



CONSTANTIN BRÂNCOVEANU, THE DIPLOMAT

Constantin BĂLĂCEANU STOLNICI*

Resumé. Le prince (voïvode) Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) parmi d'autres remarquables qualités a été un des plus abiles diplomates de l'histoire des pays roumains Pendant son long regne (de 26 ans) la Valachie s'est trouvée au centre des tensions créées par les trois grands empires du XVII-ème et XVIII-ème siècles (ottoman autrichien et russe) ainsi que de leurs prétentions territoriales Pour assurer l'autonomie de la Valachie et la survie de son regne il a du adopter une gymnastique diplomatique tres subtile et dangereuse Il a du nager prudemment entre l'agressivite des Habsbourgs apres le siège de Vienne (1683) l'aube de imperialism russe surtout apres la victoire de Poltava (1709) et la puissance encore très importante des ottomanans et de leurs allies les tartares Il a commence par l'adoption d'une politique franchement pro ottmane pour essayer plus tard une politique procretienne Il a préféré les Habsbourgs a Pierre le Grand ce qui a produit une rupture avec les puissants Cantacuzénes qui étaient russophiles sutout pour des raisons religieuses les russes étant orthodoxes Les louvoyments de sa politique et les intrigues des Cantacuzénes ont declanchées les suspicions de la Sublime Porte, s-a chute et son exécution avec ses quatre fils et son conseiller ordonnee par le sultan Ahmet III.

Keywords: Constantin Brâncoveanu, Wallachia, diplomatic relations, Cantacuzino, prince of the Holy Roman-German Empire, Ottomane Porte, Ahmet III.

There are three centuries this year since Constantin Brâncoveanu's beheading (15th August 1714), this great prince/(voivode) becoming the subject of many discussions, analyses, studies, articles, lectures or congresses and

* Honorary Member of the Romanian Academy and Founding Member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists.

symposiums. Generally, in the centre of these it is the part he played in the cultural history of Wallachia and of course in its spiritual life. A few people know that this prince was one of the most skilful and active diplomats of his times but also of our history.

This was possible especially due to the fact that at the balance of the centuries XVII-XVIII the Carpathian-Pontic-Danubian space has been the centre of some intense political tensions (even ideological-religious ones) but also of confrontations with many major geopolitical interests (even territorial claims).

The problems began with the decline of the Ottoman power after the Turks defeat at Lepanto (October 1571) and then at St.Gothard (1663), but especially after the disastrous ending of Vienna siege (1683) and after the Holy Roman-German Empire revived by a post-renaissance mercantile economy started its fight for domination of the Pannonic Plain of Transylvania and of the South-Eastern Europe, using well trained troops and with higher quality of armaments. To these there were added some illusory territorial claims of Poland on the Wallachia but especially the Russian rising under the czar Peter I who strived to enter on the European history scene by assertion of his military power and by the expansion of his territories on two directions, to the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. A moreover element was the disappearance of Sweden as a great power after the defeat at Poltava (June 1709).

The situation became even more complex due to the interventions of France of Louis XIV who wanted by all means to stop the strengthening of Austria House and to hinder a significant decline of the Ottoman Empire (reviving the pro-Ottoman politics of François I in the times of Soliman the Magnificent). These interventions, on their turn, challenged those of England and of the Low Countries to the Vienna advantage in order to counteract the aggressive rising of the Bourbon France.

After all as the above mentioned were not enough, the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church (especially the Greek one in the Turkish space (inclusively the Romanian one) who hoped for a revival of the Byzantine world and culture thanks to Russia (the third Rome) put pressure in favour of Peter I and of his policy especially by the influential Patriarchs of Jerusalem from Nottara family.

In this situation, the élites of the three Romanian principalities could not stand with crossed arms, without risking the entire loss of their autonomy. They had three options: the conservative one (to remain faithful subjects of the „Sublime Porte” who had together with the Tartars a strong military force), the Western-European one (to accept the Hapsburg domination) or the Orthodox Eastern European variant (to join Russia). It was not the case then to pose a problem of the independence *stricto sensu*.

In Transylvania the things evolved relatively easy as after Michael the Brave this Romanian space passed slowly under the Hapsburg domination.

In Moldavia the boyars could not establish a stable and coherent foreign policy, because the rulers succeeded for short intervals of time. Thus only during Constantin Brâncoveanu's reign (1688-1714) 7 rulers reigned (Constantin Cantemir, Dimitrie Cantemir, Constantin Duca, Antioh Cantemir, Ioan Buhuș, Mihail Racoviță and Nicolae Mavrocordat).

Only in Wallachia the great boyars carried on a subtle diplomatic fight to maintain the stability and autonomy of people. This thing was possible especially thanks to the political stability achieved by Constantin Brâncoveanu (who led Wallachia for 26 years) and thanks to his skill in negotiations.

In the respective times Wallachia was under the influence of the strong family of Cantacuzins, some rich Greeks who came to our country after the fall of Constantinople, who considered themselves as the continuers of the family of Emperor Ioan VI (1347-1354), but who admirably fitted in the Wallachian great gentry, becoming even the leaders of the Romanian partie and great lovers of the country. Brâncoveanu himself, orphan since he was 1 year old (after the murder of his father Papa Brâncoveanu by the "seimeni" (pedestrian soldiers for the guard of princely court) in 1655, he was brought up by his maternal uncles Șerban, Constantin and Mihai Cantacuzino who educated him from a cultural point of view (especially the Stolnic (Steward) Constantin Cantacuzino) and from a political point of view.

When Brâncoveanu rised on Wallachia throne (1688) the country was engaged in an important diplomatic action of approaching to Austria orchestrated by the prince Șerban Cantacuzino and his son-in-law the great Agha Constantin Bălăceanu. It had been determined by the insistence of some imperial emissaries like the Spanish Jesuit Antid Dunod and th count Ladislau Csaki to whom the metropolian bishop Anton Ștefan of Nicopole and Gheorghe Btancovici joined. An important part had the victorious campaigns of the imperial troops led by Scherffenberg, the marquis von Baden, Carol of Lorena and the generals Veterani and Caraffa who, among other things, led to the passing of Transylvania under the domination of Austria. Its image of a great power was significantly strengthened while the Ottoman decline was confirmed by the scandals of Istanbul which resulted in the dethroning of the sultan Mahomed V (1687). The pressure of Vienna have been amplified by sending a military corps under the command of Veterani who established in Oltenia at Cerneți and who retired with difficulty after some discussions had with Mihai Cantacuzino, Constantin Brâncoveanu and Constantin Bălăceanu. Finally, the ruler with his allies decided to send a mission of 360 people led by the great Agha Constantin Bălăceanu. This deputation departed in secret from Bucharest on 3rd October 1688 without any precise instructions but also without an official mandate to the great Agha. The respective mandate was sent later on, at Veterani's demand, to Sibiu where it was brought by Constantin Brâncoveanu who had signed on 9th of March 1688 a document of

obedience towards Austria and also had received on 19th of May the same year the title of count of Magyar kingdom. The dies were cast for the pro-Austrian partie.

This action was part of a much more complicated policy of Șerban Cantacuzino, who had in view the Turks driving away from Europe and the reconstitution of Byzantine empire under his leadership because he considered himself a descendant of the byzantin emperours

The prince's brothers, led by the Stolnic Constantin Catacuzino, were convinced of the fact that the military power of the Ottomans together with the Tartars was still very great. Also they had not a too great trust in the Austrian troops which were moreover very weakened by the opening a western front (in Rhenania) by Louis XIV (allay of the Turks) unleashing a military campaign in September 1688 against the league of Augsburg. So that, frightened by the possible consequences, they were determined to hinder the success of pro-Austrian policy of their brother. For these they poisoned the prince Șerban on 28th of October 1688 and appointed even on the next day Constantin Brâncoveanu as a voivode of Wallachia without resorting to the traditional formalities and to the approval of the Ottoman Porte.

Thus it began the diplomat career of the new ruler and the future martyr of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

During the first year of his reign he followed the cautious pro-Ottoman policy of his maternal uncles – the stolnic Constantin and the spatar Mihai Cantacuzino who had been his mentors and later on his advisors.

His first objective was to annihilate Bălăceanu's mission and to win the Sublime Porte's confidence, but his attempts failed - to persuade by successive emisars (Preda Pârșcoveanu, Radu Golescu, Radu Popescu) his uncle in-law Constantin Bălăceanu to give up his mission. Balaceanu was determined to continue the mission received from his father-in-law, the prince Șerban Cantacuzino, to put on the Wallachian throne Iordache (Gheorghe) Cantacuzino, the son of the late prince, and to lead the country from behind this.

Also the attempts of Brâncoveanu - by other missions (of Cornea Brăiloiu, Șerban Greceanu, Dinu Rudeanu, Constantin Știrbei and Preda Brătășanu) - to convince Veterani of not coming with his troops to Wallachia, failed. Veterani sent the general Donat Heissler to Wallachia where he occupied Oltenia and a great part of Wallachia, he setting down to Bucharest, and he sent the colonel von Schlich to Craiova with an ultimatum by which he asked Brâncoveanu the country obedience to the Austrians and his abdication in favour of Iordache Cantacuzino.

Now it appears for the first time the great diplomatic skill of Brâncoveanu. Firstly he succeeded in inviting Heissler to a feast at Drăgănești (Prahova) where he had taken refuge. There he proves his attachment to the House of Austria but also the impossibility to act because of the Turks and of the Tartar troops, about

which he *incidentally* mentions that they began to move from Bugeac to Wallachia. Heissler, frightened by the perspective of a confrontation with the Tartars, retreats in a hurry all his troops beyond the mountains, in Braşov region. At the same time with him Constantin Bălăceanu leaves the area together with his family and the widow of Şerban Cantacuzino (princess Maria) with her son Iordache. Thus Brâncoveanu drives away from the country his adversary and the foreign troops without fight and without appearing as an enemy of the imperials (a fact which has not shut the door for some future negotiations).

Secondly, he convinced the Sultan Soliman II of his fidelity and he sent to him the tribute increased

Brâncoveanu's situation became then complicated because the Ambassador of France to Istanbul – Pierre Antoine Castagneres, the marquis de Châteauneuf – insisted on the Porte to offer Wallachia to the head of the Kuruktzys - Imre Tököli. But Brancoveanu found an unexpected solution. Profiting by the death of the prince of Transylvania Mihai I Apafi (13th of April 1690), he organized a military expedition to Transylvania in order to offer it to Tököli. For this action he obtained the support of the Sultan who had sent to him an expeditionary corps led by the Ottoman seraskier (army commander and defence minister) the beglerbey of Silistra Cerkez Ahmet to whom Gazi Hanzade Ghirai – the son of the Tartar Khan Selim Ghirai – also joined with his troops. The Turkish-Tartar army together with the Romanian soldiers and the Kukrutzys, guided by the Wallachian "potecari" (a Romanian term meaning people who knew the mountain paths), discreetly passed over the Carpathians Mountains and surprised the Austrian armies led by Heissler and Bălăceanu (now an Austrian general and count of the Holy Roman-German Empire). In the battle fought at Zărneşti (12th of August 1690), the imperial troops - to whom joined the troops of Mihaly Teleky, of the marquis Doria and of the count Magni - were defeated; the Ottoman seraskier, Doria, Teleky and Bălăceanu were killed, and Heissler was taken prisoner. Brâncoveanu, who only watched the battle, was the great victor, as he got rid of his adversaries (Bălăceanu died and Tököli became the prince of Transylvania), he strengthened his position at Constantinople and remarkably he had not been perceived in Vienna like an irreducible adversary. Arrived at Bucharest and free of the immediate and acute mentioned dangers, Brâncoveanu began to deal with the country's activities. The political situation of Europe, the permanent suspicions of the Porte and the territorial claims of Austria, Poland and Russia required a skillful foreign policy, very cautious and as secretly as possible in order to maintain the autonomy of Wallachia, to maintain himself on the throne and even to survive. To play exclusively the Ottoman card it was childish and very risky.

Brâncoveanu surrounded himself with some counsellors headed by his uncles with whom he created his foreign policy. It is his period of cooperation with the

Cantacuzins which lasted rather until the year of 1703. Radu Ștefan Vergati (Ciobanu), analysing the wall frescoes of Horezu monastery (where Cantacuzin brothers turned away their faces from Constantin Brâncoveanu), considered that the breaking off between them and the prince lasted since 1693 when it was finished the building off the monastery.

The prince formed a team of agents who could put him in touch with the European centers sensitive to his policy. Thus, after P. Cernovodeanu, he had at Constantinople his capuchehaias (diplomatic agents of the Romanian rulers at the Ottoman Porte), Gheogheos Clironomos, Ianachi Porphyrita, the sluger Toma Cantacuzino and the second logofat Ștefan Cantacuzino, in Warsaw there was the ceau; David Corbea, near the Russian czar there were Gheorghe Castriotul from Castoria, Paniot Radu, Petru Damian, David Corbea and Toader Corbea, and near the Austrians Ladislau Teodor Dindar, the physician Iacob Pylarino from Cephalonia, Peter Grienner and the Venetian Bussi. The prince also organized for himself a chancellery/office with translators for the negociations and for the correspondence, among which for Italian and Latin languages: the physician Bartolomeo Feerrati and Giovanni Candido Romano; for German: Ladislau Teodor Dindar, Peter Griennen and Nicolae Folos de Wolff; for Turkish: the clucer Afenduli, and the brothers David și Teodor Corbea for Latin, Greek, Hungarian, Slavonic and Russian languages; for Polish language (Andreas and Nicolauks Wolff). He also had a secretariate of quality led by Maria del Chiaro who used also the figures as codes (for making secret things). He also coopted among his counsellors the slugerul Toma Cantacuzino, the second logofat Ștefan Cantacuzino (the future prince), the paharnic Ianache Văcărescu (who had to be executed at the same time with the ruler), the merchant Nicolo Caraiani and Constantin, son of Vasilie of Venice.

It was found according to Paul Cernovodeanu "a large correspondence not only with the sovereigns of the time (the emperors of Vienna, the czar of Russia, the king of France, of Poland and so on), but also with state men and imperial generals, Polishes and czarists, leaders of Kuruts' revolution (1703-1711), ambassadors of the great powers (English, Dutchman, Hapsburgic and Venetian) at Constantinople, the Sovereign Pontiff, cardinals, high hierarchs of the Eastern church, Greek scholars and so on".

Also he made relations with influential foreign diplomats who informed him and whom he informed, but who also helped him much, such as Lord William Paget, the Ambassador of England, and count Jakob Colyer, the Ambassador of Holland in Constantinople, count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, imperial negotiator, or the Aulic counsellor Franz Ulrich von Kinsky to whom he sometimes met secretly in Wallachia and to whom he had a secret correspondence. From this correspondence there were kept about 150 letters. As I already told, the first objective of Brâncoveanu's foreign policy was the renunciation of the utopian

plan of Șerban Cantacuzino and Constantin Bălăceanu about Wallachia liberation from the Ottoman trusteeship and about driving the Turks away from Europe.

Then Brancoveanu did all in his power to win the trust of the Porte, although it passed through a gloomy period of its history in which only in 7 years changed 18 High Viziers and suffered a series of important defeats culminating with that at Zenta (1697). Brâncoveanu regularly paid the tribut, which he increased until he doubled its value; he executed all the dispositions, he prodigiously bribed all the great corrupts of Istanbul and supported an expensive Levantine clientelle, but who helped him much. Also he detached from the pro-Austrian boyars and he harshly sanctioned the Bălăceanus, confiscating their properties and exhibiting the head of the great Agha in a shaft near his houses in Bucharest. (It is true that clandestinely he supported their family in exile with important subventions.) Moreover he also obtained to be supported near the Sultan and the Ottoman dignitaries by the English, Dutch and French diplomatic missions in Constantinople. This policy was a success benefic for the country and for the ruler. The highest point of his success was on 15th of July 1703 when he had been received in Adrianopolis by the Sultan Mustafa II (a favour of exception) which conferred him the privilege to be appointed a ruler/voivode for life (an extraordinary privilege). The thing is remarkable because he did not involved with the Ottomans in the military operations with the troops of Augsburg League to whom the Turks went to war in this period until the peace at Karlowitz (January 1699). At the same time he managed to avoid the confrontations of Austrian and Ottoman troops on the Wallachian territory. Also he succeeded that the Wallachian territory did not enter in the peace negotiations between Austria and Turkey.

An important objective, extremely delicate and very dangerous, was to resume the relations with the House of Austria. He had a clever correspondence, he sent emissaries and received all kind of personalities from Vienna whom he helped in their missions, he informed them and probably supported them financially, of course all these in a great secrecy. Also he invested much moneys in the banks of Vienna and Brașov, he bought properties in Brașov area and built a residence at Sâmbăta de Jos. This policy itself was a success culminating with the decernation by Leopold I, in January 1695, of the title of prince of the Holy Roman-German Empire. To this it was added the granting of the right of a political asylum for him and his family in the Hapsburgic Empire in case of danger. It is surprising how he succeeded to get out of the position of enemy of Austria at Zărnești and to enter into the imperial aristocratic system at the highest level.

Brâncoveanu, the Cantacuzins and generally the great Romanian boyars as well as the elites of some Balkan peoples (of Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Croația, Bosnia and Herțegovina) had (under the influence of the Orthodox

hierarchs, especially the Greek ones) a certain reserve towards the Hapsburgs due to their aggressive Catholicism. Also they did not agree the German discipline and the selfishness of Austrian colonialist policy. Many looked at them considering them only as a necessary evil. The appearance of Russia as a great Orthodox power offered another variant for a liberation of the Christian peoples in the South-Eastern Europe from the Islamic domination. It was a more attractive perspective from cultural and religious reasons. Beyond the certain common post-Byzantine traditions, the alphabets themselves were the same. The Russians behaviour and the way of government of the countries were by then, unknown. Only stories circulated, a kind of myths, some with messianic character, about these blonds who came from the darkness of the North-Eastern Europe. Brâncoveanu as well as the leaders of Balkan peoples had heard about them and communicated with them through merchants, travellers and especially through monks like that Isaia used by Brâncoveanu to enter into relation with Peter I when he reigned with his brother Ivan and who was uncovered by Bălăceanu's men and imprisoned in the Austrian prisons.

Although the pressures of the Cantacuzins and of the Orthodox hierarchs (especially the Patriarchs Dositei and Hrisante Nottara) were very great, Brâncoveanu approached the Russians with great discretion and relative suspicion. He was among the few personalities of South-Eastern Europe who realized that at that time the main concern of czar Peter I was to assure his position in the North to the Baltic Sea, an objective for which a war with Sweden of Carol XII started ("The great war of North"). Brâncoveanu had interesting relations with the czar and with his close persons (the chancellors Feodor Alekseevici Golovkin and Gavriil Ivanovici Golovkin) as well as the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople Piotr Andreievici Tolstoi. He sent as messengers to Peter I: David Corbea (who remained in Russia), his brother Toader, Gheorghe the Castriot (the most efficient one), captain Sava Constantin, Panaiat Radu and Petru Damian. He advised and even asked the czar to help the Christian peoples in the Balkans to free themselves from the Ottoman trusteeship. Neculcea also mentions the existence of a secret treaty with political, military and economic clauses between the czar and Brâncoveanu, but these treaty remained unknown.

Much closer and imprudent were the relations kept by the Cantacuzins on their own account with the Russians.

Both Brâncoveanu and the Cantacuzins informed the Russians about the situation in the Ottoman empire and in the Hapsburgic one and they gave advices as the ones who knew better the political, economic and military situation in Turkey and in Western Europe. They informed them about the war progress with the League of Augsburg and the war of succession for the throne of Spain, about the relations between Louis XIV and Charles XII as well as those between the king of Poland Stanislaw Leszcynski and the Ottoman Porte or the khan of the

Crimea. For the service done, Brâncoveanu had been decorated by the czar on 21st of August 1700 with St. Andrei cross order, and in 1701 he received a document of favour ("Jalovannaia gramota"), which assured to the ruler and to the Cantacuzins a political asylum in Ukraine in case of danger. At the end of the XVII century and the beginning of the -XVIII century Brâncoveanu got rather sick of the Cantacuzins' trusteeship and he began to detach from them. The braking off was accentuated when Brâncoveanu replaced Mihai Cantacuzino as a great spatar with Toma Cantacuzino (1709).

After the battle of Poltava (1709) the hopes of the Christians in the Ottoman empire to be liberated by the Russians increased. The Cantacuzins dashed in a clear support of the Russians as well as the rulers of Moldavia, Mihai Racoviță and afterwards Dimitrie Cantemir (whose wife Casandra was the daughter of the prince Șerban Cantacuzino), while Brâncoveanu adopted a more prudent and ambivalent policy. During the campaign of Peter I in Moldavia, Brâncoveanu promised his military and logistic support both to the Sultan and to the Czar, maintaining in expectancy his army at Urlați. Thus, Wallachia did not involve itself in the Russo-Turkish war of 1710-1711, and its ruler did not suffer for the moment any trouble. But after Stănilești, Brâncoveanu's position was damaged. Three elements led to this. The first was the fact that Mazepa, when passed from the Russian camp to the Swedish camp, he informed them and indirectly the Turks, about the duplicitary policy of Brâncoveanu. Secondly there were the denunciations made by the Cantacuzins (like that report sent to Ștefan Racoczi) which presented Brâncoveanu as a man of the Austrians who misled both the Turks and the Russians and who assured for himself a life in exile, depositing great sums of money in Venice. Thirdly it was the desertion of the great spatar Toma Cantacuzino who abandoned with his soldiers the Turkish camp of the great visier Mehmet Baltagi and joined the Russian troops of general Karl Ewald von Rönne contributing to the conquest of Brăila.

It seems that even since 1711 the sultan Ahmet III decided to take the revenge on Brâncoveanu, being supported by his son-in-law Damad Ali Pasha who became a great visier, one of the most cruel Ottoman dignitaries. As a matter of fact, the Porte did no longer need him now that the Turks were victorious and they felt up capable to resist the pressure of Austria and of Russia. Formerly the Wallachian voivode by his relations helped them much with informations and advices (as well as with multiple gifts).

The Wallachian ruler remained alone. The Russians did not trust in him as they reproached to him that because of his indecision they lost the campaign in Moldavia. The Austrians involved in their battle in Europe were not at all ready to support him and the Turks considered him a traitor. Moreover, the Cantacuzins plotted more and more intensely for his elimination.

Beginning with 1709 and especially after the Russians defeat at Stănilești, Brâncoveanu - alone, not being able to rely doubtlessly on the great powers around (the Ottomans, the Austrians, the Russians and the Poles) and, having moreover an increased adversity of his uncles the Cantacuzins, - tried to create a defensive foreign policy.

He secretly continued his relationship with the office in Vienna, especially with Count Stephan de Stainville. It was about a change of information useful for both parts. Also he used Apostol Manu, a rich merchant innate in Bitolia (which reached a great power in Pesta, even being ennobled by the emperor), in order to deposit money in Vienna and Brașov and to invest in grounds of Transylvania. The son of this Apostol married later on Smaranda, the niece of the great Agha Constantin Bălăceanu, a future founder of Zamfira monastery (Prahova). These relations with the Hapsburgs annoyed the Cantacuzins who detested the Austrians, probably because of religious reasons, especially that these adopted even since 1652 an aggressive policy of catholic missionarism in Transylvania which would led to the constitution of the United Church by the action in 1698 of the metropolitan bishop Athanasie Anghel (although he was encouraged and financially supported by Brâncoveanu) and then by the Papal Bulla "Indulgentum esse" in 1716 of Pope Clement XI.

With the Russians the things went worse, because they did no longer trust Brâncoveanu who hesitated to help them with provisions and troops in their war with the Turks. His relations with the czar became more difficult due to the Cantacuzins intrigues. The strongest relations he kept with the governor of Kiev – Dimitri Mihailovici Golîtin and, in a certain measure with Piotr Pavlovici Safirov, vice-chancellor and intimate advisor, and Mihail Borisovici Seremetev, a general-major, who were hostages with the Turks. These relations with the Russians were also encouraged by Sir Robert Sutton (the Ambassador of England) together with Jakob Colyen (the Ambassador of Holland) whom I have already mentioned.

The most difficult was the relationship with the Porte. Brâncoveanu's non-interference in 1711, the Cantacuzins' desertions and especially the denunciations which were used also by Dimitrașcu Racoviță (the son-in-law of Mihai Cantcuzino and brother of the late ruler of Moldavia Mihai Racoviță, now in exile at Istanbul) as well as the intrigues of King Charles XII of Sweden, established at Cetatea Albă, deprived Brâncoveanu of the trust of Ahmet III who secretly prepared together with the great visier the revenge. Until their victory of Stănilești, the Ottomans, situated in a position of weakness, tolerated the diplomatic flirtations of Brâncoveanu with Austria and Russia which in certain measure could have been useful to them, as they created a bridge for discussions in case of a crisis, and meantime they received from the Romanian ruler useful information, money and gifts by wich he managed to calm down their suspicions. After 1711 the Turks passed from a humiliating defensive position to an offensive

one. Brâncoveanu with his diplomatic manoeuvres was no longer useful to them. He had to be removed and exemplarily punished in order to stop a new attempt of "betrayal" like that of him and of Dimitrie Cantemir. As a matter of fact, because of these infidelities probably afterwards it appeared in the Sultan's mind the idea of the Phanariot reigns.

It is difficult to say if the Romanian ruler found out or inferred something about the real attitude of the Porte towards him. Anyhow we know that he made hopeless efforts to calm down the situation in Constantinople. Among others, "he had submitted to all the demands of money from the Porte, he compensated the people of Brăila for the damages suffered in 1711, he promptly acquitted himself of securing the workers at Hotin fortress" (P. Cernovodeanu). But he had not the foreseeing of the disaster that had to come and thus he could not leave the country and take refuge in Transylvania where he had obtained, as I told, the right of a political asylum. It is true that Ahmet III hid his intentions until the last moment.

After 26 years of diplomatic balancing and of successes he made a first great error which he paid with the death of himself and of his sons.

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SOME VIEWPOINTS ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SAINT MARTYR PRINCE CONSTANTIN VODĂ BRÂNCOVEANU AND TSAR PETER I THE GREAT

Radu Ștefan VERGATTI*

Abstract. Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), Prince of Wallachia, and Peter I the Great (1682-1725), Tsar of the entire Russia, are remembered as two European personalities of remarkable importance. Their relationship was indirect, as they never had actually met. Nevertheless, in their foreign politic both were united by a common aspiration towards to blow the Sublime Porte. By his actions the Romanian voivode aspired to maintain the independence of his state. In its turn, the tsar was looking to conquer the Istanbul and to get into control over three continents.

Constantin Brâncoveanu continued the political path of Șerban Cantacuzino, his uncle and the former voivode of Valachia (1678-1688). In the same time he benefited from the modern organization of the princely chancellery that ensured him links throughout Europe. Also, the prince Brâncoveanu used the Orthodox Church. He organized a secret meeting in 1707 in Bucharest. Valachian and Orthodox Church leaders attended that meeting. Its purpose was to set up a military campaign against the Ottomans with the help of the Russian tsar. In case of victory the latter was to become a theoretical leader of the Balkan Peninsula. The plan was not completed. The tsar regarded the Cantacuzene family members as his main allies in Valachia. In 1706 the tsar Peter I wrote in a commanding tone to the prince Constantin Brâncoveanu asking him to appoint Mihai Cantacuzino as the head of the army. Then, in June of 1711, he offered help and asylum to the voivode nephew Toma Cantacuzino, which had betrayed the Ottomans. Subsequently prince Brâncoveanu had not helped the tsar in the Stănilești battle (June 1711). Russia was defeated by the Ottomans. Peter I angrily called Brâncoveanu "Judas". The relationship between the two of them were broken.

* Full Member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists.

Key words: Constantin Brâncoveanu, Peter the Great, princely chancellery, Russia-Valachia diplomacy

The present paper deals with the relations between two major personalities in the history of Europe and, by extension, in universal history: Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), Prince of Wallachia, and Peter I the Great (1682-1725), Tsar of the entire Russia¹. Therefore, for a great part of their rule, they were contemporaries. Both were concerned with leading an active foreign policy, which should be convenient for their peoples.

Constantin vodă Brâncoveanu sought to continue and develop the policy that his uncle, Șerban vodă Cantacuzino (1678-1688), had initiated in southeastern Europe. The latter had succeeded in establishing the principle of political balance. It was a great achievement which guaranteed the territorial integrity and political autonomy of Wallachia².

Peter I the Great pursued a different plan³. He wished to turn the Tsarist Empire from a huge Eurasian terrestrial power into a great universal power bordering the seas and oceans of the world. It is to this end that he acted and reacted either by wars⁴ or by way of diplomacy⁵.

1 I have used this word because the official title of Russian monarchs read Tsar of Great Russia, Little Russia and White Russia.

2 Cf. R. Șt. Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Rolul orașului București în politica balcanică a lui Șerban Cantacuzino*, in "București, Revista muzeului de Istorie al Municipiului București", IX/1972, pp. 129-136.

3 The foreign policy programme of Peter the Great is known as "Peter the Great's plan". It was attributed to the tsar who was said to have made it during his reign. Research has shown that, in fact, Peter I the Great did not draw up any plans during his reign. The writing bearing this title is due to the Polish Michał Sokolnicki (1797). The text was put into circulation in the 19th century by the French journalist Charles Louis Lesur, from whom it was taken (cf. Boris Mouravieff, *Le Testament de Pierre le Grand, légende et réalité*, Éditions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1949, passim; Simone Blanc, *Histoire d'une phobie: le Testament de Pierre le Grand*, in "Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique", vol. 9/1968, no. 3-4, pp. 265-293; Paul Cernovodeanu, *Contribuții de istorie românească și universală*, Editura Dorul, Aalborg, 2002, pp. 264-265).

4 *The Northern War* (1700-1721), in which Russia fought against Sweden and gained access to the Baltic Sea, is such an example; during the same war, while pursuing King Charles XII (1697-1718), Russia engaged in the fight against the Sublime Porte, but suffered a defeat concluded by the peace of Vadul Hușilor (the Pruth), resulting in the loss of both Azov and access to the Black Sea. Finally, the tsar also involved in the war against Persia (1722-1723). The outcome of this war was a temporary gain of northern Azerbaijan, with the cities of Baku and Derbent; however they were to be returned to Persia in 1735 by Tsarina Ana Ivanovna.

5 Tsar Peter I had the merit of modernising *Posolsky Prikaz* (= the department of envoys) and creating a network of Russian diplomatic relations across the world; it is true, some Russian diplomats were not well chosen, as was the case of Count Pyotr Andreyevich Tolstoy who, as a representative in Istanbul, was bought by Constantin Brâncoveanu who 'lent' him large amounts of money: cf. *Istoričeskie sviazi narodov SSSR i Rumânii b XV-naceale XVIII v. Dokumentî i materialî b treh tomah*, tom III, 1673-1711 / *Relațiile istorice dintre popoarele U.R.S.S. și*

In his foreign policy⁶, Constantin vodă Brâncoveanu had an outstanding adviser: his maternal uncle, Seneschal Constantin Cantacuzino⁷. The latter understood the need to pursue the existing principle, that of political balance in southeastern Europe, which had recently been reintroduced and enforced by his brother, Prince Șerban Cantacuzino⁸. To acquire better efficiency in international relations, the Seneschal modernised his main working instrument, the princely chancellery⁹.

Seneschal Constantin Cantacuzino was heeded by his nephew, Constantin Brâncoveanu, an orphan since the age of one¹⁰, who had been brought up and educated by his uncles, brothers of his mother Stanca – Șerban vodă, Constantin the Seneschal and Mihai the spathar Cantacuzino. In fact, the prince himself confessed: “*Eu tată n-am pomenit de vreme ce am rămas mic fără de tată, fără cât pe dumnealui Constandin (stolnicul) l-am cunoscut părinte în locul tătâne-meu* (roughly translated as *I have no father to remember for I have been fatherless since childhood, it is Constantin the Seneschal I have known as a father instead of my parent*)”¹¹.

It was in those circumstances that the seneschal housed, in the chambers of the princely palace, on the underground floor, the chancellery of the country. He did so because he needed it to be near the throne. Thus, he could rapidly and precisely respond to any call of the prince. Then, he could immediately attend the reception of ambassadors, with whom secret discussions were conducted.

România în veacurile XV – începutul celui de-al XVIII-lea. Documente și materiale în trei volume, vol. III, 1673-1711, editorial committee: I. S. Grosul, A. C. Oțetea, Ed. Nauka/Știința, Moscova, 1970, p. 201, doc. no. 55 (in which Brâncoveanu shows Golovin that he gave Tolstoy 30,000 *efinci*), as well as 290, doc. no. 96 (in which Brâncoveanu shows Gavriil Ivanovich Golovkin that he sent 4,000 to Tolstoy, the Istanbul envoy). Further to be cited as *Istoriceskie sviazi*.

6 Cf. Radu Ștefan Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Pe urmele stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino*, București, 1982, p. 212 and the following; Paul Cernovodeanu, *În vâltoarea primejdiilor. Politica externă și diplomația promovate de Constantin Brâncoveanu 1688-1714*, Ed. Silex, București, 1997, passim.

7 Cf. Radu Ștefan Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Pe urmele stolnicului...*, p. 212 and the following.

8 Idem, *Rolul orașului București în politica balcanică a lui Șerban Cantacuzino*, loc.cit., pp. 129-136. Before Șerban Cantacuzino, the policy of balance in southeastern Europe was applied by Radu cel Mare (1495-1508) and Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521) (cf. R. Șt. Vergatti, *Radu le Grand – un voivode valaque méconnu*, in “Revue Roumaine d’Histoire”, tome XLVII, 2008, nos. 1-2, Janvier-Juin, pp. 16-29; idem, *Neagoe Basarab. Viața. Domnia. Opera*, Editura Episcopiei Argeșului și Muscelului, Curtea de Argeș, 2009, passim).

9 Cf. Radu Ștefan Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Pe urmele stolnicului...*, ed. cit., pp. 233-240.

10 Brâncoveanu remained an orphan when he was less than one year old, his father, Papa Brâncoveanu, having been killed by Seimeni in March 1655 (cf. *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești. Acte și scrisori*, published by Endre Veress, vol. X (1637-1660), București, 1938, p. 287).

11 Cf. *Istoria Țării Românești de la octombrie 1688 până la martie 1717*, compiled by Constant Grecescu, București, 1959, p. 12 (further to be cited as *Anonimul Brâncovenesc*).

Clerks with nice calligraphic handwriting were chosen to work in the chancellery. They were supposed to write easily, without mistakes, letters composed by all rules of the protocol of the age, which were to be sent abroad.

The Seneschal was extremely careful and strict in interpreting and composing letters. He would use well-prepared and carefully chosen people. A lot of them had been trained during special courses held at the Princely Academy of Sf. Sava. There they learned the languages used to communicate and the art of diplomacy, the science of composing a message¹².

Of those who worked in the chancellery, let us mention Nikolaus Wolf and Andreas Wolf, both specialised in Latin and Polish, "Polack clerks"¹³, Giovanni Candido Romano (Ioan Frâncul or Ioan Romanul)¹⁴, specialised in Italian, Latin and in drawing up calendars, the Jewish Anton Maria del Chiaro, also specialised in Latin and Italian, used as secretary of the prince¹⁵, Peter Grienner, doctor Bartolomeo Ferrati, used for Latin and German¹⁶. There also were brothers Theodor and David Corbea, both from Scheii Brașovului, used for Latin, Hungarian and Slavonic¹⁷, chiaus Afenduli of Istanbul¹⁸, well acquainted with the

12 Cf. R. Șt. Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Pe urmele stolnicului*, ed. cit., pp. 233-240.

13 Serviciul Municipiului București al Arhivelor Naționale (= S.M.B.A.N.), *Condica brâncovenească* – mss. 705, f. 182 v.-183v.; *Călători străini despre țările române*, vol. VIII, editor in charge Maria Holban, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1983, pp. 119-120; *Inscripțiile medievale ale României, I. Orașul București*, published by Alexandru Elian, Constantin Bălan, Haralambie Chrică, Olimpia Diaconescu, București, 1965, p. 220, no. 46, p. 221, no. 48; Ștefan Ionescu, *Epoca brâncovenească. Dimenisuni politice, finalitate culturală*, Ed. Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1981, p. 113.

14 Cf. Emil Vârtosu, *Foletul novel. Calendarul lui Constantin vodă Brâncoveanu, 1693-1704*, București, 1942, pp. V-XI; Nicolae Vătămanu, *Medici și astrologi la curtea lui Brâncoveanu*, in "Viața medicală", XIII/1967, no. 1, pp. 51-56; N. A. Ursu launched the assumption, though not confirmed by other sources, that metropolitan Teodosie was Ion Românul (in "Cronica", XVII, 1982, no. 33, 14 August); *Călători străini...*, vol. VIII, ed. cit., p. 133.

15 Also see his biography in *Călători străini...*, vol. VIII, ed. cit., p. 364 and the following.

16 Ibidem, pp. 398-400; C. Giurescu, N. Dobrescu, *Documente și regeste privitoare la Constantin Brâncoveanu*, București, 1907, p. XIV; N. Vătămanu, *Dohtori și pătimiși până la 1800*, Ed. Științifică, București, 1974, pp. 154-158; it is also to be mentioned that Bartolomeo Ferrati's wife was a kin of the Cantacuzino family (Nicolae Iorga, *Medicul lui Constantin Brâncoveanu, Bartolomeo Ferrati*, in "Revista Istorică", vol. 28, (1932), pp. 12-13).

17 S.M.B.A.N., *Condica brâncovenească* – mss. 705, f. 509 v.; Gr. Crețu, *Cel mai vechi dicționar latino-românesc de Teodor Corbea*, in "Voința națională", XXII, 15 Oct. 1905 (extras); Scarlat Struțeanu, *Frații Corbea, doi umaniști ardeleni la Curtea lui Constantin Brâncoveanu*, in "Ramuri", Craiova, XXXIII (1941), no. 1-2, pp. 40-55; Ștefan Meteș, *Din relațiile noastre cu Rusia. Frații David și Teodor Corbea din Brașov...ca diplomați și scriitori*, in "Mitropolia Ardealului", nr. V/1960, no. 11-12, pp. 836-862; Gh. Cardaș, *Teodor Corbea, poet și traducător al Psaltirei, „vel pisar și canțelar” al împăratului Petru cel Mare*, in "Mitropolia Olteniei", XIX/1967, no. 1-2, pp. 28-44; Paul Cernovodeanu, *O familie de diplomați români din Transilvania la cumpăna dintre veacurile XVII și XVIII. Corbea din Șcheii Brașovului*, in "SMIMed", XXIII, 2005, pp. 145-158.

Turkish Osman Arabic, Pashtu and Farsi, the Greeks Niccolo da Porta¹⁹ and Spiridon²⁰, experts in Medieval Greek and Latin and in encrypting and decoding written messages.

Some of them were no mere clerks. They were also sent as envoys of the Cantacuzino family and of Constantin vodă Brâncoveanu. Gheorghe Castriotul and the Corbea brothers were remarkable messengers in Russia. Panaiot Radu and Pătru Damian were also sent as envoys to Russia, to Posolsky Prikaz²¹.

The list of those used in the chancellery created by the Seneschal, inherited and developed by Prince Brâncoveanu²², could go on. Many were used for foreign relations of Bucharest with Istanbul, Vienna, Rome, London, Russia, Crimea²³, Poland, etc. The network of diplomatic and family connections was vast, which was proved by the prince's extensive correspondence numbering 282 known letters²⁴. If we add the Seneschal's epistles that are partially known²⁵, we obtain and even ampler picture of Wallachia's foreign relations at the turn of the 18th century.

18 Cf. Ion Ionașcu, *Despre cronicarul Afenduli din Țara Românească*, in "Studii. Revista de istorie", XXII/1969, no. 5, pp. 875-885.

19 *Călători străini...*, vol. VIII, ed. cit., pp. 139-140; Mario Ruffini, *L'influsso italiano in Valachia nell'epoca di Constantin vodă Brâncoveanu (1688-1714)*, Munchen, 1974, pp. 136-174; Paul Cernovodeanu, *În vâltoarea primejdiilor...*, ed. Cit., p. 17.

20 *Istorieskie sviazi*, vol. III, ed. cit., p. 201, doc. no. 55. To these we can add the names of several Transylvanian clerks specialised in the correspondence with the princes of Transylvania and with Buda (cf. Susana Andea, Avram Andea, *Erdélyi iródeákok a moldvai és havasalföldi vajdai kancelláriákban a 17. században [=Dieci transilvani în cancelariile domnești din Moldova și Țara Românească în secolul al XVII-lea]*, in "Korunk", XI (2000), No. 7, pp. 86-93.

21 Cf. Constantin Șerban, *Legăturile stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino cu Rusia*, in "Studii și articole de istorie", II/1957, pp. 237-254, here p. 243.

22 Cf. Ștefan Ionescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-122; Paul Cernovodeanu, *În vâltoarea primejdiilor...*, ed. cit., p. 16.

23 The connections of the Wallachian chancellery ensured by its leader, the seneschal Constantin Cantacuzino, in the name of the prince were also made through people that were part of the family. For instance, the seneschal Constantin Cantacuzino's sons: Radu Răducanu, who crossed Western Europe accompanied by Hrisant Nottaras; in 1700, Radu Răducanu and Chrysanthus Nottaras paid the best printing house of Padua, the Jesuit printing house, to impress the map of Wallachia (cf. R. Șt. Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Pe urmele stolnicului*, ed. cit., p. 196); the seneschal's older son, Ștefan, accompanied by Dionisie of Ianina, studied at Oxford between 1699-1705 (cf. Andrei Pippidi, *Putere și cultură în epoca lui Brâncoveanu*, în AIIAI, 25, 1988, 2, pp. 361-367); one should not neglect the connections maintained by the Cantacuzinos with the Crimean branch of their family, dating from the times of Demetrie Cantacuzino, a brother of the *Postelnic* Constantin Cantacuzino, Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu's maternal grandfather.

24 Cf. Paul Cernovodeanu, *Din corespondența diplomatică a lui Constantin Brâncoveanu* (I), in "Revista Arhivelor", an. LXII/1985, vol. XLVII, no. 1, pp. 78-80; idem, *În vâltoarea primejdiilor...*, ed. cit., p. 17.

25 Cf. R. Șt. Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Pe urmele stolnicului*, ed. cit., p. 240 and the following.

The analysis of the correspondence shows, without a doubt, that there were connections up north as far as Stockholm and London, to the west as far as Paris, south as far as Bologna, Rome (Vatican), Milano, Padua, Venice, to the east reaching Moscow, Warsaw, Cracow, Baturin²⁶, Kiev, Tiflis, Erevan, Teheran, Damascus, etc.²⁷

The seneschal would send messages of greater importance through his close relatives or people he trusted and were devoted to him. Thus, his nephew Pârvu Cantacuzino²⁸, the son of his brother Drăghici²⁹, was sent to Transylvania³⁰, his sons Ștefan and Radu-Răducanu were rushed to Istanbul³¹, his nephew Toma was also sent to Tsar Peter I the Great in 1707³², and the Corbea brothers – Teodor, David and Matei – travelled several times to Moscow or to the Tsar's palaces or to Poland³³. If the need arose, particularly when Russia was concerned, the correspondence was strictly supervised. More often than not, various encrypted formulas were used with the purpose of hiding messages or the identity of the carrier. Therefore, they made sure, on the one hand, that the messages would reach the destination and, on the other, that the messenger would not sell in information.

The seneschal, as the first diplomat of the country, knew how to receive his most outstanding guests³⁴. In 1689, he greeted Count Kinski at Pitești, lodged him

26 A city located in the Zaporozje region of Ukraine; in the 17th century, it was the residence of the nationalist Cossack ataman Ivan Stepanovici Mazeppa (born 1639 – deceased 1709, ataman between 1687-1708); today, Baturin is merely a *stanitsa*.

27 Cf. R. Șt. Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Pe urmele stolnicului...*, ed. cit., pp. 233-240.

28 Cf. Nicolae Stoicescu, *Dicționar al marilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova în sec. XIV-XVII*, Ed. Enciclopedică Română, București, 1971, p. 143.

29 Banul Mihai Cantacuzino, *Genealogia Cantacuzinilor*, published by N. Iorga, București, 1902, pp. 111-112; N. Iorga, *Documente privitoare la familia Cantacuzino, scoase în cea mai mare parte din arhiva D-lui G. Gr. Cantacuzino*, Inst. Minerva, București, 1902, p. 77; *Istoria Țării Românești 1290-1690. Letopiseșul Cantacuzinesc*, critical edition by C. Grecescu and D. Simonescu, București, 1960, p. 170 (further to be cited as *Letopiseșul Cantacuzinesc*).

30 *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești. Acte și scrisori*, published by Endre Veress, vol. XI (1661-1690), București, 1939, p. 270.

31 Cf. R. Șt. Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Pe urmele stolnicului...*, ed. cit., p. 237.

32 Ibidem, p. 266; Toma Cantacuzino was also sent to Istanbul in 1703 (N. Stoicescu, *Dicționar...*, ed. Cit., p. 145), to Edirne in 1704 (Al. A. C. Stourdza, *Constantin Brancovan, principe de Valachie 1688-1714. Son règne et son époque*, vol. III, Paris, 1915, p. 99, 104), to Brașov in 1709 (N. Stoicescu, *op. cit.*, p. 145).

33 Cf. Gheorghe Georgescu-Buzău, *Un diplomat român la Moscova la începutul secolului al XVIII-lea, David Corbea*, in *Relații româno-ruse în trecut*, București, 1957, pp. 42-62; also see *infra*, note 17.

34 The seneschal received his guests in accordance to those written by Neagoe Basarab in his Teachings to his son Theodosie, the chapter on envoys and wars, in *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie, versiunea românească de la Curtea de Argeș. Originalul slavon în facsimil. Transcrierea și traducerea fragmentelor de acad. Gheorghe Mihăilă*, published by