

STATE OF MIND OF ION I. C. BRĂȚIANU AT THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR I (JUNE 1914-DECEMBER 1916)

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Abstract. On 1 June 1914, Romanian Prime-Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu met Tzar Nicholas II who was paying an official visit to Romania. The Russian emperor insistently demanded that Romania remain neutral or conclude an alliance with the Entente. The Romanian Prime-Minister concluded an alliance with the Entente. On 14/27 August 1916, Romania joined the war alongside the Entente. The Austro-Hungarian, German, Bulgarian and Turkish troops took advantage of the lack of help from the Entente to Romania. Romanian troops were defeated. Confronted with the situation, Ion I. C. Brătianu turned demoralized. He fortunately recovered quickly and succeeded to organize the retreat in Moldavia and Romania's resistance to the foreign attacks.

Key-words: Romania, Ion I. C. Brătianu, neutrality, World War I, fighting on two fronts

On 1 June 1914, Tzar Nicholas II arrived in the maritime harbour of Constanța. The Russian autocrat had sailed his splendid yacht Standard together with his family, for an apparent courtesy visit. In reality, during the visit the Tzar declared to King Charles I that he would not keep unresponsive in the case of a war against Serbia.

Was that a premonition of the Tzar's? I do not tend to believe that.

The assassination that took place in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 that resulted in the killing of Franz Ferdinand, the heir of the Austria-Hungary Empire throne, and his wife, princess Sofia, actually represented the pretext for the start of the First World War. In truth, the determining cause for the engagement into the fight of not less than 28 states from all the continents¹ was the desire for redistribution of the colonial empires and to form national states in Europe.

Romania was interested to solve the problem of coagulating its ethnic state on the grounds of the minorities' principle. Actually, the diplomats and political leaders in the capital cities of the great powers formally used this principle, which allowed conceptual ascertaining of the future national European states, pre-existing the end of World War I.²

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¹ Cf. Mircea Popa, *Primul război mondial*, București, 1979, p. 477; see also the annexed tables.

² An example of this is drawing, already in December 1916, the future conventional border destined to separate Romania and Hungary, called by the diplomats „the Balfour line” (see R. Șt.