

ROMANIA AND THE FRANCO–GERMAN WAR (1870–1871)

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Abstract

To those who might be tempted to believe that some observable similarities between the course of phenomena in nature and those in society are not purely coincidental, it seems only natural that the evolution of international relations should comprise – after moments of maximum tension – states of relative relaxation. The great powers, in particular, had good reason to shrink from the prospect of a general conflict. Fearful lest a new European order jeopardise their position in international relations and each feeling that the bi- or multilateral approaches attempted or achieved in 1867–1868 (i.e., the Russo–Prussian and Franco–Austrian–British rapprochement) were inert and therefore without prospects, the high courts were – not by chance – advocates of the European peace. The primary directions in which the great politics seems to have acted to avert the risks of a general conflict – the eventuality of which, thanks to improvements in combat techniques, was already prone to taking on apocalyptic dimensions in the *collective mindset* – would thwart any attempts to undermine the order in the East and, above all, prevent the dangers of insurrection in Central and Southeastern Europe. The Romanian question was at the crossroads of these directions. Hence, the particular concern of the guaranteeing powers “pour détourner le cabinet roumain de toute tentative ambitieuse ou révolutionnaire.” Furthermore, the guarantors in Bucharest had an effect as moderate or conservative elements – in other words, *those who favoured the path of political-diplomatic regulations* for matters involving the Romanian State’s relations with external factors – were advancing to the forefront of Romanian political life. Understandably, not all the internal forces could agree with such a path, particularly the radicals who – although withdrawn from the government – still held a parliamentary majority for a while. However, despite the internal tension, which grew in step with the tense international situation, the primary exponents of the executive power in Bucharest (i.e., Prince Carol and the successive cabinets until March 1871) well understood that the position of Romania toward the Franco–German war and the consequences of a such complicated event, must be that of the neutrality. Through that position Romania proved sympathy toward France, but was finally pressed to deliver explanations in order to relax the repressive observations over Romania’s behaviour, expressed by the German Government.

Keywords: the Franco–German war, the Romanian’s neutrality, the challenge of the European order, the sympathy of the Romanians toward France, the reactive observations expressed by the German Government, the *status* of the Black Sea, Romania and the Guaranteeing Powers.

It is well-known that the Franco–German rivalries or tensions spanned the “century of nationalities,” reaching a pivotal moment with the war that ended the

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Second Napoleonic Empire and paved the way for the successful establishment of the Second Reich. In the immediate context of these events, the “Teutonic lesson” inflicted on France in 1870–1871 served as an extreme sanction against Napoleon III’s Rhineland policy.¹ In line with his frequently invoked European projects,² the last aimed to control or arbitrate the complex and tense process of German national unification, accomplished “through iron and blood.” Although Napoleon III professed, at least in his statements, a desire to shape this process according to his intentions – well-known for advocating a reconfiguration of Europe’s political and territorial landscape by promoting the principle of nationalities,³ – the Rhineland policy of the Second Empire gradually revealed itself to be eroded by inertia, illusions, and wavering attitudes after 1863, becoming increasingly evident after 1866. This reality became a focal point for opposition within the liberal Empire, with Adolphe Thiers’ “philippics” of 1867, condemning Napoleon III’s adventurous policies, gaining considerable attention. Thiers warned that the consequences of these policies in the German or Italian questions posed the risk of inevitably turning against France.⁴ This risk materialised in the practical order of events, as the Emperor’s attempt to provoke a shift in the Concert of Europe⁵ – aimed at completely eradicating the anti-French clauses of the 1815 treaty system – ultimately failed. Similarly, the lack of success in the imperial cabinet’s efforts to forge alliances – whether offensive or defensive – with Great Britain, Austria–Hungary, and Italy, or the ineffectiveness of conspiratorial manoeuvres,⁶ aimed at inciting nationalities’ actions, as seen in 1859–1861 and, to a lesser extent, in 1866, confirmed this aspect.

¹ I do not intend to revisit in detail here the commentaries I have previously made regarding the implications of the Franco–German conflict of 1870–1871. The repercussions of this conflict on the political state of Romania have been summarised very briefly, aiming to provide conclusions that are as concise and expressive as possible on the core theme of these commentaries. For details concerning Romania’s position concerning “the great collision on the Rhine,” see Gheorghe Cliveti, *România și crizele internaționale 1853–1913* (Iași: Ed. Fundației “Axis”, 1997), 161–209 (the chapter *România și conflictul Franco–German. 1870–1871*); see also Gheorghe Cliveti, “1870–1871: românii și sincopa Europei franceze,” in *Franța – model cultural și politic*, ed. Alexandru Zub and Dumitru Ivănescu (Iași: Editura Junimea, 2003), 251–264.

² Pierre Renouvin, *Les idées et les projets d’union européenne au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1931).

³ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Napoléon III et les nationalités* (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1934); Paul Henry, *Napoléon et les peuples* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1943).

⁴ Adolphe Thiers, *Discours prononcés au Corps Législatif (les 14 et 18 mars 1867) par M. Thiers sur la politique extérieure de la France, spécialement en ce qui concerne l’Allemagne et l’Italie* (Paris: Mazerau et Cie., 1867), 1–112.

⁵ An attempt proven by the famous *letter* from Napoleon III to the European sovereigns on November 4, 1863, in which the French emperor proposed the convening of a *general congress* aimed at “à régler le présent et à assurer l’avenir;” *Les origines diplomatiques de la guerre de 1870–1871*, ed. Henri Charles Lavanzelle, vol. 1 (Paris, 1910), 1 and following; William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe* (Baton Rouge/London: Louisiana State University Press; 2010), 177–294.

⁶ Alexandru Marcu, *Conspiratori și conspirații în epoca renașterii politice a României. 1848–1877* (București: Editura Cartea Românească, 1930).

Denying the clear signs of isolation, perhaps blinded by the mirage of continental hegemonism, France, politically overexcited by the reopening of Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen's candidacy for the Spanish throne, forced the issue in 1870, triggering a war on the Rhine that would become a historically significant moment. This war was said to have left deeper marks on the conscience of the French and the Germans than any other collision on the Rhine. Although it began as a classic governmental war (political and military) between France and Prussia, it developed characteristics that led some historians to consider it a precursor, if not the first edition of "total war."⁷ Alongside the armed forces, economic potential, railway transport, and collective morale played crucial roles in determining the outcome of the confrontation. Each side fought with the firm conviction that justice was on its side and that the opponent, the hereditary enemy, posed a direct threat to its national and state existence or future. Historical resentments and national pride thus served as the primary motivators for the combatants on both sides, triggering a surge of energy. This reality was reflected in the realm of ideas through the increasingly pronounced differences between the French and German interpretations of the *national fact*.⁸ Amid the tumult of war, the German view found vivid expression in Treitschke's provocative article *Was fordern wir von Frankreich?* published in August 1870. In response, Ernest Renan criticised the German way of viewing the nation question, a perspective that tended to "à faire dégénérer les luttes des peuples en extermination de races." In turn, Fustel de Coulanges argued, in an open letter addressed to Mommsen, that "vous [the Germans – my note] invoquez le principe des nationalités; mais vous le comprenez autrement que toute l'Europe."⁹ Furthermore, this *malentendu fondamental*, according to the same Ernest Renan,¹⁰ made the Rhine red from the blood of the two peoples.

By engaging two factors that held leading positions in "continental affairs," the Franco–German conflict revealed, through its ideological repercussions, dire consequences for the development of European realities, particularly for the evolution of international relations.¹¹ In its context, the final agreement of the Concert of Europe set at

⁷ Keith Perry, *Modern European History* (London, 1985), 12.

⁸ René Johannet, *Le principe des nationalités* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1923), 6–14; see also the chapters "L'Idée française" and "L'Idée allemande."

⁹ Pierre Renouvin, *Le XIX^e siècle: De 1815 à 1871. L'Europe des nationalités et l'éveil des nouveaux mondes*, vol. 5, *Histoire de relations internationales*, ed. Pierre Renouvin (Paris: Hachette, 1954), 402 and the following; Johannes Willms, *Nationalismus ohne Nation. Deutsche Geschichte von 1789 bis 1914* (Düsseldorf, 1983), 343–421.

¹⁰ Renouvin, *Le XIX^e siècle*, 5:402.

¹¹ Albert Sorel, *Histoire diplomatique de la guerre franco-allemande*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1875); K. Rheindorff, *England und der deutsch-französische Krieg, 1870–1871* (Bonn, 1925). Perhaps the most nuanced commentaries on the general implications of the Franco–German conflict in A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 201–218 (the chapter "The End of French Primacy").

Vienna in 1815 came to an end (Bismarck proclaimed, *Il n'y a plus d'Europe*,¹² echoed from afar by Beust: *Je ne vois plus l'Europe*).¹³ Italy's initiative to form a *League of Neutrals*, aimed at maintaining the possibility of a *collective mediation* in the spirit of "concerted diplomacy" for the Franco–German dispute, ultimately failed.¹⁴ The same fate befell Thiers' missions after the Emperor's capitulation at Sedan,¹⁵ which were intended to gain the support of non-belligerent powers in favour of France, now in a "sans issue" situation,¹⁶ exacerbated by the prospects of a peace unilaterally imposed by victorious Germany. The extinguishing of collective reason at the level of high politics encouraged the Italians to decisively claim Rome as their capital as a *fait accompli* (September 1870).¹⁷ It determined Austria–Hungary to align its international position more closely with that of the Second German Reich, the revival of the Habsburg court being comparable in its implications to the attitudinal changes of the same court that marked the significant reversal of alliances following the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). The same end to collective reason in 1870 allowed Russia to unilaterally denounce the neutralisation of the Black Sea (on October 19/31, 1870) and regain vital strategic positions in the southeastern part of Europe.¹⁸ The gesture of the great Northern court required convening a diplomatic conference in London, indicating that in Eastern affairs, the practices of concerted diplomacy of high politics still survived, albeit increasingly faintly.¹⁹ However, maintaining the same kind of practices in Central and Western European affairs was no longer possible. The *Pax Germanica* of May 1871, preceded and accompanied by the entire array of festivities marking the establishment of the Second Reich, was enforced by virtue of the right of force, *from victor to vanquished*. This made it even clearer that, in the constellation of great powers, Germany had advanced to a polar position – a fact with profound reverberations in other aspects of European life beyond that of high politics. I refer to the developments of small and medium-sized states, the pulse of national movements, the socio-political and ideological trends, etc.²⁰ Concerning one of these aspects, the case of Romania stands out as quite distinct.

¹² Renouvin, *Le XIX^e siècle*, 5:393.

¹³ H. Hauser et al., *Du libéralisme à l'impérialisme (1860–1878)*, vol. 17 of the series *Peuples et civilisations. Histoire générale* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1939).

¹⁴ Antonin Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe, depuis l'ouverture du Congrès de Vienne jusqu'à la fermeture du Congrès de Berlin, 1814–1878*, vol. 2, *La Révolution* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1891), 399 and the following.

¹⁵ Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique*, 2:411–416.

¹⁶ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, ed. Walter Maturi, Federico Chalbod, and Mario Toscano, 2nd ser. 1870–1896, vol. 1 (Roma, 1956), 139 (Senard to V. Venosta, Florence, September 4, 1870).

¹⁷ Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique*, 2:415.

¹⁸ Serge Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1910), 157–159.

¹⁹ Goriainow, *Le Bosphore*, 162.

²⁰ It is a point of view supported by the participants at the colloquium in Strasbourg in 1971, organised by the European Association of Contemporary History, with the topic *Dimensions et resonances de l'année 1871*. Among the reports, I mention as follows: *Les mutations politiques nationales et les rapports internationaux dans L'Europe Occidentale. Les problèmes de la nouvelle Europe Centrale; L'Europe Orientale et Balcanique*.

Among the many aspects related to the exceptional way Romania responded to the entire unfolding of the Franco–German conflict of 1870–1871, the pro-French manifestations of Romanian public opinion²¹ and the attempts by certain groups and political figures in the country to provoke a radical change in the domestic and foreign conditions of the United Principalities stand out.²² However, when viewed in all its complexity, this perspective cannot be summarised merely as attitudes *à l’instant*. It must be understood, first and foremost, as an expression of the close connection between the building of the modern Romanian state and the course of international transformations. By virtue of this fact, establishing a new European balance in 1870–1871 also had considerable repercussions on the state of affairs at the Lower Danube, just as Romanian implications were sensed in the unfolding of international processes. Furthermore, although such implications may not have been apparent in the actual evolution of the war on the Rhine, they nevertheless significantly influenced certain circumstances leading to it. Let us not forget that Romania (the United Principalities) was subject to the collective guarantee assumed by the great powers in 1856–1858. This European guarantee initially applied to the political entity (status) of the Principalities and their internal organisation. The fulfilment by the Romanians of the significant desires from their national program, proclaimed by the *ad hoc* assemblies in 1857 – desires such as union, full autonomy, a foreign prince, and representative government – came about in the form and content of energetic *faits accomplis*,²³ in 1859, 1864, and 1866. Finally, such *faits accomplis* demonstrated, depending on the time and place, the exceptionally close connection between the emergence of the modern Romanian state and the course of national and state transformations on the European stage. This rule also held true for the period following 1866, when Romanian actions continued to be assigned a role of primary importance within the context of projects and attempts at insurrection by nationalities in Central and Southeastern Europe.²⁴ This was particularly true given that the Poles, having suffered a severe correction from Russia in 1863, could no longer take any

²¹ Gheorghe Cristea, “La guerre franco-allemande et le mouvement républicain de mars 1871 à Bucarest,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, no. 2 (1964): 277–290; Gheorghe Cristea, “Conspirația republicană din august 1870,” *Studii. Revistă de istorie* 22, no. 2 (1969); Ioan Dimitrie Suci, “Les Roumains de l’Empire Austro-Hongrois et la guerre franco-prussienne (1870–1871),” in *Nouvelles Études d’Histoire*, vol. 4 (Bucarest, 1970); Beatrice Marinescu and Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, “Le peuple roumain et la guerre franco-prussienne de 1870–1871,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 10, no. 2 (1971): 329–342; Vasile Russu, “Mișcări și frământări anticarliste (1866–1871),” *The Scientific Annals of “Al. I. Cuza” University – Iași* 20, third section, Istorie [History] (1974): 45–56; Vasile Russu, *Viața politică în România (1866–1871)*, vol. 2 (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2001), 206–242; Mihai Timofte, *România la 1870–1871. Monarhie sau Republică* (Iași, 1996), etc.

²² Apostol Stan, “O acțiune politică pentru cucerirea independenței în timpul războiului franco-prusian (1870–1871),” *Studii. Revistă de istorie* 26, no. 4 (1973).

²³ Paul Henry, *L’abdication du prince Couza et l’avènement de la dynastie de Hohenzollern au trône de Roumanie* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1930), 81–87.

²⁴ Marcu, *Conspiratori și conspirații*, 294–412.

significant initiatives, and the Hungarians turned towards concluding the dualism with Vienna in 1867. These considerations, correlated with specific aspects regarding the strategic position of the Romanian state at the confluence of Central and Southeastern Europe, its juridical and political status, and the game of interests of the great powers, support the view that *the Romanian factor*, in the entire scope of its domestic and foreign relations, deeply interfered with the preludes and circumstances of the Franco–German conflict. Starting in April–May 1870, the density of events likely to draw our attention began to follow an upward curve. Given the particularly frequent succession of new events in a relatively short period, I believe combining the general, declarative considerations prevailing so far with more detailed analytical evaluations is appropriate. I will refer to events that marked the opening and provided range to the vectors of Romania’s positioning concerning the circumstances that provoked and unfolded the “war on the Rhine.”

At the time of the outbreak of the “diplomatic scandal” caused by Leopold of Hohenzollern’s candidacy for the Spanish throne – a scandal that served as a pretext for the cabinets in Berlin and Paris to push events toward the inevitable outcome, i.e., the war – the internal political scene in Romania was already confronted with signs of serious unrest, despite the hopes of Prince Carol, conservative elements, and, not least, the great powers that the new government, led by Manolache Costache Epureanu, would offer more guarantees than the previous ones for maintaining order.²⁵ All these actors, while displaying a desire for peace, sensed the tense pre-war atmosphere and the attitudes of the powers – which essentially confirmed the end of concerted efforts by the great powers to uphold the treaty system of 1815²⁶ – still converged towards the tacit acceptance of an isolated Franco–Prussian conflict. This situation led to the great cabinets focusing on preventing the dangers of extending the area of hostilities. The potential for insurrections in various parts of the continent, particularly in Italy and Romania, added to the tension and uncertainty of the time. While the Italian rulers managed to take some preventive measures – among others, Mazzini was moved to Gaeta,²⁷ and Garibaldi and the “Red Shirts” were kept under strict surveillance²⁸ – the same did not happen in Romania. For reasons that no longer need to be mentioned, a disturbance of order in Romania – whether through the overthrow of the ruler, the proclamation of a republic, or independence – would

²⁵ Ministère des Affaires Etrangères – Archives Diplomatique/M.A.E. – A. D. *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34 (Mellinet to France’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, May 9, 1870); Arhivele Naționale al României/A.N.R., Microfilme [Microfilms] *Franța [France]*, r. 15, cd. 174.

²⁶ Renouvin, *Le XIX^e siècle*, 5:399–401.

²⁷ *Pressa*, August 5, 1870.

²⁸ Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique*, 2:393 and the following; see also *Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902)*, ed. Harold Temperley and Lillian M. Penson (Cambridge, 1938), 319–323 (“Clarendon to Loftus, London, March 9, 1870”), 324–327 (“Gladstone to Granville, London, September 24, 1870”), 337 and the following. (Granville to the British ambassador in Paris, Lyons, Londra, August 4, 1870, about “the urgency of a Franco–British Treaty,” regarding the validity of international agreements).

have required the intervention of the powers that signed the 1856 treaty. Due to the circumstances created by the inevitability and then the reality of the Franco–Prussian conflict, this mission carried the risk that one empire or another bordering the Romanian state might assume it. It was a significant risk, considering that, by tradition, intervention by any of the three empires (i.e., Ottoman, Tsarist, or Habsburg) could lead to the outbreak of a conflict on the Danube, about whose predictable implications the high courts were very concerned. Once again, as in 1859 and 1866, the Romanian question proved to be one of the hot points of international life. Although in 1870–1871, one could no longer consider a new major *fait accompli* by the Romanians, the powers' concerns to prevent such a possibility kept the Romanian question at the centre of high politics. For clarification, the French cabinet expressed its belief, shared in Vienna, London, Berlin, and Florence, that it would be extremely imprudent not to take into account that Romania was “dans un état de malaise qui se traduit par des fâcheuses symptômes” and that “*tout ce qui touche au sort des Principautés Unies devient promptement en effet, une question d'intérêt général*” (my italics).²⁹ Knowing that it was suspected of maintaining ties with the people representing the European revolution in Bucharest,³⁰ the Tsarist cabinet found itself compelled to renew its assurances of good intentions while also asserting that it was not Russia but rather revolutionary committees abroad that constituted the support upon which I. C. Brătianu and his accomplices relied.³¹ The new assurances given by Russia also aimed at maintaining order in the East, but it served as a starting point for Gorchakov to appeal to one of his favourite ideas, namely, that it was not St. Petersburg but the other great cabinets that were guilty of undermining the validity of the 1856 treaty by accepting the series of *faits accomplis* by the Romanians, which in 1866 also validated the success of another Hohenzollern candidacy,³² besides the unsuccessful one aiming for the throne of Spain.

In a Europe where collective sentiments were tenser than interstate relations, *the Romanian implications* in unfolding international events cannot be summarised solely by governmental actions. In fact, the prominence of the Romanian question in the attention of high politics was not primarily driven by the attitudes of the executive power's representatives in Bucharest but by the tendencies of various political groups, especially the radicals. As previously mentioned, the Reds considered the tension in international relations as a reason to adopt a vigorous and courageous stance in Romanian politics rather than submitting to the warnings of foreign forces. According to the radicals, the latter approach could provide the

²⁹ *Les origines diplomatiques de la guerre de 1870–1871*, vol. 27, 4 Mars 1870–30 Juin 1870 (Paris, 1930), 57, 273 and the following. (Emile Ollivier to Fleury, May 3 and 7, 1870).

³⁰ *Les origines diplomatiques*, 27:205 and the following. (La Valette to E. Ollivier, London, April 21, 1870).

³¹ *Les origines diplomatiques*, 27:286 (Fleury to E. Ollivier, Petersburg, May 13, 1870).

³² *Les origines diplomatiques de la guerre de 1870–1871*, vol. 28 1^{er}–15 Juillet 1870 (Paris, 1931), 107 and the following. (Fleury to Gramont, Petersburg, July 7, 1870).

premise for increased interference by the guaranteeing courts and the suzerain power in the domestic affairs of the Romanian state. In the socio-political sphere, it would favour the position of conservative elements. Consequently, the group led by I. C. Brătianu sought, through a variety of means and methods of action, to create the possibility of their return to power, a goal they claimed in the name of the need to democratise domestic political life (the Reds were advocates of universal suffrage and a unicameral parliamentary system) and consolidating the international position of the Romanian state. Naturally, the radicals also included the national cause in their arsenal of arguments, which they had affirmed as a fundamental principle of governance in 1867–1868. Therefore, it is fully justified to assess that through their concepts, methods, and objectives, the actions of the Reds placed Romania among the European countries experiencing the last notable manifestations of the forty-eighter spirit.³³ To increase and, in a way, alter the details of the involvement of the Romanian question in the evolution of international relations, which were tending toward their peak tension, the radicals and other elements of the opposition (Cuza's supporters, some moderate liberals around I. Ghica, etc.),³⁴ did not hesitate to question the very appropriateness of maintaining Carol I on the Romanian throne. Relying on the fact that the war on the Rhine generated French interest in dethroning Prince Carol, some emissaries from the opposition travelled to Paris; among them, Dimitrie Brătianu sought to reach an agreement with Prime Minister Émile Ollivier regarding the removal of the Prussian prince and offering the crown to a prince of French origin or N. Bibescu.³⁵ Meanwhile, in the country, the popular movement that favoured restoring Al. I. Cuza to the throne was becoming increasingly evident.³⁶ Returning to the radicals, their leaders intended to take advantage of the complications created by Leopold of Hohenzollern's candidacy for the Spanish throne to raise the dynastic question in Romania, based on Article 83 of the Constitution, which stipulated that succession to the throne, in the absence of direct male descendants of the ruler, would pass to the eldest of Carol I's brothers or his sons. C. A. Rosetti and I. Brătianu believed that "for Prince Leopold to be a candidate for the Spanish throne, he needed the approval of the Romanian national assembly because he had not formally renounced his rights of succession, thus allowing the Romanians to regain their freedom to possibly requiring the assistance of another European dynasty."³⁷

³³ Vasile Russu, *1866–1871*, vol. *România în relațiile internaționale*, ed. Leonid Boicu, V. Cristian and Gheorghe Platon (Iași: Editura Junimea, 1980), 241.

³⁴ M.A.E. – A. D. *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; A.N.R., Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 287 et sqq., 310 et sqq. (Patrimonio to Gramont, 9 and 16 July 1870).

³⁵ Nicolae Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice ale României de la 1859 la 1877* (București, 1983), 254 and the following.

³⁶ Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 254.

³⁷ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Patrimonio to Gramont, July 12, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 290 and the following.

Therefore, it was necessary in Paris to thwart the attempts to dethrone Prince Carol, at least in the lead-up to and the beginning of the Franco–German War. To this end, it was essential to mitigate the opposition that Carol I, as a Hohenzollern prince, faced in the French capital – a task that Ion Strat, the Romanian agent in Paris, undertook with great zeal.³⁸ However, what ultimately contributed decisively to diverting Emperor Napoleon and his cabinet from their hostile intentions towards Carol I was the position of Austria–Hungary. Both Beust³⁹ and Andrassy argued that the greatest danger was not the attitude of the ruler but that of the radicals, who were accused of having ties with Russian agents.⁴⁰ According to the Hungarian Prime Minister, “une révolution dans les Principautés danubiennes paralyserait l’Autriche, qui serait obligée de tourner toutes ses forces vers l’Orient.”⁴¹ Considering that the Hungarian interests would be highly endangered by Russia getting involved – “et un moyen sûr <pour> la déterminer serait une révolution dans les Principautés”⁴² – the political circles in Pest even considered *Hungary’s separate neutrality*.⁴³ However, Vienna could no longer overlook Pest’s position, much to Bismarck’s satisfaction.⁴⁴ The adoption of clear neutrality by

³⁸ In agreement with the Spanish ambassador to Paris (Olozaga) and with the approval of Napoleon III, Ion Strat was sent on a mission to Sigmaringen (without informing the Romanian sovereign) to explain to Carol Anton all the complications related to Leopold of Hohenzollern’s candidacy for the Spanish throne (*Les origines diplomatiques de la guerre de 1870–1871*, vol. 29 *16 Juillet 1870–10 Août 1870* (Paris, 1932), 5). Carol Anton entrusted Ion Strat with delivering the official document of his eldest son’s renunciation of the Spanish throne to Tuilleries (Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 255 and the following; see also Iosefina Lopez Sanmartin, “Spania și România,” *Studii. Revistă de istorie* 23, no. 6 (1970): 1143). Though for Ion Strat’s services to France, he would later be awarded the Officer’s Cross of the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honour (*Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 353), the Romanian agent would receive reprimands from P. P. Carp for talking to Sigmaringen without the approval of the Romanian government (Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 256).

³⁹ Beust wanted to persuade the French cabinet about “le danger que les événements actuels des Principautés font courir à la France, et les conséquences qui en peuvent résulter pour nos bons rapports [Austro–French – my note] et même notre alliance /.../. Que le Prince Charles tombe, ce ne sera pas le Prince Bibesco, mais la République, de MM Bratiano et Rosetti qui prendra sa place; ce sera en un mot l’intrusion de la Russie d’un côté, la propagande révolutionnaire de l’autre. *Savez-vous que, si les choses continuent à suivre cette voie, nous nous attendons un jour ou l’autre à voir les bandes roumaines envahir nos provinces orientales en portant le drapeaux français et en proclamant la Révolution? Dans ce cas, nous serions bien assez occupés de notre côté pour ne pouvoir vous prêter aucun secours, quelque éventualité qui se produise...*” [my italics]. *Les origines diplomatiques*, 29:138 and the following. (Cazaux to Gramont, Vienna, July 20, 1870).

⁴⁰ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Patrimonio to Gramont, July 16, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 11 and the following.

⁴¹ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 1st ser. 1861–1870, vol. 13 (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato Anno, 1963), 122 (Artom to Visconti Venosta, Vienna, July 19, 1870).

⁴² *Les origines diplomatiques*, 29:72 (Cazaux to Gramont, Vienna, July 17, 1870).

⁴³ *Les origines diplomatiques*, 29:301 and the following. (La Tour d’Auvergne to Gramont, Vienna, July 29, 1870).

⁴⁴ Istvan Diószegi, *Österreich-ungarn und der französisch-preussische Krieg. 1870–1871* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974), 19–21.

Austria–Hungary immediately after the outbreak of the Franco–German War was inevitable. Italy also adopted the same stance, with Austria–Hungary’s neutrality somewhat “absolving” it in the eyes of France. Russia declared neutrality on July 23, and just a few days later, on July 28, so did Great Britain. The London cabinet, reassured by Russia’s gesture, nonetheless conditioned its position on the belligerents’ respect for Belgium’s integrity and neutrality.⁴⁵ *In essence, Russia’s declaration was also conditional, clearly indicating that its neutrality would remain valid only as long as* “les intérêts de la Russie ne seront pas affectés par les éventualités [superfluous to add – my note] de la guerre.”⁴⁶ Even from these brief observations, it follows that the attitudes of Austria–Hungary, Italy, Russia, and Great Britain – having an effect in Constantinople – toward the Franco–German conflict were driven by reasons whose relevance depended on the prevention of certain eventualities, including possible actions by the Romanians that might be contrary to the guaranteed order.

The condition upon which the Tsarist cabinet tied the observance of its declaration of neutrality had, among other effects, the increase of suspicions regarding the attitude of certain Romanian political forces towards Russia’s tendencies. Despite this power making it a political principle to draw Europe’s attention “sur la versatilité traditionnelle des roumains,”⁴⁷ some great cabinets (i.e., Paris, Vienna, and London) suspected the radicals of being “complètement au service de la Russie.”⁴⁸ However, it would be very difficult to accept that the Reds intended to fully align their actions with Tsarist policy’s tendencies. What distinguished the radicals from other political groups was that they did not express, a priori, fears about Russia’s tendencies but rather sought to create a space for Romanian action within the context that “une tentative en grand” by the great Northern court would make. By their nature, the actions of the radicals could not align with the objectives of Tsarist policy. Without revisiting the considerations made throughout this work regarding the significance of the radicals’ actions, it is essential to remember that the assessments of their conduct during the summer of 1870 came from their domestic and foreign adversaries. As for the assessments

⁴⁵ Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique*, 2:395 and the following; Jacques Droz, *Histoire diplomatique de 1648 à 1919* (Paris, 1952), 427 and the following.

⁴⁶ *Les origines diplomatiques*, 29:269 (Beust to Chotek, Vienna, July 27, 1870).

⁴⁷ *Les origines diplomatiques*, 27:285 (Fleury to E. Ollivier, Petersburg, May 13, 1870).

⁴⁸ A detailed report on the Reds’ preparations and suspicions of their connections with Russia was prepared in July 1870, likely by a member of the French consulate in Bucharest, titled *Mémoire sur la situation actuelle en Roumanie. Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 334–341. Among the bases of an understanding that the Reds might have concluded with Russian agents, the memo listed: a) If Prince Carol is forced to leave the country, the Reds would form a provisional government and immediately proclaim independence. b) If the Porte requests intervention, Russia will oppose it. If the contracting powers of the 1856 treaty support the Porte, Russia will declare it must also intervene in the Principalities. c) The Reds will agree with the Russian government on the issue of Christians in the East. d) Russia will make efforts to ensure that Egypt and Romania simultaneously proclaim their independence (Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 340 and the following).

made by some of the great cabinets, these essentially tested the Romanian cabinet's vigilance and its consistency with the assurances given to maintain order. It is no wonder, then, that insinuations were also made regarding the attitude of the ruler, who, from the moment the German troops took the initiative in the war with France, would have requested assistance from Russia or responded to the *spontaneous offer* of this power to support him in taking "les mesures nécessaires /.../ en cas de rébellion contre le régime établi."⁴⁹ Concerning the Epureanu cabinet, its attitude – constantly monitored and warned by the high courts – did not show any blameworthy signs of deviating from its sincere commitment to respecting the guaranteed order. This occurred despite serious challenges to the government's policy: on the one hand, the danger of losing control over the actions of internal opposition forces, and on the other hand, the need to remain in constant contact with the evolving balance of power in Europe. A telling moment for the conduct of the Romanian cabinet was the Foreign Minister's statement in the Chamber regarding Romania's stance on the conflict in Western Europe. Given the cabinet's very limited support from the electorate – as demonstrated by the recently concluded parliamentary elections – and the pro-French sentiment prevalent among large circles of Romanian public opinion, P. P. Carp understood the *internal significance* of his well-known statement that "wherever the flags of France fly, our interests and sympathies lie."⁵⁰ As the Foreign Minister who made this statement, the *Junimea* leader was then obliged to provide explanations to the powers that demanded them. For instance, the Romanian agent at the three Northern courts (L. Steege) informed Andrassy and the ambassadors of Russia and Prussia in Vienna "que le dit témoignage sympathique marquait, de la part de notre gouvernement moins une préférence pour la France qu'une nécessité parlementaire en vue de certaines menées de l'opposition, et n'entraînerait certes, chez nous, dans aucune direction, une infraction quelconque à la plus stricte neutralité."⁵¹

Given that two of the guarantors – France and Prussia – were in collision, it was necessary for a government "of order," like the one led by M. Epureanu, to align its actions with those of the great cabinets willing and able to ensure the maintenance of the *status quo* in the East. According to Romanian ministers, such a great cabinet could not be the one in St. Petersburg. P. P. Carp and other politicians in Bucharest regarded Russia as the greatest threat to the existence of the Romanian state.⁵² To counter any potential Russian intervention under the pretext

⁴⁹ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to La Tour d'Auvergne, August 20, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 366.

⁵⁰ Frédéric Damé, *Histoire de la Roumanie contemporaine depuis l'avènement des princes indigènes jusqu'à nos jours (1822–1900)* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1900), 210.

⁵¹ M.A.E., fond *Arhiva istorică [Historical Archive fund]*, *Austro-Ungaria [Austria-Hungary]*, vol. 174 (1866–1871), f. 177 (L. Steege to P. P. Carp, Vienna, 22 July 1870).

⁵² *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Patrimonio to Gramont, July 16, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 311–313; *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to Gramont, August 3, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 314 and the following.

of a disturbance of internal order (with the radicals being identified as the threat), the Romanian Foreign Minister informed Mellinet that the government in Bucharest would take defensive measures in concert with the High Porte and that 30,000 Romanian soldiers would serve as the vanguard for Ottoman troops.⁵³ However, past experiences and the exaggerated suzerain claims of the Porte made the political figures in Bucharest very cautious about the joint defensive measures between Romania and the Ottomans. Consequently, it was necessary to test the positions of the other high courts. Regarding some (i.e., Prussia and Italy), this was unnecessary, as Berlin had already categorically distanced itself from any direct involvement in Eastern affairs (to avoid giving the other powers a pretext to intervene in the Franco–German conflict). At the same time, the stance of the Florence cabinet on the Romanian question was too insignificant to serve as a primary guide for the Bucharest government’s actions. As long as a French success on the Rhine was not ruled out, the Romanian ministers pinned their greatest hopes on Paris’s position. The sincerest declarations in favour of Prince Carol and his cabinet would be received from the French capital as a reply.⁵⁴ *En outre*, the French cabinet also ensured the “ouverture à Vienne,” so that Austria–Hungary could provide “l’appui efficace en cas de danger.”⁵⁵ Nothing more. By passing on the responsibility of supporting the government “of order” in Bucharest to Austria–Hungary, France furthered its isolation and simultaneously made the Romanian ministers understand that what remained for them to do was to attempt to establish good relations with the Dual Monarchy.⁵⁶ Vienna also had reasons to be interested in such relations, as Beust sought to clarify to Steege, explaining that the Austrian government would not have created so many difficulties for the Romanian state in the question of consular jurisdiction had it not been under pressure “de la part des gros bonnets juifs,” which

⁵³ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 344 and the following.

⁵⁴ M.A.E., fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, vol. 174, f. 170 (P. P. Carp to L. Steege, Bucharest, July 10/22, 1870).

⁵⁵ M.A.E., fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, vol. 174, f. 170 (P. P. Carp to L. Steege, Bucharest, 10/22 July 1870)

⁵⁶ For a time, France relied on the possibility of a Russo–Austro–Hungarian agreement, mediated by the cabinet in Paris, to prevent the disruption of order in Romania (Emile Ollivier, *L’empire libéral*, vol. 13 (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1908), 412–414). The French cabinet did not hesitate to warn Bucharest that the war at the Rhine, involving two of the guarantors, compromised the *collective* stance of the powers, thereby increasing the risks to Romania from a rash act. The French Foreign minister advised Patrimonio (on August 4) to caution the Romanian government that “il est évidemment que les États plus spécialement placés sous la sauvegarde du droit international perdent une partie des garanties qu’ils rencontrent en temps de paix dans le contrôle réciproque et le bon accord des gouvernements. Les Principautés Unies seraient les premières à souffrir de cet état de choses si elles avaient l’imprudence de donner prise à des calculs dont elles ont pu depuis longtemps apprécier le danger. Toute agitation intérieure quelque en fût le prétexte pourrait devenir le point de départ des événements les plus graves pour le pays en entraînant des complications dont la conséquence certaine serait d’amener une immixtion étrangère dans ses affaires intérieures...” (*Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 347).

represented almost exclusively the finances and press in Austria–Hungary.⁵⁷ However, they gave Steege new instructions to test the field not in Vienna but in Pest, where – according to P. P. Carp – one could find “le foyer de la politique autrichienne en ce qui nous concerne.”⁵⁸ The Romanian agent was charged with ensuring “la Hongrie que le gouvernement actuel [Romanian – my note] évitera tout ce qui pourrait leur porter ombrage, mais en revanche nous voudrions que Hongrie soit avec la France dans la question roumaine.”⁵⁹ As expected, the assurances from the Bucharest cabinet were well received in Pest, with Andrassy eager to appear very willing to conclude a separate Romanian–Austro–Hungarian consular convention by abandoning the older French suggestion (it is clear, thus, that Andrassy aimed for “good relations” with Romania, but not in conjunction with France!) that the reform of the capitulations regime should occur through an agreement among all interested powers.⁶⁰

However, as France’s defeat became inevitable, the Romanian government noticed a serious shift in Austria–Hungary’s attitude.⁶¹ In Vienna, and more notably in Pest, the previously hostile stance towards Prussia began to dissipate. Although the Dual Monarchy still harboured “des appréhensions précautionneuses” toward Russia, Andrassy correctly anticipated that Germany’s victory at the Rhine would completely alter the terms of Austro–Hungarian–Russian relations.⁶² Consequently, Austria–Hungary’s unilateral promises to support the Romanian state would lose their significance, with the Hungarian premier even suggesting that Russia would no longer intervene in the Ottoman Empire on its own, without the consent of the interested powers.⁶³ Nevertheless, any disturbance of order in Romania was seen by the politicians in Vienna and Pest as an eventuality, the complications of which were far from being mitigated, with Andrassy telling Steege that “*s’il survenait en Roumanie quelque trouble sérieux, ce dont Dieu vous garde, ce seront plutôt les Turcs, et les Turcs seuls, qui occuperont votre pays, et nous les laisserons faire, c’est à peu près convenu*” (my italics).⁶⁴ The clear prospects of France’s defeat and the aforementioned Austro–Hungarian revival led the Romanian rulers to the conviction that “les arbitres de notre sort” had become London and St. Petersburg,⁶⁵ whose dispositions on the Romanian question could best be gauged in Constantinople, a traditional ground for Russo–British confrontation. From the Ottoman capital, the

⁵⁷ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, vol. 174, f. 164–167, (L. Steege to P. P. Carp, Vienna, July 4, 1870).

⁵⁸ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, vol. 174, f. 170 (P. P. Carp to L. Steege, July 10/22, 1870).

⁵⁹ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, vol. 174, f. 170 (P. P. Carp to L. Steege, July 10/22, 1870).

⁶⁰ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, f. 178 (L. Steege to P. P. Carp, Vienna, July 22, 1870).

⁶¹ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, f. 187 (the same to the same, Vienna, August 1, 1870).

⁶² Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, f. 187 (the same to the same, Vienna, August 1, 1870).

⁶³ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, f. 187 and the following.

⁶⁴ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, f. 188.

⁶⁵ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, f. 188.

agent D. A. Sturdza observed that “les Russes sont très montés contre nous.”⁶⁶ He also noted that the danger of Russian intervention in Romania persisted (Andrassy’s assumptions about Russia had yet to be confirmed). He added that an Ottoman intervention, dangerous in itself, could be more of a pretext than a deterrent to a similar move by the Russian Empire.⁶⁷ All of this was revealed in connection with the circumstances surrounding the well-known republican attempt at Ploiești.⁶⁸ Per se, this attempt was not particularly significant. It was a premature and isolated effect of revolutionary preparations, whose main initiators (the leaders of the radicals) had momentarily retreated in the face of evident external dangers. However, the August 8/20, 1870 incident was significant for its implications. It energised the anti-Carol sentiments of some internal political forces. It also occasioned new expressions of sympathy towards France and disapproval of the government’s inclination to adapt its conduct to the attitudes of Austria–Hungary or the Sublime Porte.⁶⁹ And, most interestingly here, it allowed for the realisation that the dispositions of the suzerain court, cultivated by Russia,⁷⁰ for intervention in Romania posed a real threat, which was averted by the prompt measures of the Romanian authorities and the explanations provided by the Epureanu cabinet to certain powers.⁷¹

Among the high courts (without Russia!) that restrained the Porte from resorting to coercive measures regarding Romania, Great Britain made the most insistent appeal to the idea that safeguarding the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire depended on the viability of the political-diplomatic acts contracted under the aegis of the Concert of Europe (referring to the 1856 treaty and subsequent acts).⁷² Great Britain’s insistence, primarily aimed at preventing Russia from regaining its former positions in southeastern Europe, was seen in Bucharest as potentially offering some chances for

⁶⁶ M.A.E., fond *Arhiva istorică* [*Historical Archive fund*], *Turcia* [*Turkey*], vol. 127, f. 25 (D. A. Sturdza to P. P. Carp, Thérapia, July 29/August 10, 1870).

⁶⁷ Fond *Arhiva istorică*, *Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 30 (D. A. Sturdza, to P. P. Carp, Thérapia, August 11/23, 1870).

⁶⁸ Cristea, “Conspirația republicană;” Nicolae Simache, “Mișcările din Ploiești. 1869–1870,” in *File din trecutul istoric al județului Prahova* (Ploiești: Muzeul de Istorie al Județului Prahova, 1971), 127–181 cited in Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 256 and the following.

⁶⁹ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to La Tour d’Auvergne, August 26, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 369 and the following; Marinescu and Rădulescu-Zoner, “Le peuple roumain et la guerre franco-prussien de 1870–1871,” 329–342.

⁷⁰ Fond *Arhiva istorică*, *Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 30 (D. A. Sturdza to P. P. Carp, Thérapia, August 11/23, 1870).

⁷¹ Fond *Arhiva istorică*, *Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 32–33 (D. A. Sturdza to P. P. Carp, August 16/28, 1870). The Romanian agent in Constantinople would publish articles in some newspapers in Constantinople (“La Turquie,” “Courrier d’Orient”) about the “attempt” at Ploiești, stating that the government had taken the necessary measures and that peace prevailed in the country. Fond *Arhiva istorică*, *Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 38 and the following (D. A. Sturdza to P. P. Carp, August 20/September 1, 1870); *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, 333 and the following (Granville to Gladstone, December 10, 1870).

⁷² Fond *Arhiva istorică*, *Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 32 and the following (D. A. Sturdza to P. P. Carp, August 16/28, 1870).

diplomatic efforts in London to strengthen Romania's international position. The Bucharest cabinet even deemed it appropriate to propose to London that it, being the only one with influence over both belligerents at the Rhine, should seek the guarantors' agreement to sanction neutrality for Romania, similar to that of Belgium.⁷³ P. Mavrogheni was tasked with bringing this proposal to the attention of the British cabinet, to which Lord Granville replied, as did Sir Elliot to D. A. Sturdza (in Constantinople), that Romania's position was very different from that of Belgium; that Belgium was a sovereign, independent state whose *territory* could be neutralised; whereas Romania was under the regime of collective guarantee by the powers, which also ensured the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, of which the Romanian state was a part; and that, finally, the Bucharest cabinet's proposal aimed at estrangement the Romanian state from Turkey.⁷⁴ Great Britain's position regarding the efforts of the government in Bucharest to gain recognition of Romania's neutrality highlighted the consistency of the British cabinet with its stance on guaranteed order in the East. This stance also stemmed from the conviction at 10 Downing Street that the objective pursued by the Romanian cabinet was unlikely to gain the support of other powers. The impossibility of collectively mediating the Franco–German conflict and the collapse of the idea of the *League of Neutrals* (suggested by Italy in July 1870)⁷⁵ demonstrated that the era of the Concert of Europe had ended (at least for the European order under the influence of the treaty system from 1815).⁷⁶ The capitulation of Napoleon III at Sedan (September 1, 1870) signified the end of the Second Empire and the imposition of a manner of conducting international relations that showed little respect for collective reason. Using a "très net" language,⁷⁷ Bismarck indicated that he only envisioned a separate peace with France, from victor to vanquished. And as if to confirm his perspective, Italian troops entered Rome (September 20).⁷⁸ Under these circumstances, Thiers' missions to St. Petersburg, London, Vienna, and Florence (September–October 1870),⁷⁹ intended to provoke the powers to intervene in favour of France, whose situation had become "sans issue,"⁸⁰ were doomed to failure, as the French statesman received only promises of good intentions in the four capitals he visited. These promises proved that the new French administration had no other path but to reach a direct agreement with Berlin.⁸¹

⁷³ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Austro-Ungaria*, vol. 174, f. 200 (P. P. Carp to L. Steege, August 26, 1870).

⁷⁴ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 53 (D. A. Sturdza to P. P. Carp, September 1/13, 1870); Fond *Arhiva istorică, Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 59 and the following (the same to P. P. Carp, September 15/27, 1870).

⁷⁵ Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique*, 2:399 and the following.

⁷⁶ Renouvin, *Le XIXe siècle*, 5:393–397.

⁷⁷ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:142 (Launay to Visconti Venosta, Berlin, October 4, 1870).

⁷⁸ Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique*, 2:415.

⁷⁹ Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique*, 2:411–416.

⁸⁰ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:139 (Senard to Visconti Venosta, October 4, 1870).

⁸¹ Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique*, 2:415 and the following.

Russia did not hesitate to take advantage of the profound “collective reason” crisis. The European public, deeply moved by the fate of France, was shocked to learn of Russia’s unilateral denunciation of the neutralisation of the Black Sea through Gorchakov’s circular letter (October 19/31, 1870).⁸² The imminence of a general conflict became a universally held belief. The fact that such a conflict did not occur was due both to the significant difficulties faced by the other guaranteeing powers in adopting a common position against Russia’s violation of the Treaty of March 30, 1856 and to the skill with which the great Northern court chose its moment and constructed its argument for this action. The Russian cabinet was convinced that Germany’s victory had rendered France “hors de cause” and paralysed Austria–Hungary and Great Britain.⁸³ They also accurately anticipated that, in terms of preventing the powers from considering Russia’s defection as a *casus garantiae*, everything depended on Berlin’s stance.⁸⁴ And to Berlin, St. Petersburg had only to remind them of the 1866 agreement, which was established during Manteuffel’s mission and maintained under the auspices of the consensus “doch wir einander treu geblieben sind” [yet we have remained true to each other – my translation]⁸⁵ – and, if necessary, to clarify the reasons for Russia’s declaration of neutrality in July 1870.⁸⁶ The Tsarist cabinet also counted on the possibility of invoking similarities, which Gorchakov argued existed between the act of denouncing the Black Sea neutralisation and the entry of Italian troops into Papal Rome. Additionally, the cultivation of mindsets in Constantinople was not neglected, where Ignatiev – insisting “de parler en voie privée et d’une manière académique”⁸⁷ – had accustomed Ottoman officials to the idea of revising the clauses of the 1856 treaty related to the neutralisation of the Black Sea.⁸⁸ The reasoning presented in Gorchakov’s circular was particularly interesting. The premise was that the 1856 treaty could not escape the exceptions that have typically undermined European transactions. Among the deviations from the clauses of the Paris Treaty and its subsequent acts, the attitudes “of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia” should be mentioned. They performed “une série de révolutions contraires à l’esprit comme à la lettre de ces transactions et qui les ont conduites d’abord à l’union ensuite à l’appel d’un prince étranger” (my italics).⁸⁹ It would also be claimed that

⁸² Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, 157–159; Kantsler A. M. *Gorchakov. 200 let so dnja raždenija* (Moscow: Minister Meždunarodnaja Otnoshenija, 1998), 335–338 (Gorchakov, circular letter, October 19/31, 1870).

⁸³ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:444 and the following (Launay to V. Venosta, Berlin, November 14, 1870).

⁸⁴ Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, 162 and the following.

⁸⁵ Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, 163.

⁸⁶ Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, 163.

⁸⁷ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:176 (Launay to V. Venosta, Berlin, October 8, 1870).

⁸⁸ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Turcia*, vol. 300, f. 74 (D. A. Sturdza to P. P. Carp, Thérapia, September 1/21, 1870).

⁸⁹ Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, 157 and the following.

the Straits and the Black Sea had been opened to foreign warships under “various pretexts.” Consequently, the circular letter stated that the Tsar would no longer allow, in law or practice, the security of his empire to depend “d’une fiction, qui n’avait pas résisté à l’épreuve du temps.”⁹⁰ The argumentation presented in the Russian circular letter – an act accompanied by special notes tailored to the power it was addressed⁹¹ – did not face significant objections from the British, Austro-Hungarian, French, Italian, Prussian, or Ottoman cabinets. The primary criticism was directed at the Tsarist cabinet’s procedure. By unilaterally denouncing certain clauses, St. Petersburg cast doubt on the validity of the entire treaty, which, in 1856, it had pledged, along with other European powers, to guarantee collectively. This was why Britain and Austria–Hungary deemed Russia’s procedure illegal and unacceptable.⁹² Interestingly, the Prussian cabinet was also quite surprised by this procedure, as there were clear concerns in Berlin that the collective deliberation required by Russia’s action might also involve regulating the Franco–German conflict under the auspices of the Concert of Europe (to which Bismarck believed he had just delivered a fatal blow).⁹³ To resolve the deadlock in a way that would not affect the conclusion of the separate Franco–German peace, the Berlin cabinet suggested convening a *special conference* (intended to deliberate *solely* on the circumstances caused by Russia’s action), with Bismarck first proposing St. Petersburg as the venue and then, to reassure and engage England, London.⁹⁴

Since the Berlin cabinet was determined to avoid resolving the Franco–German conflict through a European conference, and Russia had unilaterally denounced the neutralisation of the Black Sea, it was natural for the political leaders in Bucharest to

⁹⁰ Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, 158.

⁹¹ Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, see multiple references throughout the work.

⁹² *Foundations of British Foreign Policy*, 331–333 (Gladstone, memorandum, November 10, 1870, regarding Gorchakov’s circular letter); *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:443 and the following (Minghetti to V. Venosta, Vienna, November 14, 1870). Beust, for instance, believed that “la démarche russe implique la négation de ce qu’il avait proposé. Si la volonté de la Russie suffisait pour changer un traité aucune clause ou garantie n’aurait plus de valeur pour l’avenir /.../ Une guerre serait inévitable plus tard dans des conditions défavorables. La faute de la Russie est trop grande pour ne pas en profiter /.../ Il s’agit seulement de repousser le principe qu’une simple dénonciation suffit pour annuler un traité international. Si l’on propose une conférence ou un congrès il faut aussi les repousser.” *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:465 (Minghetti to V. Venosta, Vienna, November 15, 1870). About England’s position, see *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:476 (Cadorna to V. Venosta, London, November 17, 1870).

⁹³ Bismarck, to avoid any connection between the potential deliberations of the powers regarding Russia’s action and the conclusion of the Franco–German peace, argued that Prussia, like Italy, had not signed the Paris Convention of April 15, 1856. Therefore, Austria, Great Britain, and France were responsible for responding to the violation of the March 30, 1856 treaty. *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:477 and the following (Launay to V. Venosta, Berlin, November 17, 1870).

⁹⁴ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:508 (Artom to Minghetti, Florence, November 24, 1870); *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:524 and the following (V. Venosta to Cadorna, London, November 27, 1870).

question the viability of the *collective* stance of the powers and the political-diplomatic acts on which the international legal status of the Romanian state was based. Among the opinions expressed by various Romanian personalities or political circles regarding the issue raised – opinions that could form the subject of a separate study – particular attention was justifiably given to those contained in V. Boerescu's article, *Romania in Relation to Europe*, published in "Pressa" on November 3, 1870.⁹⁵ In the article, after noting that the balance of European power had substantially shifted, the idea was advanced that the Romanian state should become an independent kingdom, with a status similar to Belgium, under the dynasty of Carol of Hohenzollern and the guarantee of the great European powers. The author's position as a former Minister of Justice and his close association with Prince Carol gave the article the weight of a *political manifesto*, a semi-official declaration,⁹⁶ which understandably caused concern and dissatisfaction in Constantinople,⁹⁷ Consequently, explanations had to be provided once again, with D. Știrbey being tasked by P. P. Carp to convey them to the Sublime Porte. The Romanian agent was instructed to inform Ali Pasha that "Pressa" was merely an opposition newspaper and that the Bucharest government disavowed any solidarity with its views.⁹⁸ On the other hand, V. Boerescu had to justify himself by publishing a new article, *De l'indépendance de la Roumanie*, in the "Journal de Bucarest,"⁹⁹ on the same day (November 28) that government representatives in the Chamber declared it was not at all appropriate to implement the projects announced by those at "Pressa" and that the state's foreign policy remained faithful to the treaties guaranteeing autonomy.¹⁰⁰

Despite appearances that this was merely a "trial balloon," the entire situation arising from Boerescu's article on November 3 essentially expressed the realisation in Bucharest of the need to reassess Romania's foreign position, a necessity driven by the

⁹⁵ For details, Stan, "O acțiune politică," 749–765. V. Boerescu's article mentioned, "The balance of European political power, as established by the treaties of 1815 and the revolutions from 1848 to 1852, has changed. This change will naturally exert its influence on the entire balance. This balance will enter a new phase immediately after the conclusion of peace; new political relations will be established between different European states. Eastern Europe will not be forgotten in these new combinations; we can be sure /.../ Eastern Europe will be a special focus of this concern, and Romania will likely be placed in the forefront;" *Pressa*, November 3, 1870.

⁹⁶ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, November 21, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, c. 387.

⁹⁷ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 71–73 (D. Știrbey to P. P. Carp, Pera, November 29, 1870).

⁹⁸ Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 258.

⁹⁹ In his new article, V. Boerescu stated, "nous avons entendu conquérir l'indépendance de la Roumanie, par la voie diplomatique, au prochain congrès européen, et non pas par la voie de la révolution, non par l'insurrection des races slaves ou autres races qui nous entourent." The article, attached to the letter sent by Bartholeyns de Fouselaere to Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs, November 28, 1870. *Roumanie*, vol. 3 (suite), issue 189, Archives Générales du Royaume. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères – Bruxelles/A.G.R. – M.A.E. – C.E.; Microfilme [Microfilms] *Belgia [Belgium]*, r. 4, cd. 49.

¹⁰⁰ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, November 28, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 394 and the following.

exceptional consequences of the events of 1870 on international relations.¹⁰¹ The existence of the regime of collective guarantee, as it had been established concerning the Romanian side, was difficult to imagine with France – at least temporarily – completely powerless, with Great Britain increasingly adopting a stance of splendid isolation, and with Prussia on the verge of becoming an imperial Germany, displaying its perpetual disinterest in Eastern affairs. In this new context, the collective guarantee seemed ineffective in preventing a possible and dangerous assumption of responsibility for keeping the Romanian state in order by one or all three neighbouring powers together. The massing of Russian troops in Bessarabia – a figure of 300,000 soldiers was vehiculated¹⁰² – and Ottoman preparations in Rumelia and on the Danube¹⁰³ were, not coincidentally, generating serious fears among political circles in Romania.¹⁰⁴ Most Romanian politicians argued that the solution could only be independence, with the collective guarantee of the great powers ensuring that the guaranteed party (the Romanian side) could fully enjoy this primary attribute of statehood without any restrictions on internal organisation or the exercise of foreign policy. The great difficulty, however, was who among the Romanian political leaders should act and how to set things on a new course. Resorting to another significant *fait accompli* proved very risky, ruling out the return to power of elements driven by revolutionary impulses. The conservative elements argued that waiting was the most appropriate conduct for Romania as long as major international disputes could not be resolved. And yet, someone was convinced that something had to be done immediately. That someone was Prince Carol. Seeking to consolidate his position against the various internal political tendencies – which, as we have noted, did not exclude the possibility of the nation renouncing the services of the Prussian prince – Carol I thought it appropriate to make a political gesture that caused a sensation both in the country and abroad.¹⁰⁵ On November 25/December 7, 1870, the prince addressed a letter to the sovereigns of Great Britain, Austria–Hungary, Italy, Prussia, and Russia (“la France

¹⁰¹ During the Strasbourg Colloquium, organised by the European Contemporary History Association, with the topic *Dimensions et résonance de l'année 1871*, the report *L'Europe orientale et balkanique* was supported by Dan Berindei, on behalf of the Romanian Association of Law and International Relations cited in *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 11, no. 2 (1972): 365.

¹⁰² *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Bordeaux, December 24, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 412. In early October, the Austrian consul and P. P. Carp had demanded explanations from Offenberg regarding the presence of Russian troops at Romanian borders. The Russian consul denied the rumours, of course. *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to Jules Favre, October 7, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 375.

¹⁰³ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to Jules Favre, October 7, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 375.

¹⁰⁴ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 407–409; *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 35 (unpaginated); (Mellinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Bordeaux, December 19, 1870 and January 8, 1871), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 16, cd. 1 and the following.

¹⁰⁵ Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 259.

exceptée”?)¹⁰⁶ in which he proposed that the future European Congress (the great powers had agreed to convene the London Conference) also deliberate on the situation of Romania. The letter was intended as a plea to revise the 1866 constitution in a conservative direction and secure a freer legal status for the Romanian state, which was a requirement that the prince made conditional on his keeping the throne. Shortly before, Prince Carol had expressed these intentions to the Austro-Hungarian consul Zulauf von Pettenberg, convinced that to remain at the helm of the state, he needed complete freedom of action, incompatible with the dependent status of the Principalities towards the suzerain power and with a Constitution that allowed the manifestation of all “anti-dynastic passions.”¹⁰⁷

On the domestic front, the attempt to bring the Romanian question before the deliberations of the upcoming diplomatic conference might not have sparked a particular reaction if the ruler had not sought the powers’ support for a constitutional revision. Such a possibility posed the danger of returning Romania’s relations with the high courts to a status inferior to that established by the *Addendum* of 1864. This is why, in its response to the Prince’s Message (December 11/23), the Assembly of Deputies assured Carol I of conditional loyalty, which fundamentally expressed an accusation regarding how the ruler sought to revise the Constitution (the Assembly was aware that the ruler had appealed to the support of the guaranteeing powers).¹⁰⁸ “In the *realm of the Constitution*, as specified in the response to the Message, the throne can always count on full devotion.” Furthermore, as decisive proof that the legislative body did not conceive of accepting the placing of the monarch’s will above that expressed by the fundamental law, the formation of a new government, led by Ion Ghica, was imposed. This government would proclaim itself as frankly constitutional and parliamentary.¹⁰⁹ In the name of the loyalism that animated the new ministers,¹¹⁰ assurances would be given, among other things, to Constantinople that Romania’s

¹⁰⁶ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 35 (unpaginated); (Mellinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, January 12, 1871), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 16, cd. 4 and the following.

¹⁰⁷ *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; (Mellinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Tours, November 8, 1870), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 381–383. Mellinet told Zulauf that Prince Carol would have shared that he “avait besoin d’une entière liberté d’action, inconciliable avec l’état de dépendance des Principautés vis-à-vis de la Puissance suzeraine et avec les passions antidynastiques. Il serait d’ailleurs, question d’un projet de coup d’état pour l’exécution duquel on compte sur l’appui de l’armée. En un mot [Mellinet concluded] l’idée d’un changement radical dans les institutions et la rupture des liens existant entre la Moldo-Valachie et la Porte préoccuperaient plus vivement que jamais le Prince Charles...” (Microfilme *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 382).

¹⁰⁸ Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 260.

¹⁰⁹ Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 260.

¹¹⁰ Regarding this aspect, Mellinet told his Minister of Foreign Affairs, on December 31, 1870, that “la véritable signification du cabinet actuel est celle d’une protestation contre la mise à exécution des projets d’indépendance et de royauté nourris par le Prince Charles et son entourage. M. Jean Ghica est connu comme un partisan de la politique occidentale et de la bonne entente avec la Porte ottomane.” *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 34; Microfilme, *Franța*, r. 15, cd. 423.

foreign policy aimed at respecting treaties and maintaining good relations with the suzerain power.¹¹¹ The attitude of the Romanian national representatives placed Carol I in perhaps the most challenging “exam” of his entire reign. In those months (December 1870–March 1871), Prince Carol had to understand that his continued reign required, above all, a more pronounced *Romanianisation and constitutionalisation* of his status as a crowned head. And what could be a more complicated and, therefore, more enlightening test for Carol I than to make a decision regarding the Strousberg affair after the parliamentary inquiry committee submitted a report that clearly identified the primary culprits of the financial disaster? The interests of the Romanian state and certain German political and business circles were at stake.¹¹² Prince Hohenzollern was constantly advised by his father and other German officials, led by Bismarck, to avoid offending the latter.¹¹³ All this pushed Carol I toward a position contrary to the interests of the country he governed, a reality evidenced by the widespread discontent of Romanian public opinion. Political calculations suggested that the ruler should play hard to avoid being dethroned, indirectly hinting at his willingness to abdicate. On 15/27 January, the well-known letter to Auerbach appeared in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, the content of which became known in the country at the beginning of February. The public noted downright insulting remarks about Romanian realities.¹¹⁴ The heated debates in the Assembly and the public’s outrage over the ruler’s conduct led to anti-Carlist sentiments among Romanians reaching their peak, threatening to provoke a divorce between the nation and the dynasty.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the situation for Prince Carol was very complicated. He would not receive

¹¹¹ Fond *Arhiva istorică, Turcia*, vol. 297, f. 74 (N. Callimachi-Catargi to C. Ghica, in Constantinople, December 20, 1870).

¹¹² The report of the parliamentary commission indicated that the primary culprit for the financial disaster was the former representative (Ambronn) of the Romanian state, based in Berlin; that he had been appointed by Carol himself, contrary to the practices provided by the Constitution and without the decree being countersigned by the relevant Romanian minister; that Ambronn issued bonds that did not comply with the terms of the concession act and without considering the guarantees stipulated in this act; and, more seriously, that he delivered to Strousberg a deposit of a significant amount derived from the sale of bonds, which he replaced with worthless mortgage securities. *Turquie-Bucharest*, vol. 35; (The Commission’s Report, attached to Mellinet’s letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, March 7, 1871), Microfilme *Franța*, r. 16, cd. 27–30.

¹¹³ Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 263 and the following.

¹¹⁴ Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 264.

¹¹⁵ On behalf of those advocating for the adherence to the Constitution, Ion Ghica would later declare to Carol I, “If the country were forced to choose between the prince and the Constitution, the Constitution would be preferred;” cited in Gheorghe Platon, *Istoria modernă a României* (București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1985), 216. Ion Ghica became Prime Minister on December 18/30, 1870, also holding the Minister of Internal Affairs position. The government also included N. Callimachi-Catargi as Minister of Foreign Affairs, D. A. Sturdza as Minister of Finance, Dimitrie Cariagdi as Minister of Justice, Nicolae Gr. Racoviță as Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, Eustațiu Pencovici as Minister of War, and Dimitrie Berindei as Minister of Public Works; Ion Mamina and Ion Bulei, *Guverne și guvernământ, 1866–1916* (București: Editura Silex, 1994), 31 and the following.

the encouraging signs he expected from the powers in response to his letter penned on November 25/December 7, 1870. Including the Romanian question on the agenda of the London Conference was impossible. Bismarck and Wilhelm I sought to convince Carol I not to persist in his requests before the conclusion of the Franco–German peace, with the Berlin authorities asserting that any Romanian complication was now doubly unwelcome. The prince could not rely on our moral support for even a moment.¹¹⁶ Such support was promised, it is true, by Tsar Alexander II,¹¹⁷ but this meant very little, given that in Constantinople, Ottoman officials made much of the severe insult that had been inflicted on the Sultan, to whom the vassal prince had not first addressed the letter with which he had honoured the other sovereigns.¹¹⁸ The Ottoman Porte threatened to withdraw its delegate from the conference if the Romanian ruler’s requests were brought up for discussion.¹¹⁹ The Ottoman position would find support from all the powers participating in the conference¹²⁰ in a context that also included suggestions offered to the Porte by figures like Ignatiev or Prokesch-Osten to revert to the separation of the Principalities and to send *commissioners* beyond the Danube.¹²¹ Upon learning of the powers’ attitude, the ruler consented to send a government envoy to the British capital with the mission of dispelling all suspicions about Romania. Ion Strat was instructed, among other things, to convince the English cabinet that in Bucharest, spirits were animated by the desire to respect “order.”¹²² Although they did not *explicitly* address the Romanian question, the deliberations of the London

¹¹⁶ *Memoriile regelui Carol I. De un martor ocular*, vol. 5 (București: Editura Tipografiei Ziarului Universul București), 133 and the following; Dimitrie Alexandru Sturdza, *Recueil de documents relatifs à la liberté de navigation du Danube* (Berlin: Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, 1904), 601.

¹¹⁷ Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice*, 263.

¹¹⁸ Regarding the impression made in Constantinople by Carol I’s letter to the five sovereigns, the Italian ambassador to the Porte reported to Visconti Venosta on December 25, 1870: “La démarche du Prince Charles de Roumanie a fait ici une bien mauvaise impression, d’autant plus qu’il s’est adressé à tous souverains représentés à la conférence, excepté au Sultan. Il a sondé ambassadeur d’Angleterre s’il voulait se charger de présenter lettre directement au Sultan en dehors du Grand Vizir, mais Elliot a refusé de s’y prêter. Grand Vizir a donné ordre à Musurus Pacha de se retirer de la Conférence si on voulait mettre sur le tapis la question de Roumanie.” *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:635

¹¹⁹ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:635; see also Fond *Arhiva istorică, Turcia*, vol. 297, f. 218 (C. Ghica to Callimachi-Catargi, Constantinople, December 19/31, 1870).

¹²⁰ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:637. (Ulisse Barbolani to V. Venosta, Constantinople, December 27, 1870); *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2nd ser. 1870–1896, vol. 2 *I gennaio-30 giugno 1871* (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1966), 10 and the following (V. Venosta to Cadorna, in London, January 4, 1871).

¹²¹ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 1:637.

¹²² The indications for Ion Strat were summarised as follows: “nous ne désirons en aucune façon glisser une question roumaine dans les délibérations de la conférence, tous nos intérêts nous détournent; notre pays est pleinement satisfaite de sa situation politique; il considère le traité de Paris avec les actes internationaux subséquentes comme la meilleure garantie de sa sécurité; enfin, tous ses vœux sont pour un strict *statu-quo* aussi bien au dehors qu’au dedans.” Fond *Arhiva istorică, Turcia*, vol. 127, f. 80 (Callimachi-Catargi to Ion Strat, in London, January 14/26, 1871).

Conference represented a critical moment for the fate of the collective guarantee and, therefore, for the evolution of relations between the Romanian state and the guaranteeing powers. The deliberations in London demonstrated that Romania was situated in a zone where disputes between the tendencies of Russia and the Habsburg Empire took precedence;¹²³ that Germany, despite displaying a lack of direct interest in Southeast Europe, tended to play the role of arbiter for affairs in this part of the continent;¹²⁴ that a re-evaluation of Romania's foreign policy was becoming necessary, in which rapprochement with Austria–Hungary and normalisation of relations with Russia were to be the *sine qua non* condition of new ties with Germany.¹²⁵ Besides these lessons, it was learned in Bucharest about extending the European Commission of the Danube's term for another 12 years.¹²⁶ Last but not least, about the fact that through the Treaty of March 1/13, 1871 (Article VIII), “*les hautes parties contractantes renouvellent et confirment les stipulations du traité du 30 mars, ainsi que ses annexes, qui ne sont pas annulées ou modifiées par le présent traité*” (my italics).¹²⁷

The new *collective deliberation* of the high courts concerning what remained valid of the order established by the March 30, 1856 treaty and the subsequent acts could not bode well for the tendencies of Romanian policy. After years of sustained efforts and attempts to convince the great powers to tie their obligations as guarantors to the recognition of international status for Romania corresponding to the imperatives of the moment and the future of our national cause, Bucharest received no other response than an *invitation*, explicitly made to avoid any further deviation from the guaranteed order.¹²⁸ In such a context, the incidents at the Slătineanu Hall (March 10/22, 1871) brought matters to the brink of the inevitability of a new collective deliberation by the powers. The demonstration of hostility toward Consul von Radowitz, toward Carol I's status as a German prince, and above all, toward Germany – a demonstration that also implied evident pro-French attitudes – made the ruler abdicate. On the morning of March 23, Carol convened the Regency from 1866 to hand over the responsibility of governing the state. The ruler's action could have triggered dangerous eventualities for

¹²³ Among other things, Austria–Hungary wanted to establish control over the Chilia arm (of the Danube); in response, Russia sided with the Ottoman Porte, securing a new diplomatic advantage in Constantinople; (*I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 2:30 and 44–45, Curtopassi to V. Venosta, Vienna, January 10 and 12, 1871). Russia then fostered the Porte's desire to request full sovereignty over the Straits, a principle opposed to that of closing them to the warships of the powers; *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 2:108 and the following (Cadorna to V. Venosta, London, January 30, 1871); *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 2:116 (V. Venosta to Cadorna, Florence, February 2, 1871).

¹²⁴ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 2:31 (Launay to V. Venosta, Berlin, January 10, 1871).

¹²⁵ Platon, *Istoria modernă a României*, 217.

¹²⁶ Sturdza, *Recueil de documents*, 100.

¹²⁷ Goriainow, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, 282.

¹²⁸ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 2:307 and the following (Fava to V. Venosta, Bucharest, March 24, 1871).

Romania and, at the same time, serious inconveniences for the guaranteeing courts. The great powers, after having just managed to embalm rather than reassure the guaranteed order through the recently concluded London Treaty, were not at all eager for a new diplomatic meeting on the Romanian question at that moment.¹²⁹ It would be enough to consider that the abdication of the foreign prince, had it been maintained, would have required a re-evaluation of all Romanian achievements concerning the guaranteed order. Aware of this fact, the two members of the Regency, L. Catargiu and N. Golescu (N. Haralambie was absent from the capital), succeeded in persuading Prince Carol to reconsider his abdication. It was clearly understood that the solution required forming a “government of order” to overcome the internal tension, which would demonstrate more firmness than previous cabinets. Prince Carol entrusted Lascăr Catargiu with the task of forming the new government, which Titu Maiorescu rightly claimed represented the strongest expression of the conservative idea within the limits of the 1866 Constitution.¹³⁰ It was a government that would prove capable of maintaining internal order, mitigating some aggravating elements of the financial dispute with Germany¹³¹ and writing a separate page in the evolution of relations between the Romanian state and the guaranteeing powers.

¹²⁹ *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 2:342 and the following (Launay to V. Venosta, Berlin, March 30, 1871); *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 2^a serie, 2:345 (Curtopassi to V. Venosta, Vienna, April 1, 1871).

¹³⁰ Platon, *Istoria modernă a României*, 216.

¹³¹ Platon, *Istoria modernă a României*, 216 and the following. In the government, L. Catargiu also held the Minister of Internal Affairs position, with other ministers including Gh. Costa-Foru at Foreign Affairs and *ad-interim* Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, Petre P. Mavrogheni at Finances, Nicolae Kretzulescu at Justice and *ad-interim* Minister of Public Works and Christian Tell at War; Mamina and Bulei, *Guverne și guvernământ*, 33–40 (for the acts of governing and ministerial reshuffle).