ION I.C. BRATIANU – POLITICIAN OF MUSCEL

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Abstract

Remarkable representative of the Romanian politics both during the World War I and between wars, Ion I.C. Brătianu was part of the National Liberal Party, being a constant supporter of the liberal ideas and also its leader. Also called « the Sphinx » by his contemporaries and by the European diplomacy, Ion I.C. Brătianu remained in Romanian history as a fervent fighter for sticking up the Romanians' interests, principles and rights.

***Key Words** : political career, National Liberal Party, foreign relations, war*

I.C. Brătianu was born on the 20th of August 1864 in village Florica (Stefanesti – nowadays), as the eldest son of the politician I.C. Brătianu. After having finished his studies at "Sf. Sava" College in Bucharest, he studied at the Roads and Bridges School in Paris. He became an engineer and got involved in building the Cernavoda bridge and Bacau-Piatra Neamt railways.

His brilliant political career started in 1895, firstly as a deputy, then as a Minister of Public Works, holding offices in all liberal government. In order to revive and radicalise the National Liberal Party, I.C. Brătianu succeeded in involving the "generous"ex-socialist young people into his party.

The congress of the National Liberal Party took place on the 24th of January 1909, when I.C. Brătianu was elected its president; this fact strenghtened the young liberal members'position.

As a Prime-Minister, he travelled to Wien and Berlin from August 21 to September 3, where he discussed about international state in general, and the state of the south-eastern Europe, in particular. During the meeting from the 15-16th of January 1910 with the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Affairs Minister, A.I. von Aehrenthal, Brătianu supported the interests of the Romanians from Transylvania

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and warned the Hungarian governmental authorities about the economical and political consequences against the Empire, in case of some actions taken against the Romanians. On the 11th of January 1911, I.C. Brătianu and his government resigned, motivating that their legislative activity was over and a re-organization of the party was requisite.

He assumed the Government administration again on the 17th of January 1914, and kept this position till 1919.

In his quality of country ruler, I.C. Brătianu had into the view the universal vote adoption and agrarian reform achievement. His domestic politics concerns shifted to the foreign ones as a result of the World War I ebuillition. In his politics of war, I.C. Brătianu was driven by the idea that the most propicious moment should be expected, so that our country's joining the war to lead to the total achievement of our national claims. He acted tactfully and secretively, avoided decisive engagements, kept the freedom of move, so that the Romanian diplomacy to be anytime ready to act for achiving the fundamental aim of the Romanians, namely, the state unity.

He concerned himself about the preparations of war and at first, he proposed neutrality as an alternative, acting perceptively to eliminate the averse elements. In this context, on the 23rd of June 1915, I.C. Brătianu repelled count Ottokar Czernin's proposition regarding Romania joining the war on Central Parties'side, in exchange for Bucovina restitution and some other concessions offered by the Hungarian government.

He carried on an intense diplomatic activity, taking actions for making some agreements with Italy and Russia; a separate alliance and a convention with Russia in order to set clear cooperation terms of the war weapons. I.C. Brătianu refused to quit to the neutrality till he would have got some guarantees with regard to the Romanian territorial objectives achievement; he refused to accept an agreement without political and military guarantees, considered as being

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indispensable. Finally, on the 17th of August 1916, I.C. Brătianu and the diplomatic representative of France, Great Britain and Italy signed military and political conventions in Bucharest, conventions that provisioned the terms of Romania joining the war. This fact was achieved on the 27th of August 1916, through the Declaration of war against Austro-Hungary.

After having been beaten for more times, under the circumstances of the king and the ministers'retire from Bucharest to Iasi, I.C. Brătianu together with Take Ionescu (tory-democrat) formed a national concetration government on the 24th of December 1916, having as the main objective of domestic politics the electoral and agrarian reform. These reforms purposes were the moral rising and the army incitement after the previuos defeats so that to determine the soldier continue the fight for the national ideal accomplishment. According to Ion I.C. Brătianu, the renewal of the Romanian army was achieved with great effort, human and material sacrifices, thus resuming the actions on the battlefield. The result of these preparations became visible through the important victories got in summer of 1917.

In the foreign affairs direction, Ion I.C. Brătianu took position to establish tight connections with Russia in order to secure the supply via the Russian harbours and the provision of amunition necessary to continue the fight; on the 10th of August 1917, he asked the diplomatic representatives of the Antanta to consolidate the Romanian-Russian front in Moldavia.

The idea of an agreement with regard to a separate peace with the Central Parties was unacceptable and the governement Brătianu- Take Ionescu resigned on the 8th of February; however, Brătianu suggested to the new government (Averescu) to protract the peace alliance subscription till some favourable provisions would be obtained.

I.I.C. Brătianu took back the government administration on the 12th of December 1918, and prepared the participation at the Peace Conference from Paris.

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The confederates hostility surprised him, who rightly considered Romania entitled to get what it had beed promised and to be treated as a full-entitled ally partner.

Nevertheless, on the 1st of February 1919, Brătianu, as the chief of the Romanian delegation at the Peace Conference proved his ability of good speaker, excellent diplomat and worthy politician and presented with arguments the reason of Romania taking part into war and its contribution to the victory against the Central Parties, the human and material efforts Romania made, the services Romania did for the Antanta's cause; he also emphasized the provisions of the treaties and conventions signed previous to Romania getting into war, pleaded warmly for the unification of the country and for legitimate international recognition of its political and territorial state. He combated the idea that the states taking part into the Peace Conference from Paris could be divided into more categories, including those state with limited interests. He pointed out that sometimes the interests of all statea exceeded what could be seen at a simple look of a map, and said that it was necessary to analyze and respect equally the interests of those states, the Great Powers/Parties taking into account the implication and the way each country had respected its obligations.

The Peace Conference had to admit by treaties what the Romanian had achieved both on the battlefield by military actions, and by proclaiming the historical decisions of the Romanians made by its representatives during the year 1918. The territorial issue reglementation was supported by the Romanian Prime Minister through prompt speeches, through logical argumentation which sometimes succeeded in impressing the auditorium, through a presentation of the chronological events and documents signed by Romania to go to war. He was determined to take back "each square centimeter" of the Romanain territory, to avoid imposing some conditions which were not in agreement with the Romanian reality and interests and to take advantage of any event in order to support and make the Romanians' cause known.

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As for the supporting the independent Romania's right to take back the lost territories, I.I.C. Brătianu presented a series of arguments based on statistical, etno-lingvistical, economico-geographical and historical data, all having into view the demonstration of the Romanians' autochtony all over the country territory, the cultural, material and spiritual unity of the Romanians, as well as their fight for keeping the national identity and for achieving their unification in a single state. He also presented into the conference some details regarding the unification decisions of the Romanians's national meetings, he pleaded for the state unity recognition of Romania based on the ethnic principle, on a well-delimited territory, where the Romanians could act to assure a unitary economical development.

Proving himself to be an agile politician and a wise diplomat, he continued his activity contributing – after the WWI – to some reforms, laws and measures promotion and adopting, meant to consolidate the Romanian unitary national state. Amongst these, the agrarian reform, the Constitution of 1923, and the Administration Law are worth mentioning. He contributed to the "dynastic crisis" solutioning and to Mihai's acceed to the Romania's throne. His political and diplomatic actions resulted into positive results the Romanians had been expecting, had echoes among the European diplomacy and he was considered among the great diplomats and politicians of the time.

In his political lectures provided in Romania and abroad, he proved to be tactful, clever, intelligent, discerning, convincing and eager to convince the public that his allegations were justified. He did not hesitate to oppose those ideas and principles that proved to be against the national interests, confirming every time his intransigence, correctness and straight attitude he possessed. Brătianu kept his image and correct political attitude constant, without being influenced by the contemporary events and taking into account only the possibilities that could promote the political projects and plans that would bring benefits to the Romanian

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people or wouldn not affect their national interests on the national and international level.

He suddenly died on the 24th of November 1927, his death representing a serious problem for the National Liberal Party and the end of a rich political career of this remarkable man of state. Gheorghe Nichifor mentioned that „Ion I.C. Brătianu can be considered without any sign of hesitation,as the most important politician and man of state from the time of the national unification fights. A leader of spirits and ideals, indulgent to details but uncompromising his principles, „Ion I.C. Brătianu was deeply fond of the high doctrine principles of the Romanian liberalism for his entire life. Wise and penetrating party leader, clever chief of government and matchless diplomat, he kept the forefront of the modern Romanian history at the beginning of the last century".

Also called « the Sphinx » by his contemporaries and by the European diplomacy, Ion I.C. Brătianu remained in Romanian history as a fervent fighter for sticking up the Romanians' interests, principles and rights.

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