

1881 - PROCLAMATION OF THE ROMANIAN KINGDOM, THROUGH THE SPEECHES OF VASILE BOERESCU AND CAROL I

Sabin Drăgulin,*

dragulinsabin@yahoo.com

Ancuța Brașoveanu**

antoanetaancuta@gmail.com

Abstract: *The year 1881, the year in which Romania was proclaimed Kingdom, represents one of the major landmarks in the process of development and modernization of the Romanian state. This historic moment was preceded by two major events: the union of Moldavia with Wallachia on 5-24 January 1859 and the declaration of state independence from 9-10 May 1877. The transformation of Romania into a kingdom was, in fact, one of the greatest '48 desire. In our study we will consider the integral analysis of Vasile Boerescu and Carol I's speeches at the proclamation of the kingdom, together with a small comparative study of the evolution of their discourses over time at key moments in the history of the Romanian state.*

Keywords: *King, Kingdom, independence, nationality, Romania, great powers.*

Introduction

The year 1881, for the political, cultural and economic elite of Romania, represented the achievement of another objective within the country project imagined in 1848 and published in the programmatic documents of the revolutionary movement in the Romanian countries. After the union of the two Romanian Principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia, bringing a foreign prince to its throne and gaining state independence by force of arms, the moment of proclamation of the kingdom came to close a first historical cycle in which the state completed

* Prof. PhD., The Faculty of Political Science and Administration, "Petre Andrei", Iași.

** PhD. Student, Philology, "Ovidius" University, Constanța.

its internal organization.¹ Of course, the project continued, but then, symbolically, the boyar elites in Romania, in synod with the sovereign, made that institutional reform, to express, in front of the whole world, the symbolic connection of the state to western cultural and civilization models.²

Declaring the kingdom was not an unexpected act. There was a tension in the political space due to the expectation of that act. Interesting was the moment when Mihail Sturdza, the former ruler of Moldavia, sent his congratulations to Prince Carol I before the proclamation of the kingdom was accomplished.³ But when we looked at that moment of national history, it is important to specify that although it was a moment thought by the founding fathers of the state and the Romanian nation, putting it into practice was not easy. Internally, there was still a constant opposition to the king. The German origin and the fact that he was a member of the imperial dynasty provoked an attitude of rejection by the pro-French national elites. The inner troubles that preceded the proclamation of the kingdom were also found in the memories of Titu Maiorescu. Romania had begun, after 1878, to enter into the orbit of the Central Powers. The opposition was divided. Junimists would have wanted to take part in the government; instead, the Conservative Party refused them.⁴ Ion Brătianu, from the liberals, wanted the government to invite the conservatives to show the whole world that the achievement of the kingdom was an action of both parties. The divided views and the lack of unity of the opposition forced the liberals to be the ones who implemented another point in the national project.⁵

Another aspect that we must bring to discussion was that the adoption of the kingdom represents the conclusion of another fascinating period in the history of the Romanian state; "The great liberal government". Between 1876 and 1888, the liberals were at the government of Romania. Throughout that period, the minister was I.C. Brătianu, except for the period April 10 - June 8, 1881, when the post of prime minister was

¹ Sabin Drăgulin, *The History of Romanian Political Thought 1848-1948*, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Dumitru Suci, *The monarchy and the formation of Great Romania 1866-1918*, Albatros Publishing House, București, 1997, p. 103.

⁴ Apostol Stan, *Political power and democracy in Romania*, Albatros Publishing, București, 1995, p. 128.

⁵ Titu Maiorescu, *Parliamentary speeches on the political development of Romania under the reign of Carol I*, vol. III, (1881-1888), Socecu&Comp. Publishing House, București, 1899.

assumed by his brother D. Bratianu. The "pause" in government was due precisely to the liberals' desire to co-opt the conservatives.⁶

At the same time, external work had to be carried out in order to make that decision acceptable.⁷ The proclamation of the kingdom came only four years after gaining independence, by force of arms and sacrifice of blood. The attitude of the Romanian state was not passive, from the 5th to the 24th of January 1859, until the 10th of May 1881. Step by step, stage by stage, the state was built. But, as it had been seen in the Berlin Peace Treaty (1881), there were certain conditions imposed by the great powers. Perhaps the hardest, from a political point of view, was the granting of citizenship to the Jews who had immigrated to Romania since the 1960s, which caused a vehement reaction from the local elites. There are known speeches that, liberal leaders, or conservatives had spoken from the Parliament's tribune against those conditions.⁸ But there were also economic conditions. Germany and Austria-Hungary, had invested in the Romanian economy, but some of them, especially those that looked at railway infrastructure, caused huge scandals that remained in historical memory nearly 150 years. The Romanian state, in the Strousberg affair, was forced by Germany to pay compensation to private individuals; otherwise that great European power would refuse to recognize internationally the independence, and later the Kingdom.⁹

Those were the domestic and international realities of 1881. However, the Kingdom was proclaimed.

In order to better understand the main ideas, concepts, values of the age, we present two speeches.

In order to express the values of that time, we have chosen to analyse two speeches: that of Vasile Boerescu, as representative of liberal modernizing elites and of sovereign Carol I.

⁶ Dan Carbarău, „Great Liberal Government: Romania's independence and the proclamation of the Kingdom”, in *Polis*, nr. 2(8), 2015, pp. 91-105, (accessed 11.06.2019), [http://revistapolis.ro/documente/revista/2015/Numarul_2\(8\)2015/Numarul_2\(8\)2015.pdf](http://revistapolis.ro/documente/revista/2015/Numarul_2(8)2015/Numarul_2(8)2015.pdf).

⁷ Paraschiva Căncea, *Political life in Romania in the first decade of state independence 1878-1888*, Scientific publishing house, București, 1974, pp. 81-82.

⁸ Sabin Drăgulin, Antoaneta Ancuța Brașoveanu, „State, modernity and anti-semitism in Ion C. Brătianu's political speeches from the second half of the nineteenth century”, în *Cogito*, Vol. X, no. 4/December, 2018, pp. 17-28,

<http://cogito.ucdc.ro/COGITO%20nr.%204%20december%202018%20BTfinal.pdf> (accessed 11.06.2019); Sabin Drăgulin, „The origins of Romanian racism. A History of Ideas”, *Sfera Politicii*, 2012, pp. 37-50,

http://revistasferapoliticii.ro/sfera/pdf/Sfera_168.pdf (accessed 11.06.2019).

⁹ Keith Hitchins, *Romania 1866-1947*, Third Edition Revised and Added, translated by George G. Potra and Delia Răzdolescu, București, 2003, p. 63.

Speech Analysis:

Vasile Boerescu was a Romanian Wallachian boyar who was born in Bucharest in 1830 and died in Paris in 1883. Although he had a short life, Boerescu entered the political history of the country as a moderate liberal who fought for political rights of the Romanians being able to create their own state. In 1859 we found him a professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Bucharest, and in 1871 he became its rector.

The period in which he lived, tumultuous and full of events, had signed his destiny. In 1848, although he was a student, he participated in the revolution, being an active contributor of the Romanian *Pruncul*¹⁰ newspaper, where the liberals of the age promoted their ideas. In 1857 he founded the *National*¹¹ newspaper, where the authors supported the unionist ideas, being elected in the same year as a deputy in the elective assembly in Wallachia. In 1859, Boerescu was among the most vocal MPs, succeeding in his speech to persuade other colleagues to designate Alexandru Ioan Cuza the only candidate for the leadership of the two Principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia. And in the speech of January 24, 1859, we found the idea of nationality and patriotism in order to strengthen the national power, but respecting the rules imposed by the great European powers, which, hopefully, *will applaud the decision of the Romanians to do the act of union*.¹²

In 1866, he was a member of the delegation that represented Romania at the Peace Conference in Paris.

In 1877, on June 10-22, Boerescu held a speech on Romania's independence, where he advocated for defensive, not offensive, defence, non-mixing of Romanians in the interests of other peoples, emphasizing once again the uniqueness of the Romanians' nationality *as a peculiar and special people*¹³, for the need to be understood and supported by the great European powers, powers that would see in Romania a neutral, distinguished state *capable of striking a balance between other nations of origin and with different interests, independence representing the strengthening of Romanian nationality, moderation, order, peace, progress*.¹⁴

¹⁰ The first uncensored newspaper in the history of the Romanian nation, founded on 12 June 1848 by C.A. Rosetti and Eric Winterhalder.

¹¹ A more cultural newspaper, publication of moderate liberals, printed at the National Printing House of Iosif Romanov.

¹² V. Boerescu, „Discourse on the union of the Principalities”, in Vasile Boerescu, *Political Speeches (1859-1883)*, vol. I (1859-1873), Bucharest, Socec & Co Graphic Workshops, 1910, pp. 3-11.

¹³ Idem, „Speech for Romania's Independence”, in Vasile Boerescu, *Ibidem*, vol. II (1873-1883), Bucharest, Socec & Co Graphic Workshops, 1910, pp. 866-728.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 866-728.

The conclusion is that, in all three speeches exposed at key times, respectively, 1859, 1877 and 1881, the ideas about union, independence, the desire to transform the state from the principality to kingdom, promote the national ideas, express the duty to the descendants, the need ensuring the defence of the state, maintaining peace, continuing the modernization process of society and the state, integrating Romania in the field of international relations and giving the great European powers the support as a guarantor of the evolution of the Romanian state.

In fact, Boerescu would have a decisive presence at key moments, in the historical stages that the Romanian state was going through.

At the historical moment of Romania's transformation from the Principality into Kingdom, Boerescu (March 14, 1881) had the quality of foreign minister. The document is relevant because the found ideas show how the process of changing society took place in search of national identity, the form of social and political organization, and the promotion of the national ideal.

Due to the extent of the speech, we will only play those fragments, from which the main ideas broke.

"Your Government, uniting itself with this law project that you have taken the initiative, merely follows the impulses of its heart, as well as the impetus of its nation. What are the impulses of our heart, each of you feels it; those who have spoken to us have eloquently exposed them, and each of us, members of the government, as Romanians, can only have the same feelings.

Gentlemen, the act that is being done today is a great act that will occupy a significant place in our history. (...) But let us now see now, gentlemen, in what way would this act have abnormalities, or how could it cause some distrust of other states?

Abnormally nothing can contain this act; I can even add without pre-courageous preference, that the anomaly was the same which existed until today (applause) as we were before.

Yes, thanks to the bravery of its sons, thanks to the glorious battles they had on the fields of Bulgaria, their blood and its value were a rank and an honourable position among the civilized peoples of Europe.

But once Romania became independent by itself, and once this independence was recognized by all the powers of Europe, who thus appreciated that this new state deserves all the endeavour, which was its place, the rank we held in the hierarchy of the independent states of Europe?

Place or rank of Principality! But for what Principality? There are states in Europe of much more subordinate importance than Romania, some of which are much smaller than us, both in terms of size and

population and wealth, and yet those states are called Kingdoms, have a defined position, a proper hierarchy, admitted in the vocabulary of the European diplomacy label.

Our name of Principality, which we have had up to now, was it well defined and in accordance with the position and the value of our state? No, gentlemen, and that's why I said that what had been until now was an anomaly. (Prolonged applause)

But could that anomaly last indefinitely? Not. (...)

Remember, gentlemen, how the progress of our state has gradually been done. In 1859, we made the union of both Principalities, how many of us had the misfortune to contribute to that great work, to find ourselves on the political stage, when the union, that first phase of the new Romanian state was made, we can only be the happiest, when we see that today the work ends and is crowned. (applause)

Time is coming back as through the bravery of our sons on the battlefield, to see the independence of our state recognized by all foreign powers. By this independence, we define our position of state.

I repeat to you, that this position has been defined to us; for until the recognition of independence, Romania's position was indeed undefined. Were we a truly independent state? It was not well known. Were we really a vassal state? This was not known either. (...)

This name, this title, is that of the Kingdom and King. The nation whose representatives you are, made this solemn declaration, and the government can only be in the union and echo of the national will. (Applause) (...)

At us the meaning of the word Dominus is pure Latin: it derives from the Romans from the word dominus, and in Latin dominus means master, sovereign, later also emperor. That is why, in our old days, our lords were called Dominus, as D. Chitu observed rightly. When the modern terms began to appear, Dominus was often called Principe, a word that does not exist in our old language (...)

If today, taking a precise and well-defined name and title, which is a logical consequence of our recognition of independence, we also follow an impulse of our heart, this is a happy harmony that is supposed to be held by a nation, knew to unite the sense of the heart with the voice of reason. And when today we fulfil the most vivid and ardent desire of any Romanian, at the moment when I speak to you and when the Assembly does this great act, I am sure that the souls of the Plevna heroes are happily in the holy regions where they are. (Prolonged and repeated applause) Considering, however, not only that reason of diplomacy, I wonder: what change of name could give rise to a shadow of mistrust in Romania? (...)

The first consideration is, as I said, that the title of King of Romania is only a continuation of the same sovereignty. The King is more precisely, more precisely and better defined, what the Dominus of Romania was, vaguely and indefinitely. Neither the right nor the law is added, nor decreasing.

Another consideration is that our kingdom does not entail any difficulties that would result from changes in frontiers or land expansions.

Romania Kingdom continues to be in the same limits, with the same territory expansions, as in the past. (...)

So Romania Kingdom is nothing but Romania before: it has no other aspirations, no other program.

The aspirations like the Romanian Kingdom program are, as before, in the best relations with all the Powers, and to pursue the great course of civilized action. (Applause) (...)

I am sure, in any case, that the great European Powers will not give a bad interpretation to this great act of the Romanian people today. (Prolonged Applause)".¹⁵

Keywords that we found in this discourse are: kingdom, king, nationality, Romania, Europe.

Boerescu began his speech by pointing out that, as a Government representative, he supports the parliamentary initiative of proclaiming the Kingdom, a motion put forward by General Leca, the chairman of the Chamber, at the opening of the meeting on March 14, 1881. Using epanalepsis impulses as an emotional factor, *impulses his heart, as well as the impulse of his nation, the impulses of our heart*, the speaker supported the adherence to the new form of the proposed organization: *Your Government, uniting itself with this law project that you have taken the initiative proposes, the impulses of his heart, as well as the impulse of his nation. What are the impulses of our heart, each of you, gentlemen, feels it; those who have spoken to them have been eloquently exposed, and each of us, members of the government, as Romanians, can only have the same feeling.*

Then continued, using the antithesis: normal / abnormal, today / ahead, *but let's see now, gentlemen, what would this act have something abnormal...? Abnormally nothing can contain this act;... abnormal was the same until today (applause) as we used to be.* and the rhetorical question followed by an answer, a technique specific to the orator,

¹⁵ Idem, „Speech for the proclamation of the kingdom”, in Vasile Boerescu, *Political speeches* (1859-1883), vol. II (1873-1883), Bucharest, Socec & Co Graphic Workshops, 1910, pp. 1249-1256.

explaining the necessity of adopting such an act, which supported the position of Romania in relation to the other states.

The Minister reminded of the debt of the descendants, of the Independence War in which the Romanian *sons* / soldiers shed *their blood on the fields of Bulgaria* in order to obtain *an honourable position among the civilized peoples of Europe*.

The rhetorical question followed by the answer again placed itself in the orator's argument: *But for what Principality?... Our name of Principality... was it well defined and in accordance with the position and the value of our state? No, gentlemen.* which specifies the necessity of Romania's recognition with the status of Kingdom, a form *admitted in the vocabulary of the European diplomacy label*, the Principality being not specific to even the states in Europe *of much more secondary importance than Romania, some of which are much smaller than us, both in terms of the extent, as well as that of the population and the wealth ranges*.

There was a brief trip into history, history at which of the orator actively participated, in order to show the stages that Romania had gone through to obtain the state itself; the evocation of the moment 1859, the union expounded with the help of the metaphor as *the first base of the new Romanian state*, where the orator played a crucial role, following his speech, by electing Alexandru Ioan Cuza as the ruler of the two Principalities, whose continuity is *today, when we see that the work ends and is crowned. (applause)*, then evoking the War of Independence, *the bravery of our sons on the battlefield, to see the independence of our state recognized by all foreign powers*.

Antithesis defined / undefined / confused, vassal / independent, then / today was used to strengthen the political and social *position* to which the Romanian state aspired at that time, *the title of Kingdom and King*.

Then he proceeded with the etymology of the *Latin* word of *Lord/Dominus*, which in other states became *prince*, a word that did not exist *in our old language*, later transformed into *King*, *because this is imposed on Him by the nature of things, by the extent and value of our state, political and economic. (Applause)*, emphasizing once again the necessity of Romania's enrolment, also through the evolution of language, on the road of modernity with the other states, and because the very term *Dominus* is by its *vague and indeterminate* nature in antithesis with that of *King* that was *precise and exact*.

Moreover, he calmly affirmed that the status of Romania would not change either from the territorial or habitual point of view, *it will not become controversial, the Kingdom of Romania continues to be in the same limits, by changes of frontiers and territories. It continues the traditions, has no aspirations, no... harmful tendencies to others,... no*

other program, but just wanted to follow the great path of the civilized nations.

He then ended, in his quality of Foreign Minister, pointing out that that status of the Kingdom came as the need *to guarantee stability and order on the lower Danube* and with the hope that the powers of Europe would not look like as an affront the new status, but as *a guarantee*.

Specifically to the proclamation the term "referent" throughout the discourse was we, the orator identifying himself not only with the audience but with the desire of the whole Romanian people.

The second discourse of the analysis belongs to Carol I, the former Lord of Romania, and King, at that moment.

"When on May 10, 1881, the Presidents of the Chamber and the Senate handed the crowns, he uttered the following words:

Today's celebration ends so brilliantly for a period of 15 years, so rich in heavy struggles and great deeds. Romania has developed very carefully under the guise of the Constitutions and its laws. The unbridled work of the state troops, the bravery of its army, and my unwavering confidence in the power of the people, have finally accomplished the most vivid desire of all: today the kingdom was founded, a sure guarantee for the future.

So I receive this crown proudly, it is made of the metal of a mouth of fire, sprinkled with the blood of our heroes and sanctified by the church; I receive it as a symbol of Romania's independence and power. A dear jewel it will be the testimony of the sad and glorious times; it will remind future generations of the ancestors' bravery and the connection that has been between the prince and the people. And the most beautiful crown for the queen it will be, as for me, the trust and love of the people, to whom all our thoughts and our senses belong. In front of the flags who had fluttered on the battlefield, in front of these crowns symbols of the kingdom, and around whom the people were gathering as soldiers around these flags, in front of these offerings for which the people rushed to the capital, we unite in the expensive call of our hearts: Let our beloved Romania live, today crowned by its own means!"¹⁶

The keywords of this speech are: crowning, kingdom, people, crown, May 10th.

May 10, now called the King's Day in Romania, was a symbolic day, both for the Romanian state and for Carol I, the day when he became the ruler of Romania in 1866, and then, in 1877, to declare the absolute independence of Romania from the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁶ the speech of King Carol I, spoken on May 10, 1881, on the occasion of the coronation after a photograph taken at the National Archives of Romania, the Royal House Fund, File 4/1881, tab 3.

The King remembered, from the beginning of the speech, the 15 years he was the ruler of Romania, *so rich in heavy struggles and great deeds*, evoking the history and deeds that led to that moment, *his constitutions and laws. The unskilled work of statesmen, the bravery of his army, and my unwavering confidence in the power of the people.*

Using the metaphor, he described the royal crown cast from the pipe of an Ottoman cannon conquered at Plevna, *the metal of a mouth fire*, the metal being steel, a metal symbolizing the bravery of the soldiers, *brave in battles sprinkled with the blood of our heroes and sanctified by the church*, a symbol of the past which must not be forgotten, *the jewel will be the testimony of the sad but glorious times; will remind future generations of the ancestors' bravery and the connection that has been between the prince and the people.*

He also pointed out that *the most beautiful crown for the queen would be*, just as for him the confidence given by the Romanians, *the trust and love of the people to whom all our thoughts and senses belong.*

Carol concluded his wishes to the new state called Kingdom:

Let our beloved Romania live, today crowned by its own means!

The term referent was initially *I* that ultimately turned into *us*, the king becoming one with the people he leaded, his voice.

Similar to the 1877 speech, the sovereign emphasized the importance of May 10 and the years spent as Lord of Romania, keeping the tone of gratitude for the Romanian people who had chosen to be their king.

What was missing from the King's speech now, compared to 1877, was the mention of the great European powers, but that was probably because the greatness of the day had as main actor the Romanian people and the new status of Romania.

Instead of conclusions

The transition from Principality to the Kingdom of Romania did not bring with great changes. Political people of the time were those who had seen in the new form of organization a formula of stability and symbolic expression, especially in relation to the other European states. Romania's wish was to be accepted as a partner of the states which negotiated the destinies of the European peoples, of course, in the geopolitical area. From the two speeches it was clear that there was a communion of ideas between the liberal elites of the time and the King. This is important because it reveals a unity between the elites and the royal house as to the continuation of the political project of the 48'. That partnership, between the two fundamental components of the political power in Bucharest, allowed the continuation of the process of modernization, transforming the country into a political actor that should be taken into account at

international level when it wanted to maintain a geopolitical stability in the Balkans.

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National Archives of Romania, the Royal House Fund, File 4/1881, tab 3.