

REMNANTS OF AN OLD ORDER? THE ROMANIAN MONARCHY BETWEEN NATIONALISATION AND TRANSNATIONALITY AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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The radicalized war-time nationalisms of the First World War had put pressure on Europe's internationally connected ruling dynasties and led to a symbolic nationalisation of the Romanian monarchy. However, this article argues that the Romanian dynasty preserved much of its transnationality and the foreign origins of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie continued to play a significant role in domestic and foreign affairs after the end of war. To show this, the article analyses the development of royal family relations and self-conceptions after the armistice and examines how the transnational aspects of the monarchy influenced Romania's *sortie de guerre* period abroad and at home, contributing to a better understanding of monarchic transnationality after the First World War.

Keywords: Romania, Interwar Period, Monarchy, Transnationality, King Ferdinand of Romania, Queen Marie of Romania.

When King Ferdinand of Romania and his wife Queen Marie returned to Bucharest on 1 December 1918 after two years of exile in Iași, their triumphant parade was welcomed by an enthusiastic crowd. While the First World War had brought about the destruction of the long-reigning monarchies of Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany and the Ottoman Empire, the Romanian king exited the war as the acclaimed leader of a victorious nation. As the Romanian Crown Prince Carol noted in his diary in late October: “On the one side they destroy their sovereigns, on the other they elevate them”¹. The victory of the Entente over the Central Powers had brought the dream of unifying all historic Romanian territories in one state within reach and gave rise to an enormous popularity of the monarchy in the country. However, for the longest period during the war, Romanian prospects had been all but promising. After the country had entered the conflict in August 1916, German and Austrian troops conquered Bucharest four months later and held vast parts of the country under occupation until the end of the war. On 7 May 1918, Romania had to acknowledge the defeat by accepting the peace treaty of Bucharest and only re-entered the war hours before the general armistice with Germany on

¹ Carol of Romania, *Între datorie și pasiune: însemnări zilnice*, vol. 1: 1904–1939, Bucharest, 1995, p. 89.

11 November 1918. The fighting continued for Romania in 1919, when the Romanian army invaded Hungary to secure control over the Transylvanian territories and contribute to the overthrow of the Bolshevik regime in Hungary under Béla Kun². Regardless of the crushing defeat as well as months of occupation and exploitation by the enemy, the Romanian monarchy overcame this severe crisis and held out to reap the benefits of the allied triumph.

An essential factor for the resilience of those European monarchies, which managed to survive the First World War, was the consistent nationalisation of their language of legitimacy – the legitimating narrative around the monarchy and its symbolic performance in public³. During the war, national categories had become more strictly defined and the loyalty of immigrants and so-called “enemy aliens” was questioned in all warring societies⁴. This development put particular pressure on Europe’s internationally connected ruling dynasties and forced them to re-define their transnational appearance along national frameworks in which they acted as moral and symbolic leaders of their countries’ war efforts. Correspondingly, the Romanian propaganda managed to create a convincing narrative around the nationalisation of the German-born King Ferdinand and the Hohenzollern dynasty, which reigned in the country since Ferdinand’s uncle, Prince Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, had been elected Prince of Romania in 1866. However, as this article argues, the Romanian dynasty preserved much of its transnationality and the foreign origins of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie continued to play a significant role in domestic and foreign affairs after the end of the First World War. To show this, the article will analyse the development of royal family relations and self-conceptions after the armistice and examine how the transnational aspects of the monarchy influenced Romania’s *sortie de guerre* period abroad and at home.

FRAGILE NATIONALISATION

The outbreak of the First World War in the summer of 1914 and the following internal struggles about the choice of side had provided a vital test to the loyalty and legitimacy of the young Hohenzollern dynasty in Romania. Because of the long-lasting conflict with the Austrian-Hungarian government about the

² See for example: F. Țurcanu, “Roumanie, 1917–1920: Les ambiguïtés d’une sortie de guerre”, in S. Audoin-Rouzeau and C. Prochasson (eds), *Sortir de la Grande Guerre. Le monde et l’après-1918*, Paris, 2008, p. 237–256.

³ J. Leonhard, “Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe’s First World War – A Commentary from a Comparative Perspective”, in J. Böhler, W. Borodziej and J. v. Puttkamer (eds), *Legacies of violence. Eastern Europe’s First World War*, Munich, 2014, p. 319–326, here p. 325.

⁴ J. Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora: Geschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs*, Munich, 2014, p. 142; E. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The campaign against enemy aliens during World War I*, Cambridge [Mass.], 2003; P. Panayi, *Enemy in our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War*, London, 2014.

treatment of the ethnically Romanian population of Hungarian Transylvania, the Romanian public opinion had quickly come to sympathise with the Entente Powers. The hopes were high that a defeat of the Habsburg Empire would enable an annexation of these territories. On the other side, King Carol I and his successor King Ferdinand felt closely attached to Germany, their country of birth, which was allied with Austria-Hungary. When Ferdinand took over the throne, after his uncle's death in October 1914, he saw himself confronted with an aggressive campaign by pro-Entente interventionists, which accused the sovereign of blocking Romania's path to national unification because of his personal sympathies with the Central Powers⁵. When Ferdinand decided to yield to public pressure and joined the Entente against the Central Powers after almost two years of neutrality, he laid the foundation of the powerful narrative around the king's virtuous loyalty to Romanian national ideals and the thorough nationalisation of the foreign dynasty. "So far we knew a King of the Romanians; now we have a Romanian king", became a popular expression after Romania joined the war and illustrates the effect of the king's decision on the national standing of the dynasty⁶. In the general enthusiasm around the victorious conclusion of the war, the newspaper *Universul* even called Ferdinand "the greatest of all Romanians"⁷.

However, neither Ferdinand's decision for war against his country of birth, nor the outstanding role played by him and his consort Queen Marie in elevating the morals of the population during the war, were able to definitively end the discussions about the foreign origins of the sovereigns among the Romanian public. Although direct attacks on the royal house by the press had significantly decreased after 1916, in the post-war period, anti-monarchical groups still tried to utilise the monarchy's German background to mobilise supporters for republican ideas. In their brochures, newspapers and speeches the Romanian socialists and sympathisers of the Russian revolution made sure always to call the king "Ferdinand of Hohenzollern" to highlight the foreignness of the dynasty. When in December 1918 strikes and social riots spread in Romania because of food shortages and the influence of Bolshevik propaganda, the militant newspaper *Trăiască Socialismul*, therefore, drew a connection to the deposition of the Hohenzollerns in Germany: "The only Hohenzollern, the most incompetent, the most corrupt, still sprawls and sits on the throne and continues to rule the country with arrogance. But he will not escape"⁸. Notwithstanding the considerable unrest that socialist ideas caused after the end of the war, republican groups found little support in the Romanian society. Most politicians considered the monarchy a

⁵ See for example: N. Filipescu, *Însemnări, 1914–1916*, Bucharest, 2017, p. 250.

⁶ Report by Charles de Saint-Aulaire to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, 2 September 1916, Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères Français, La Courneuve (AMAEF), Série Guerre, Roumanie, 342 (1916).

⁷ *Universul*, 2 December 1918.

⁸ F. Tănăsescu (ed), *Ideologie și structuri comuniste în România*, vol. II: 1918–1919, Bucharest, 1997, p. 151, 227, 284.

necessary and advantageous institution for their country⁹. Nevertheless, revolutionary groups considered the nationalisation of the dynasty a fragile accord and still viewed the German origins of the king as a promising angle to undermine the legitimacy of the monarchy.

On several occasions in the post-war period the national descent of the Romanian king re-surfaced as a topic in public discussion, which confirms the precarious character of the royal house's national appearance in the years after the war. On Christmas 1922, for example, King Ferdinand attended the mass in the Catholic cathedral of Bucharest. Because of a rotational system, archbishop Raymond Netzhammer preached on this day in the German language. This was disapprovingly observed by the Romanian press and the prominent historian and nationalist politician Nicolae Iorga even officially interpellated the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Constantin Banu, on the matter in the chamber of deputies. In consequence, the minister and also the Vatican asked Netzhammer for an explanation and demanded the archbishop to guarantee that all future services in presence of the Romanian king would be held in Romanian¹⁰. The question of which language the royal family should use, had much symbolic importance. In the Crown Council of 1914, where King Carol had failed to convince the Romanian political leaders to follow his will and join the Central Powers in war, the language of conversation had been French, because the king had not felt comfortable enough discussing this extremely important decision in Romanian. The liberal statesman Ion G. Duca later ironically described this in his memoirs as "the old Romania [...] in its whole splendour"¹¹. As this comment implied, this would not have been possible anymore in the new Romania after the First World War. Although, as King Carol before them, neither King Ferdinand nor Queen Marie were Romanian native speakers, it was very important for the legitimacy of the dynasty that they spoke Romanian in public. While both had mastered Romanian to a fluent level, the foreign language sometimes still confronted them with occasional problems. In this context, it is not surprising that the royal private library acquired a new German-Romanian dictionary in 1919¹². Another public outcry was caused by the Romanian census of 1927, when King Ferdinand stated in his form that his nationality was "German". The king's self-categorisation as German contradicted the nationalised language of legitimacy that had been built around him during the First World War and in the years after. As the king only died several days after the publication of his census form, the damage of this incautious statement was limited. But this episode and the events of Christmas 1922 show how carefully the Romanian royal house had to handle its transnational heritage after the nationalisation in the First World War and how a minor incident could threaten this new legitimacy of the Romanian monarchy.

⁹ I. Scurtu, *Regele Ferdinand: (1914–1927): activitatea politica*, Bucharest, 1993, p. 69.

¹⁰ R. Netzhammer, *Bischof in Rumänien: Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Staat und Vatikan*. vol. 2, Munich, 1996, p. 1208–1218.

¹¹ I.G. Duca, *Amintiri Politice*, vol. 1, Munich, 1981, p. 52–53.

¹² Ș. Ciubotaru, *Viața cotidiană la curtea regală a României: (1914–1947)*, Bucharest, 2011, p. 146.

In some cases, however, the German background of the dynasty could also be an advantage for the legitimacy of the monarchy in “Greater Romania”. With the peace treaties of Paris, which had sanctioned the annexation of Bessarabia, the Bukovina, Transylvania and parts of the Banat, the Romanian nation state not only doubled the size of its territory, but also acquired significant minority populations. The German populations of Transylvania and the Banat formed, after the Hungarians, the second largest minority of the kingdom. King Ferdinand showed a benevolent attitude towards the German minority. At an audience with a Saxon delegation in January 1919 King Ferdinand promised them free practice of their language and culture and he also readily talked in his mother tongue, when he visited German villages in the Western parts of the country. Ferdinand’s self-denomination as a German in the census of 1927 was commented on positively by the German minority newspapers of Romania and, in reaction to his death in July, the *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tagblatt* wrote: “We do not dread to confess that our devotion to the dynastic idea was significantly eased by the fact that the offspring of a German princely house wore the crown of Romania”¹³. In this context, Ferdinand’s transnational character promoted the cohesion of the ethnically diverse nation-state. As Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Christophe Prochasson already subsumed in their 2008 volume on the *sortie de guerre* in Europe, the monarchy gave an important sense of identity in a society struggling with considerable political, social and ethnic fragmentation as a result of the war¹⁴.

TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES: RECONCILIATION AND CONTINUITY

The transnationality of the Romanian monarchy was not only defined by the foreign origin of the dynasty, but also by the family network that connected the Romanian king and queen to many other royal and princely families all over the European continent. However, the personal ties of this “royal international” were severely damaged by the outbreak of the First World War¹⁵. While the war made it increasingly difficult to stay in contact with family members in neutral or allied

¹³ *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tagblatt*, 20 July 1927; M. Kroner, “Loyalitätsfaktor ‘deutsche Dynastie’?: Zur Akzeptanz des rumänischen Staates durch die deutsche Minderheit”, in E. Binder-Iijima, H.-D. Löwe and G. Volkmer (eds), *Die Hohenzollern in Rumänien 1866–1947. Eine monarchische Herrschaftsordnung im Europäischen Kontext*, Köln – Weimar – Vienna, 2010, p. 67–88, at 69–73; K.M. Reinerth, *Zur politischen Entwicklung der Deutschen in Rumänien, 1918–1928: Aus einer siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Sicht*, Thaur, 1993, p. 260.

¹⁴ S. Audoin-Rouzeau and C. Prochasson, “Sortir de la guerre ou sortir de l’occupation”, in S. Audoin-Rouzeau and C. Prochasson (eds), *Sortir de la Grande Guerre. Le monde et l’après-1918*, Paris, 2008, p. 209–212, at p. 211.

¹⁵ For the development of the ‘royal international’ in the nineteenth century see: J. Paulmann, “Searching for a ‘Royal International’: The Mechanics of Monarchical Relations in Nineteenth-Century Europe”, in M. H. Geyer and J. Paulmann (eds), *The mechanics of internationalism. Culture, society, and politics from the 1840s to the First World*, Oxford, 2008, p. 145–176.

states, because of blocked travel routes and interrupted mail services, many close relatives even found themselves on opposing sides. Therefore, the war often turned from a political conflict into a personal fight that drove a wedge between family members. King Ferdinand's decision to follow the will of his people and join the Entente Powers, had led to a painful falling-out with his family in Germany. His older brother Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, for example, had been very worried that his brother's "treason" would rub off on his house and had been eager to demonstrate the termination of all his ties with the Romanian royal family to the German public. For this reason, in late 1916, he had visited the German troops at the Romanian front and had proclaimed in a public speech that the German forces had righteously come to punish his brother for the treason against "his house, his family and his country"¹⁶. The combination of personal grievance and public pressure deeply alienated the brothers during the war and, even after the fighting had come to an end, the gulf between the two turned out to be hard to bridge. It was only the common loss of their youngest brother Prince Karl Anton of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who unexpectedly died in February 1919, which at last motivated King Ferdinand and Duke Wilhelm to resume their correspondence¹⁷.

While the Romanian king honestly tried to reconnect with his older brother from his very first letter, the German aristocrat, at first, responded in a rather reserved tone. However, Duke Wilhelm was helped over his grudge against Ferdinand by financial matters which necessitated the intervention of his internationally respected brother. In 1919, the government of the newly founded Czechoslovak Republic started to pursue agrarian reforms, which included extensive expropriations of large estates owned by Austrian and German aristocrats¹⁸. This also threatened the family estates of the house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen in Bohemia. Because of the revolution in Germany, the powerful pre-war network of the German aristocracy had lost much of its political influence, while the Romanian king had even increased his international political standing during the war. The negotiations about the conclusion of a "little entente" between Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania also increased the interest of the Czechoslovak Republic in staying on good terms with the Romanian royal house¹⁹. Therefore, Duke Wilhelm asked his brother to intervene with the Czechoslovak government on his behalf. Hence, the king mobilised the resources of the Romanian diplomatic service to save the Bohemian estates of the Hohenzollern family and personally discussed the matter with the

¹⁶ Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen to Alexandru Beldiman, Sigmaringen, 28 December 1916, Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen (StAS), FAS HS 1–80 R 53 T 9 Nr. 256,21; Y. Blondel, *Journal de guerre, 1916–1917: Front sud de la Roumanie*, Paris, 2002, S. 248.

¹⁷ King Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Bucharest, 6 March 1919, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R 53 Nr. 173 (1919).

¹⁸ L. Homolac and K. Tomsik, "Historical development of land ownership in the Czech Republic since the foundation of the Czechoslovakia until present", *Agric. Econ. – Czech* 62, 2016, p. 528–536, p. 529.

¹⁹ M. Ádám, *The Little Entente and Europe (1920 - 1929)*, Budapest, 1993, p. 47–110.

Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš, when the latter visited Romania in 1920. The negotiations dragged on for five more years until 1925, when Romanian and Czech representatives finally agreed on a compromise²⁰. In 1923, Duke Wilhelm again called on his brother to protect the properties of the princely house, after French troops had occupied the Rhineland and the bridgehead of Offenburg close to the Hohenzollern lands in Southern Germany in reaction to delays in reparation payments. In this context he wrote to King Ferdinand:

“As we are disarmed and defenceless, we can only offer passive resistance and I hope our firm and resisting attitude will over time earn us sympathies and credit abroad. However, the threat to my property and fortune also threatens your and your sons’ interests as the next agnates of my house. So, I would like to ask you for your protection from all dangers that may threaten us [...]. The French objectives are too obvious to fool us with lame excuses. Therefore, it is quite self-evident that you could use your rights as an agnate in some form – maybe by sending a gentleman from your embassy in Berlin here, in the case of a continued French advance, to assert the full and effective observation of your rights”²¹.

In his letter, the duke dealt with the French occupation on private but also on a general political level, trying to obtain the protection of his brother against possible French requisitions and also improve the international standing of post-war Germany by depicting France’s ruthless course of action to the Romanian king. Duke Wilhelm had recognised his loss of national and international influence under the new German republic and, therefore, realised that his brother’s influence was a valuable resource which he could not afford to give up. These pragmatic interests further eased the way to a rapprochement.

However, even under these circumstances, there were limits to the reconciliation and the experiences of the war remained a factor in the relationship. The question of whether King Ferdinand’s decision to declare war against the Central Powers had been the dutiful choice of a constitutional king or a treacherous plot of a weak character was never settled and omitted as well as possible. A similar strategy can be observed in the correspondence of Queen Marie with her mother, the Duchess dowager Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Duchess Maria, who was a daughter of the Russian Emperor Alexander II, had spent the war in Germany and Switzerland. After Romania joined the war in 1916, she attacked her daughter for her country’s decision in a private letter, which ended with the words:

²⁰ King Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Sinaia, 17 November 1920, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R 53 Nr. 184 (1920); King Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Bucharest, 8 December 1925, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R 53 Nr. 238 (1925).

²¹ Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen to King Ferdinand of Romania, Sigmaringen, 9 February 1923, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R 53 Nr. 244 (31 Dec. 1921–17 Jul. 1923).

“Woe betide you who turn against your fatherland!”²² While Queen Marie always identified herself as an English princess, her father, Prince Alfred, had ascended to the throne of the German dukedom of Coburg in 1893. The queen’s mother fully embraced her new position as a German duchess and decidedly supported the German war efforts. This explains the alienation from her daughter, whom German war propaganda depicted as the main culprit for the Romanian alliance with the Entente. According to the narrative promoted in the German press, the English-born queen had persuaded her weak husband to betray his country of birth and turn against the Central Powers in 1916²³. Nevertheless, throughout the war, Queen Marie continued writing to her mother, even though her mother only replied once – in reaction to the death of Marie’s youngest son Prince Mircea. When the relationship was revived by both sides in 1919, the war was a painful topic that both women did not feel comfortable talking about. As Queen Marie explained to her mother there was “so much [...] left unsaid that ought still to have been said and that I longed to say, but could not for fear of upsetting you and myself also, more than we could stand it either of us”²⁴. Notwithstanding the unexpressed disagreements, the Romanian queen was able to reconstruct parts of her German family network, which had been destroyed by the war. However, not all German relatives were willing to forgive Queen Marie for the role which the German press accused her of playing in turning King Ferdinand against the Central Powers. Princess Louise of Thurn and Taxis, an aunt of King Ferdinand, who had been an intimate of the Romanian royal couple before the war, for example, specifically wrote to the queen in 1920 to make clear that she still blamed her for the role she had played in the war and had no interest in reinstating contact²⁵. As we have seen, the reconstruction of transnational family relations proved to be a delicate matter, which needed much endurance and tact and was not always bound to succeed.

In addition to the personal obstacles which had to be overcome, personal meetings between the German and Romanian relatives were also hard to realise. Following the hostilities between Romania and Germany during the war, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie could not simply visit German territory and also hesitated to invite German relatives to Romania. In 1921, King Ferdinand planned to travel to a spa resort in Kreuznach, but was forced to acknowledge that this was not possible, because of the “not yet bridged gulf that was the natural consequence

²² Duchess Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to Queen Marie of Romania, 4 November 1916, in: Marie of Romania, *Queen Marie of Romania: Letters to Her Mother*, vol. II 1907–1920, Bucharest, 2016, p. 305; King Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Bucharest, 15 September 1919, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R 53 Nr.173 (1919).

²³ See for example: F.W. Frerk, *Der Siegeszug durch Rumänien*, Siegen – Leipzig, 1917, p. 14.

²⁴ Queen Marie of Romania to Duchess Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Venice, 15 November 1919, in: Marie of Romania, *Letters to Her Mother*, p. 333.

²⁵ King Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Sinaia, 17 November 1920, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R 53 Nr. 184 (1920).

of the events of the last years”²⁶. The Romanian king feared that a journey to Germany would leave a negative impression on the Romanian public and possibly undermine the nationalisation and legitimacy of his dynasty. In addition to this, he also worried about the effects of a royal journey to Germany on international affairs, regarding the symbolic importance of being the first visit of a head of state to a losing party of the war²⁷. Furthermore, the reactions of the German public to a visit of a First-World-War enemy were expected to be rather hostile. The negative emotions in inter-war Germany against the Romanian king were exemplarily illustrated by the scandal around the publication of an intercepted private letter by Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen to his brother in Bucharest in June 1923. The communist newspaper *Die Rote Fahne* attacked the German aristocrat, on the one hand, for the anti-democratic tone of the letter and, on the other hand, accused him of high-treason for being in contact with a wartime enemy²⁸. The concerns about a public outburst against a royal visitor were even bigger regarding a possible stay of Queen Marie in Germany. When the queen’s mother died in Zurich in October 1920, the Romanian queen travelled to Switzerland and planned to accompany her sisters to Coburg for her mother’s funeral. However, the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs did not approve her entry into German territory on time. The Queen missed the burial and returned to Romania. A year later, she again approached the German ambassador to Romania, Hans Freytag, with plans to join her sisters in Coburg for the anniversary of her mother’s death. Freytag’s reaction was rather reluctant. In his report to Berlin he explained:

“As far as I can grasp the situation in Germany, especially considering that this would be the first visit of a sovereign of a formerly hostile country, the Queen’s reputation as a warmonger and the current mood in Bavaria, the journey appears not unproblematic to me and I would suggest to advise a postponement or at least communicate our concerns regarding the negative effects that an unforeseen incident or attacks by the press could have on our mutual relations”²⁹.

Acting on Freytag’s suggestions, the German government promised to establish strict security measures but warned the Romanian authorities that they could not guarantee for a stay without unpleasant incidences or reactions by the press. Because of these obstacles, Queen Marie again had to cancel her visit to Germany. While the queen finally got to Coburg more than ten years later for the funeral of her sister, the

²⁶ King Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Bucharest, 1 June 1921, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R53 Nr. 197 (1921).

²⁷ F.U. Mäuer, *Zu Gast in Deutschland. Staatsbesuche in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich*, Hamburg, 2016, p. 11.

²⁸ *Die Rote Fahne*, 29 June and 30 June 1923.

²⁹ Hans Freytag to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, 14 October 1921, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin (PAAA), R 73661.

Russian Grand Duchess Victoria, King Ferdinand never returned to his country of birth, yielding to the pressure of national and diplomatic ideas, which would have projected an undesired symbolic importance to such a visit³⁰.

For these reasons, personal meetings between the Romanian royal family and their German relatives could only take place in neutral Switzerland. Before her mother died in 1920, Queen Marie had managed to briefly meet her in Zurich in fall 1919. King Ferdinand agreed with his brother, Duke Wilhelm, to get together on the Weinburg, a small family property close to St. Gallen. The two brothers met there for the first time in summer 1921 and, in the following years, organised annual family reunions on the small castle. As Ferdinand wrote to Wilhelm, the personal meetings proved to him “that the events of the last years could not change the heartiness and intimacy of [their] personal relationship”³¹. The remoteness of the property and the neutral status of Switzerland, which also harboured numerous exiled monarchs in the inter-war period, allowed the Romanian royal family to avoid major attention for their family reunions and cleared these reconciling private meetings of the symbolic message that would have been attributed to them anywhere else. This shows the importance of personal meetings for rebuilding trust in damaged family networks, but also illustrates the delicacy of these transnational reconciliations for a nationalised monarchy.

Family relationships with relatives in states that had been neutral or allied to Romania during the First World War were not charged with the same political or symbolic importance and not strained by similar frictions. Nevertheless, the experiences and results of the war also had their influence on the ties between the British and the Romanian royal family. The Romanian royal couple’s visit to Great Britain in 1924 and their meeting with King George V and his wife Queen Mary was internationally welcomed as a reunion of close relatives and allies³². While before the war the correspondence between Queen Marie of Romania and her cousin, King George, had been dominated by personal matters, the war politicised the relationship between the two. After Romania had joined the Entente powers, Queen Marie regularly wrote to the British king to demand more support for Romanian war efforts from their allies. When the country dropped out of the war in May 1918 and thereby violated the agreements with the Entente, Queen Marie tried to use her connections to the British monarch to ensure the allied powers’ adherence to Romanian territorial claims. The question if the promises made to Romania by the Entente Powers were still valid, although the country had concluded a separate peace with Germany, also became an important issue at the Paris Peace Conference. In this difficult diplomatic situation, the Romanian leadership had high

³⁰ Hans Freytag to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, 20 October 1921 and 23 October 1921, *ibid.*; H. Pakula, *The Last Romantic: A Biography of Queen Marie of Roumania*, London, 1985, p. 405–406.

³¹ King Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Bucharest, 1 June 1921 and Weinburg, 15 September 1921, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R53 Nr. 197 (1921).

³² *The London Times*, 13 May 1924.

hopes that Queen Marie could influence King George to support the Romanian case and pushed her to send several letters to London. Although the British king was very sympathetic regarding the circumstances in Romania and the interests of his cousin, his responses were mainly written by the British Foreign Office, which determined the lines in which the constitutional monarch could answer to the Romanian queen in political matters³³. Marie's transnational network certainly helped in her efforts to put Romania back on the map of international diplomacy and to get Romania's arguments heard in London, however, the direct influence of her cousin was very limited and subordinated to the views of the British government.

Besides the question of Romania's territorial claims, Queen Marie also called on King George in the matter of the treatment of the Romanov family. As already mentioned, Marie's sister Victoria was married to the Russian Grand Duke Kirill and the Russian Tsar Nicholas II was her first cousin. Therefore, the queen had very close ties to the Russian imperial house and was very concerned about the security and standing of the Romanovs after the Russian Revolution in 1917. However, in London her pleadings for the Russian relatives met with a reluctant attitude by King George. The British king, who had already refused to support any British plans to offer asylum to the deposed tsar and his family, was constitutionally restricted in his actions but also feared the public reaction to a Romanov exile in Britain. The message about the murder of the tsar and his family by revolutionary troops in July 1918 hit both of them very hard, but did not change King George's reserved attitude towards the rest of the Romanovs. Queen Marie, in contrast, initiated a trip of a Romanian ship to the Crimea in November 1918 to evacuate members of the imperial dynasty, who had been trapped there by the revolution. In addition to this, she invited her cousin, the Russian Grand Duchess Maria to stay with the Romanian royal family in the Palace of Cotroceni and helped her evacuating her parents-in-law and her son from revolutionary Russia³⁴.

As we have seen, even after the end of the First World War, transnational family relationships remained very important for the Romanian royal couple, regardless of the nationalisation process during the war. In spite of the disagreements and alienations, which the war had caused between close relatives on the opposing sides, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie were keen to reconcile with their family in Germany. The loss of political influence and common financial interests in a republicanising world stimulated the rapprochement. The relationships with relatives in allied countries had been politicised by the war, but monarchical solidarity and the support of family members in the difficult political situation of a post-revolutionary Europe also strongly influenced the attitude of the Romanian royal house.

³³ Queen Marie of Romania to King George of Great Britain and Ireland, Bucharest, 11 January 1919, The National Archives, Kew (TNA), FO 371/3568/392 (1919); H. Pakula, *The Last Romantic*, p. 127.

³⁴ Marie of Romania, *Jurnal de Război: 1918*, Bucharest, 2016, p. 231, 405; K. Rose, *King George V*, London, 1984, p. 215; H. Pakula, *The Last Romantic*, p. 281; M. Pavlovna, *A Princess in Exile*, New York, 1932.

TRANSNATIONAL SELF-CONCEPTIONS: DYNASTY AND CULTURE

A monarchic sense of solidarity and dynastic thinking were important factors for the self-conception of the Romanian monarchs. In fact, the Russians were not the only exiled relatives Queen Marie tried to support in the immediate post-war period. Another of the queen's sisters, Princess Beatrice, who had married the Spanish Infante Alfonso in 1909, was unofficially banished from Spain by King Alfonso XIII after internal quarrels at the Spanish court. With no solution to the conflict in sight, Queen Marie tried to convince her sister to settle down in Romania with her husband. In her sister and the Spanish prince, the Romanian queen saw two valuable assets, who could support the Romanian royal family in their duties. In a letter to her mother, she wrote about the two: "There is a mighty lot to work here and both are young and capable, I would love to have them here, they would become a great help to me"³⁵. While royal dynasties in the older European monarchies, such as Great Britain, had over generations produced a broad personnel of family members besides the royal couple, this had not yet been the case for Romania. Given that, King Carol I died without surviving children and King Ferdinand's brothers had remained in Germany, the Romanian dynasty only consisted of the king, the queen and their children. During the First World War, the Romanian royal family had recognised the importance of royal accessibility for the legitimacy of the monarchy, but also discovered their personal limitations as representative duties and requests for audiences continued to increase in times of peace. Queen Marie considered the mass of royal duties an increasing liability, which explains her excitement at the thought of her sister moving to Romania³⁶. In addition to a distribution of representative actions, in the modern era, second-rank family members could also contribute to the stability of a monarchy. While in pre-modern monarchies, with unclear rules of succession, a surplus of royals could lead to bloody struggles for power, the consolidation and constitutionalisation of monarchic succession and power structures pacified most of these internal rivalries in modern monarchies. Therefore, spare royal family members often acted as trusted advisors and important supporters to the rulers. Because of their standing, they could also fill important military positions, ran their own social foundations or were involved in the leading circles of society, where they represented the interests of the dynasty and strengthened the links between the monarchy and the national elites. The Romanian dynasty lacked these secondary entanglements in the Romanian society and also was constitutionally prohibited to intermarry with the Romanian aristocracy to achieve this³⁷. Therefore, the import of royal relatives

³⁵ Queen Marie of Romania to Duchess Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Cotroceni, 22 June 1919, in: Marie of Romania, *Letters to her mother*, p. 328–330.

³⁶ Marie of Romania, *Jurnal*, p. 409.

³⁷ J. Duindam, *Dynasties. A Global History of Power, 1300–1800*, Cambridge 2016, p. 150–155; C. R. Zach, "Rumänische Monarchie und politische Elite: Anpassungs- und Kooperationsstrategien der Dynastie in Krisenzeiten", in E. Binder-Iijima, H.-D. Löwe and G. Volkmer (eds), *Die Hohenzollern in Rumänien 1866–1947. Eine monarchische Herrschaftsordnung im Europäischen Kontext*, 2010, Köln – Weimar – Vienna, p. 41–54.

from abroad seemed very appealing to the Romanian queen. Even though these plans failed and Princess Beatrice settled in London until she was finally allowed to return to Spain, Marie's proposal illustrates the still strong dynastic thinking of the Romanian queen.

The sense of belonging to a transnational dynasty and a sort of "royal international" was taught to European princes and princesses from a very young age on and was, therefore, deeply rooted in their self-understanding³⁸. This explains, why the post-war reconciliations and the support of relatives abroad was so important to the Romanian royal couple. As Queen Marie expressed it in 1920, the Romanian royalty belonged to a "cast that seems to be dying out" and which had to stick together to prevail in a changing world.³⁹ This class consciousness and dynastic identity, was more durable than the antagonism caused by the war. When she heard of the revolution in Germany and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Queen Marie did not rejoice about the collapse of the enemy, and in her diary commented on the events rather sympathetically and worried about the political situation. She explained these thoughts with a sort of "class solidarity"⁴⁰. In his correspondence with his brother, Duke Wilhelm, King Ferdinand repeatedly asserted that he had always continued to understand himself as part of the dynasty of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen throughout the war. Accordingly, in the inter-war period, the king was very committed to holding up the dynastic consciousness and traditions of the house. When his son Crown Prince Carol renounced his rights to the Romanian throne in 1926, King Ferdinand immediately informed his brother as "head of our family" about the development, accepting the traditional hierarchy of the dynasty, notwithstanding his actual political superiority⁴¹. Moreover, the Romanian king tried to stimulate close relationships between his children and the children of his brothers by arranging regular meetings, to secure the dynastic cohesion in the following generation⁴².

The dynastic thinking of King Ferdinand was so pronounced, it limited the factual nationalisation of Romania's royal dynasty. When the country's constitution was reformed in 1923, the king's resistance prevented a reform of the rules of succession. Hence, article 78, which stated that in case of an extinction of the Romanian line of the house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen a member of the German branch would succeed to the Romanian throne, remained unchanged. The exclusion of German family members who during the First World War had fought in the German army against Romania, as demanded by nationalists such as Nicolae Iorga,

³⁸ M. Wienfort, *Monarchie im 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin – Bosten, 2019, p. 99–100.

³⁹ Queen Marie of Romania to Duchess Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Cotroceni, 25 January 1920, in: Marie of Romania, *Letters to Her Mother*, p. 349.

⁴⁰ Marie of Romania, *Jurnal*, p. 384–385.

⁴¹ Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Bucharest, 4 January 1926, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R 53 Nr. 246 (1926).

⁴² Ferdinand of Romania to Duke Wilhelm of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Bucharest, 8 December 1925, StAS, FAS HS 1–80 T 9 R 53 Nr. 238 (1925).

was rejected by King Ferdinand⁴³. Through this, the Romanian monarchy maintained an important part of its transnational character after the end of the war, even though this article never had to be used. The clear definition of the line of succession was important for the stability of the monarchy in case of crisis and for the king matters of dynastic survival were more important than national sensibilities. As for the case of Princess Beatrice's proposed relocation to Romania, the royal relatives abroad were considered a resource for dynastic politics, even though their inclusion would have thwarted the strategical nationalisation of the monarchy.

This reliance on family members abroad is very symptomatic for the deep distrust of the royal family against the Romanian elites and politicians. In the post-war period King Ferdinand was heavily criticised for favouring the liberal politician Ion Brătianu, whom he repeatedly made prime minister against the protest of the opposition parties. However, Brătianu was one of the few Romanian politicians the king actually trusted⁴⁴. Besides the long-serving prime minister, most advisors of the royal couple were foreigners, often from Western Europe. During the First World War, for example, the leader of the French military mission, Henri Berthelot, became one of the most important consultants of the king. The Canadian officer Joseph Boyle was the most trusted confidant of Queen Marie and their relationship was that close it even caused speculations about a possible love affair. In October 1918, the queen described Colonel Boyle in her diary as a “*Übermensch*” and complained that the Romanians were incapable of understanding this, because their “soil” would not produce such beings⁴⁵. This statement clearly shows Queen Marie's affection to the Canadian officer, but also reveals her derogatory view on the Romanians, from whom she still felt herself distinguished by her descent. Therefore, it is little surprising that King Ferdinand and Queen Marie often turned to the foreign ambassadors in Bucharest for advice. When Barbu Știrbey, one of the few Romanian intimates of the royal couple, resigned as head of the royal household in 1919, Queen Marie told the British diplomat Frank Rattigan that

“the King and herself were in the position of having absolutely nobody to turn to for advice. The Court officials, though devoted to the royal interests, had no knowledge or understanding of public affairs. All the Roumanian politicians had an axe to grind, and were incapable of giving disinterested advice. [...] Her Majesty said [...] that she was an Englishwoman seeking for my help and advice as an Englishman”⁴⁶.

⁴³ N. Iorga, *O viață de om, așa cum a fost: orizonturile mele*, Bucharest, 1972, p. 613.

⁴⁴ K. Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866–1947*, Oxford, 1994, p. 388–405; also compare for example the king's view on Brătianu with the king's relationship to Alexandru Averescu: P. Otu, *Alexandru Averescu: Marschall, Politiker, Legende*, Hainburg, 2011, p. 250–255.

⁴⁵ Marie of Romania, *Jurnal*, p. 360–361; on Berthelot and the French military mission in Romania: J.-N. Grandhomme, *Le général Berthelot et l'action de la France en Roumanie et en Russie méridionale, 1916–1918. Genèse, aspects diplomatiques, militaires et culturels avec leurs incidences, prolongements et perspectives*, Vincennes, 1999.

⁴⁶ Frank Rattigan to George Curzon, Bucharest, 15 August 1919, TNA, FO 371/3569/392 (1919).

Although, during the First World War, the Romanian monarchy had nationalised its language of legitimacy, the Romanian king and queen strongly relied on foreign advice and did not identify as “Romanian” in the sense of sharing many characteristics with their subjects – especially not with the Romanian elites of which they had a rather negative view.

As the preference for Western European advisors indicates, the German-born king and the English-born queen saw themselves as part of European culture which they considered superior to the Romanian one which is evident by their perception of the political and moral shortcomings of the Romanian elite. The importance of Western European culture for the self-conception of the Romanian royal house is exemplarily illustrated by the education of the royal children. The children spent the time of their early education in Romania under the tutelage of foreign governesses and tutors. Additionally, Romanian instructors were hired to teach Romanian language and history and Orthodox religion. In January 1914, Crown Prince Carol was sent to Potsdam to join the German military academy and serve in the Prussian First Guard Regiment. However, only a few months later, his military training in Germany was aborted because of the outbreak of the First World War⁴⁷. After the end of the war, Prince Carol's younger siblings were sent to finish their education in Great Britain. Prince Nicholas went to the British elite school Eton and later joined the British naval academy. The two youngest princesses, Marie and Ileana attended the prestigious Heathfield girls' school in Ascot. King Ferdinand and Queen Marie considered Romanian schools not sufficient for their children and also thought that an education in Western Europe would provide an ethical orientation, which they regarded impossible to obtain in Romania. As Queen Marie explained to her mother in December 1919: “Life in Romania from an ordered ‘moral’ point of view is very difficult for children at a certain age. Conversation is too lax, all things are disorderly, there are no traditions”⁴⁸. Although having lived in the country for decades, the queen still associated the Romanian society with the stereotypes of immorality and lechery, which had been very common for the nineteenth-century Western European view on the Balkans⁴⁹. Instead of exposing their children to these alleged influences, the Romanian royal couple wanted them to learn the strict code of conduct of the British nobility and pursue the virtues of a distinct, non-Eastern European culture of which they considered themselves a part.

In addition to this, the Romanian royal family maintained an extremely transnational cultural orientation, as can be shown at their consumption patterns. When Queen Marie travelled to Italy, France and Great Britain in the inter-war period, consumption was an important part of these journeys. The women of the royal house had popularised Romanian national costumes among the Romanian

⁴⁷ P.D. Quinlan, *The playboy king: Carol II of Romania*, Westport, 1995, p. 16–25.

⁴⁸ Queen Marie of Romania to Duchess Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Cotroceni, 24 December 1919, in: Marie of Romania, *Letters to Her Mother*, p. 344.

⁴⁹ See for example: E. Michail, *British and the Balkans: Forming images of foreign lands, 1900–1945*, London, 2011; M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York, 1997.

upper classes by wearing them at official events. Queen Marie's daughters, for example, all married in traditional Romanian dress. Nonetheless, the Romanian queen still found it important to keep her wardrobe up to date with the Western European couture and enjoyed the opportunities to buy dresses, perfumes and jewellery in the capital cities of contemporary fashion⁵⁰. In addition to this, the cultural consumption of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie was dominated by Western European products. While the royal couple also occasionally read Romanian authors, they imported great numbers of Western European books and newspapers for their private library. Furthermore, Queen Marie, who had attracted some international attention by writing several novels and newspaper articles herself, published primarily in English and with Western European publishing houses. Out of admiration for her support of the Romanian war efforts, the French *Académie des Beaux-Arts* had even named Queen Marie a free member of the academy and the queen participated in some meetings when she stayed in Paris⁵¹. This affinity for Western culture was per se nothing extraordinary, as it was shared by the contemporary Romanian elites, who often had studied in France or Germany and maintained a close connection to the respective cultures. However, the preference of Western European goods and art by the Romanian monarchy also extended to items of political symbolism. In 1922, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie were crowned monarchs of Greater Romania in the Transylvanian town of Alba Iulia, the historic capital of Michael the Brave, the first ruler to unite all Romanian principalities. For the historically charged ceremony Queen Marie commissioned a new crown that was supposed to symbolise the national unity of all Romanians and create a connection to the glory of the historic predecessors of the Romanian kings. However, instead of entrusting a Romanian goldsmith to design a crown featuring authentic Romanian stylistic elements, the royal house commissioned the well-known Parisian jeweller Lucien Falize, who crafted a pompous crown in neo-byzantine style. Hence, the crown symbolising the birth of Greater Romania and a peak of Romanian political power was "made in France"⁵². This was not a singular case: the medal commemorating the Romanian victory in the First World War and the return of the king to Bucharest was designed by the French engraver André-Henri Lavrillier, who also devised the motives for the new, post-war coins of the Romanian Leu – a similarly important object of national symbolism⁵³.

Although the Romanian monarchy nationalised its language of legitimacy in reaction to the First World War, foreign artists were the main producers of items and images which symbolised this narrative of nationalisation. This was a continuation of the pre-war practices of the Romanian royal court, which from the very beginning had heavily enlisted foreign artists and experts to import Middle

⁵⁰ *Le Temps*, 30 April 1919; H. Pakula, *The Last Romantic*, p. 275.

⁵¹ *Le Journal*, 14 January 1918; *L'Homme libre*, 13 April 1924; Ș. Ciubotaru, *Viața cotidiană la curtea regală*, p. 146.

⁵² *Excelsior*, 13 December 1922

⁵³ Marie of Romania, *Jurnal*, p. 402.

and Western European culture and technology to Romania and develop the country into a modern state⁵⁴. Even after the First World War, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie still considered themselves agents of a transnational European culture on a civilizing mission to Romania, for which they relied on their dynastic network, foreign advisors and Western European artists.

TRANSNATIONAL POLITICS: DIPLOMACY AND TRAVELLING

Although the Romanian king and queen had played active roles in leading Romania through the First World War, the active political influence of the royal couple gradually decreased in times of peace. While acting as important symbolic figures of national unity, they were less involved in the politics of the day. Nevertheless, the Romanian monarch and his consort were very popular at home and also had gained considerable international prestige, because their actions during the war had been closely covered by many international newspapers. Therefore, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie began to act more transnationally and went on several journeys, on which they visited wartime allies and tried to support Romanian interests abroad by means of public diplomacy. When the Romanian position seemed to lose ground at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the government asked Queen Marie to travel to Paris and support the Romanian case. The queen willingly made the journey to the French capital, where she attracted much public attention and personally met with the leaders of the Entente powers. Although the Romanian queen left a good impression on the statesmen she met in Paris – with the exception of the American President Woodrow Wilson – from a political point of view her mission was only a partial success. While she was able to counterbalance the bad mood Prime Minister Brătianu had caused among the other members of the conference by his clumsy attempts to push through the Romanian maximum demands, she could not prevent the division of the contested Banat region between Romania and Yugoslavia⁵⁵. Nevertheless, the international appearances of the royal couple had a positive but more indirect effect on Romania's international standing by keeping the country on the mental maps of European politics and raising the international public interest in Romania. The public responses to Queen Marie's visit in London – an excursion of few days during her trip to the peace conference – and to the joint visits of King Ferdinand and his consort to Yugoslavia, Poland, France, Switzerland, Belgium and Great Britain were widely positive. With the exception of communist and some socialist

⁵⁴ As a nineteenth-century example see Gustav Klimt's engagement as painter in Peleş Castle: L. Curta, "Painter and King: Gustav Klimt's Early Decorative Work at Peles Castle, Romania, 1883–1884", *Studies in Decorative Arts* 12, 2004–2005, p. 98–129.

⁵⁵ K. Hitchins, *Ionel Brătianu: Romania*, London, 2011, p. 107–132; S. D. Spector, *Romania at the Paris Peace Conference: A study of the diplomacy of Ioan I.C. Brătianu*, Iași, 1995, p. 136–138; M. MacMillan, *Die Friedensmacher: Wie der Versailler Vertrag die Welt veränderte*, Bonn, 2015, p. 180–192.

newspapers, the international press mostly commented favourably on the presence of the Romanian sovereigns in their respective countries. King Ferdinand's decision for war against Germany out of a sense of monarchic duty and the nationalisation of the Romanian dynasty during the war were recurring elements in most articles, reporting on the reception of the royal couple⁵⁶.

However, on their journeys abroad, the monarchs were not purely seen as King and Queen of Romania. The foreign origins of Ferdinand and Marie continued to play an important role in the press coverage, but also influenced the attitude of international politicians towards them. On some occasions, this was intentionally provoked by the royal couple through a specific choice of words or location. Shortly before her peace conference stopover in London in 1919, Queen Marie, for example, granted the *London Times* an interview in which she stated:

“You English – I can say so, though I, too, am English in a sense – have a way of regarding distant Continental peoples with a sort of superior aloofness. You must really take a serious interest in European affairs, and must see how much your own interests are bound up with intelligent appreciation of the position of other peoples, who you can help to develop, and who are eager for your assistance”⁵⁷.

By appealing directly to the British people as an “Englishwoman” herself, the queen tried to stimulate a stronger public interest in Romanian affairs and, thereby, achieve a more active support of the British government for Romania. However, Frank Rattigan warned the Foreign Office not to overestimate the political influence of the English princess on Romanian politics because of her boastful personality and her presence in international media: “I feel [I] ought to give a word of warning as to the position of the Queen, as there appears to be a tendency outside this country to overestimate considerably the importance of any expression of opinion by Her Majesty. The fact is that, politically, she has practically no weight in the country”⁵⁸. Queen Marie's numerous journeys abroad as part of an active royal diplomacy and her successful international self-marketing, threatened to overshadow the real political decision-making structures in Romania, especially in Britain, where the queen had a particularly good public standing because of her English origins. King Ferdinand's German descent stood in the centre of public attention, when the monarch visited France in 1924. The Romanian king entered French territory from Switzerland and made his first stops in the Alsace, the contested region France had just retrieved from Germany in the war. The official visit of a Hohenzollern in the French Alsace was commented by some French newspapers as a symbolic recognition of the French claims on the region and, thereby, of high importance⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ See for example: *Excelsior*, 10 April 1924 or *The London Times*, 12 May 1924.

⁵⁷ *The London Times*, 10 March 1919.

⁵⁸ Frank Rattigan to Ronald Graham, Bucharest, 30 April 1919, TNA, FO 371/3597/71998.

⁵⁹ M. Oproiu, “Vizita oficială în Franța a cuplului regal, Ferdinand și Maria, reflectată în presa franceză (9–13 aprilie 1924)”, in L. Brătescu, Ș. Ciubotaru and A.-S. Ionescu (eds), *Monarhia în România – o evaluare. Politică, memorie și patrimoniu*, Iași, 2012, p. 32–52.

On other occasions, the German origins of the royal family had a negative influence on the international perception of the Romanian monarchs. After a meeting with President Wilson and his wife, the American First Lady described the Queen's daughters, who also attended the dinner, as "very shy, uninteresting, and German in type"⁶⁰. Considering the international hostility against everything German in the *sortie de guerre*, the hint at the German heritage of the dynasty was a clearly negative association. Although King Ferdinand was praised all over Europe for his actions and his nationalisation in the war, his German descent continued to play a role in European politics and the treatment of the Romanian royal family. When Ferdinand's son Prince Nicholas graduated from Eton, the Romanian royal prince applied for admission at the French military academy Saint-Cyr in the region of Brittany. However, the leadership of the academy showed little enthusiasm at the thought of having a Hohenzollern prince among their students. Following an intervention by the French Ministry of War, the academy's commander finally agreed that an admission would be possible under the "necessary discretion"⁶¹. Antagonised by the French antipathy against the Hohenzollern name, Prince Nicholas finally ended up attending an academy of the British navy. The episode illustrates the difficulties of the French leadership in dealing with the Hohenzollern heritage of their wartime ally. However, a close relationship to Romania, the new regional power in Balkans, was essential to secure the French foreign political influence in the region. Therefore, the French government was prepared to make concessions to the king out of consideration for the origins of his dynasty. In 1924, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs deleted a paragraph from the French draft for a Franco-Romanian treaty, which excluded the restoration of the Hohenzollern dynasty to the German throne, to simplify the signing for King Ferdinand⁶². The Franco-Romanian treaty, which was ratified in 1926, was the final part in a system of alliances that tied France close to the states of the "Little Entente" – Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia – which had signed collective defence agreements to secure the territories they had won in the First World War⁶³. Although a remaining monarchy in a world that was increasingly dominated by republics, Romania was on good terms with old and new republican states, such as France or Czechoslovakia.

The Kings origins had little influence on the Romanian diplomatic relationships with the new German Republic. The Weimar Republic had moved away from relying on the transnational family networks of the German aristocracy, on the one hand, because the new democratic state tried to minimise the influence of the imperial elites, on the other hand, also because these ties had proven to be unreliable in the First World War. Nonetheless, the German diplomats appreciated the friendly attitude of the Romanian monarch towards them, while they were often confronted with open

⁶⁰ H. Pakula, *The Last Romantic*, p. 285.

⁶¹ Émile Daeschner to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, 28.5.1921, AMAEF, Série Z Europe, Roumanie, 4 (1918–1923).

⁶² Note of the French Ministry for Foreign Affaires for Raymond Poincaré, 26 March 1924, Archives du AMAEF, Série Z Europe, Roumanie, 64 (1924–1926).

⁶³ M. Ádám, *The Little Entente and Europe*.

hostility in other Entente countries⁶⁴. The affair around the king's statement of nationality in the Romanian census of 1927 was also registered in Germany and complaisantly acknowledged as a sign of national sympathies towards Germany, even though no direct political effects had been attached to this⁶⁵.

Despite the close political relations and the obvious distance from Germany, in France Romanian attempts of transnational royal diplomacy or dynastic policy were observed with suspicion. The republican state feared the power and intrigues of dynastic networks, on which French politics could naturally not depend. Since 1919 rumours about a personal union between Romania and Hungary had circulated in the diplomatic circles of Europe. Hungarian monarchists had proposed this solution to find a new ruler for their country, after the fall of the Habsburg dynasty and the short-termed Communist regime, and at the same time hoped to ease the loss of the Transylvanian territories, which had been accredited to Romania at the Paris Peace Conference. The Romanian royal house truly considered the proposal and even contacted the former Austrian-Hungarian Emperor Charles to ask him to renounce his rights to the Hungarian throne. However, the resistance of the Romanian government soon ended the project. For the Romanian political elites, a union with the former enemy was inconceivable, as was the thought of reversing the recent nationalisation of the Romanian dynasty by allowing the king to rule over two equal nations⁶⁶. Parts of the French press also very sceptically commented on the Romanian dynastic policy in South-Eastern Europe. Three royal weddings in 1921 and 1922 established close ties between the Romanian monarchy and the royal houses of Yugoslavia and Greece. Considering this, *Le Radical* wrote in October 1922:

“If these cousinships have consequences for the private interests and the family affaires of these august personalities, they also have consequences for the peoples. [...] We are a race of gentlemen, who do not doubt their friends. Given this, however, we should have the wisdom to be wary a bit of these cousins and in-laws”⁶⁷.

The French mistrust of the Romanian royal house's new family network in the Balkans was mainly caused by the marriages between the Romanian Crown Prince Carol and the Greek Princess Helen as well as the connection between Greek Crown Prince George and the Romanian Princess Elisabeth. The Greek prince and princess were children of King Constantin and Queen Sophie, who had been expelled from Greece in 1917 with the help of the Entente powers, because of

⁶⁴ Hans Freytag to the German Foreign Office, Bucharest, 28 February 1921, PAAA, R 73661.

⁶⁵ Gerhard von Mutius to the German Foreign Office, Bucharest, 2 June 1927, PAAA, R 73662.

⁶⁶ Georges Clinchant to the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Berne, 14 October 1919; R.R. Rosetti, *Mărturisiri (1914–1919)*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 364; M. Ádám, “The Legitimists and Central Europe: The Habsburg Restoration Attempts and the Successor States of Austria-Hungary”, in M. Ádám (ed), *The Versailles System and Central Europe*, Aldershot – Burlington, 2004, p. 129–192, here p. 132–134; L. Leuştean, *România și Ungaria în cadrul „Noii Europe”: 1920–1923*, Iași, 2003, p. 68–85.

⁶⁷ *Le Radical*, 12 October 1922.

their alleged pro-German sentiments. Queen Sophie, as a sister of Kaiser Wilhelm II, had been one of the main villains in the French wartime propaganda, which is why the French foreign politicians feared a negative effect of these marriages on the French relations with Romania⁶⁸.

While according to the pre-war standards the Greek-Romanian marriages would have been a very good fit regarding the equal status and the common religious confession of the couples, the international antagonization of the Greek royal family and their expulsion from their kingdom during the First World War made these matches politically problematic. Although, in 1920, King Constantine returned to the Greek throne and thus cleared financial objections against these alliances, the connections were rather unpopular in the Romanian society. To contain the damage of the negative image of King Constantin and Queen Sophie, the Greek queen was practically hidden in the royal palace, when she visited Bucharest in 1921 for her son's wedding⁶⁹. Nevertheless, the Romanian royal couple strongly supported the marriage projects, acknowledging that after the revolutions in context of the First World War the supply of possible royal spouses of Orthodox confession was very limited. Furthermore, the scandal around Crown Prince Carol's short unconstitutional marriage had alarmed the Romanian monarch and his consort. At the end of the war, Prince Carol had defected his post in a Romanian regiment and secretly married and impregnated Zizi Lambrino, the daughter of a Romanian general. However, the morganatic marriage was strongly opposed by the royal family, but also by most Romanian politicians, who feared that an intermixture of the royal dynasty with local nobility would undermine the legitimacy of the monarchy⁷⁰. Although the Crown Prince could be temporarily convinced to annul the marriage, return to his duties and marry a Greek princess, Queen Marie saw a morganatic connection as a real threat that "would have been a fearful weakening of the principle we represent"⁷¹. Therefore, she was eager to find partners of equal birth for her children. Commenting on possible matches for her daughter Elisabeth, the queen wrote to her mother in December 1919: "I shall stand by her whatever comes, unless she wants to run away with someone not of our class!"⁷² However, in the view of Queen Marie, there also existed hierarchies in this transnational royal class, as her reaction to the marriage of her daughter Maria with the Yugoslavian King Alexander I illustrates. The dynastic alliance with

⁶⁸ Victor Pétin to the French Ministry of War, Bucharest, 4 March 1921 and Émile Daeschner to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, 12 September 1921, AMAEF, Série Z Europe, Roumanie, 4 (1918–1923).

⁶⁹ R. Netzhammer, *Bischof in Rumänien*, p. 1077; Queen Marie of Romania to Duchess Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Cotroceni, 4 December 1919 and 13 December 1919, in: Marie of Romania, *Letters to Her Mother*, p. 338–339.

⁷⁰ P.D. Quinlan, *The playboy king*, p. 39–71.

⁷¹ Queen Marie of Romania to Duchess Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Cotroceni, 6 February 1920, in: Marie of Romania, *Letters to her mother*, p. 352.

⁷² Queen Marie of Romania to Duchess Maria of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Cotroceni, 13 December 1919, in: *ibid.*, p. 339.

Yugoslavia was politically extremely valuable for Romania and the public reactions to the news were mainly positive. The connection between the two royal families helped to overcome the territorial dispute about the Banat and laid the groundworks for a close political collaboration⁷³. Nevertheless, Queen Marie saw in the prince from the Serbian house of Karađorđević, which had so far not intermarried with European royal houses, “an outsider of unsure race”⁷⁴. The dedicated search for foreign spouses and the adherence to the prohibition of intermarrying with Romanian noble families, illustrates how important belonging to a transnational royal class was for the self-conception and legitimation of the Romanian monarchy in the inter-war period, regardless of the nationalisation in the First World War. Furthermore, Queen Marie’s scepticism of a dynastic connection with the Yugoslavian royal house illustrates the exclusive understanding of this royal class, which was fundamentally Western European and included a racial distinction from the people of the Balkans and their native rulers.

CONCLUSION

The nationalisation of the Romanian dynasty’s language of legitimacy during the First World War was essential for the survival and stability of the monarchy in the *sortie de guerre* and inter-war period. However, as has been shown in this article, the nationalisation of the foreign-born king and queen was very fragile and the Romanian sovereigns had to deal very carefully with their English and German heritage. Nevertheless, the sense of belonging to an international royal class, transnational dynasties and a Western European culture area was essential for the self-conception of the Romanian royal family. These social affiliations led to a self-distinction from the Romanian people and was often accompanied by a derogatory view on the Romanian society, particularly the local elites. Therefore, transnational family networks remained very important for King Ferdinand and Queen Marie and both of them went to great lengths to reconcile with family members, who had been on the other side in the war. In addition to this, the Romanian royal couple showed a high esteem for monarchic solidarity and saw the revolutions in Europe during the *sortie de guerre* as a general threat to the monarchic idea on the continent, even if these revolutions were directed against their wartime enemies. Also, in the international perception of the Romanian monarch and his consort, their foreign origins continued to play a significant role. King Ferdinand and Queen Marie were always considered not only Romanian but also German or British. Furthermore, their international royal network caused

⁷³ E. Boia, *Romania’s diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia in the interwar period: 1919–1941*, New York, 1993, p. 88–107; *Universul*, 11 January 1922.

⁷⁴ Quoted after: H. Pakula, *The Last Romantic*, p. 315.

anxiety among some European powers, as it was contradicting the attempts to establish a new democratic practice of international affairs in Europe.

In summary, the Romanian example in the *sortie de guerre* shows that the First World War was in deed a period of nationalisation for European monarchies. However, this nationalisation of legitimating strategies and royal appearances did not necessarily end the transnational self-conceptions and networks of European monarchs, which continued to exert a political influence in the inter-war period. Therefore, more research on the transnationality of European monarchies in the era of radical nationalisation between the two World Wars seems promising, as it furthers a better understanding of monarchies in the twentieth century and European politics in the build-up to the Second World War.

