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**LEADING MEMBERS OF THE BRĂTIANU FAMILY IN THE
CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF
WALLACHIA AND ROMANIA**

***Membri de vază ai familiei Brătianu în administrația centrală și
treburile politice ale Țării Românești și României***

Abstract: Our study contains an interesting episode from the history of Wallachia (and Romania, after the union of the Principalities), in which members of the Brătianu family were involved, from Toma Brătianu to his brother Constantin (Dincă) Brătianu and his sons Teodor, Dumitru and Ion, all of whom played a most important role in the administrative affairs of the country. Through these figures, pioneers of diplomatic and political pathways, the second half of the 19th century marked the most flourishing period in the modern history of the Romanian people. This rightly-called «dynasty» contributed fruitfully to the development of modern Romania. Dumitru and Ion C. Brătianu, but especially the latter, were an engine for all political actions after 1848, such as the election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza and the first major events in the reign of Carol I (1877 and 1881, when the country became independent, then a kingdom), which weighed heavily in Romania's integration amongst European countries.

Keywords: *sceneschal, estate, boyar, bailiff, revolutionary, radical liberal, vizier, Toma Brătianu, Dincă Brătianu, Teodor Brătianu, Dumitru Brătianu, Ion C. Brătianu*

Toma Brătianu, the eldest son of Ene Brătianu, was the first of his family to interfere in the political affairs of Wallachia, since in 1821, following the death of Tudor Vladimirescu, he became liaison for captains Ghiță Cuțui and Simion Mehedințeanu. After taking part in the events of 1820-1821, he took refuge in Sibiu, where he gave financial aid to the aforementioned captains, who were later captured and executed in Bucharest. Some letters were found on their persons, which had been written by Toma Brătianu against Lord Grigore Ghica of Wallachia, who had fallen into the disfavor of Tsarist Russia¹.

Constantin (Dincă) Brătianu (1788-1844), Toma's brother, is mentioned, at 43 years of age, in Wallachian documents such as *Catastih de*

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¹ Library of the Romanian Academy, *Manuscripts, Brătianu Fund*, Parcel LIII, Document 3.

boieri [Registry of Boyars] and *Catagrafia din 31 decembrie 1831* [The Census of December 31st, 1831] as the steward, then treasurer and bailiff of Lovișteea. These documents state that he originated from lower class Wallachian boyars, and that he was the wealthiest inhabitant of Argeș county. Because of the emergence of bourgeois connections and the enrichment of lower class boyars, Dincă Brătianu's at-the-time opponents, mainly conservative and anti-unionist greater boyars, taunted his supposed flaws, as Dincă was rumored to be an unschooled debt collector, magistrate or ruler. The aforementioned conflict occurred amid the political struggle of brothers Dumitru and Ion Brătianu (Dincă's sons) against the conservative, anti-unionist greater boyars². Under these circumstances, Constantin Brătianu found himself amongst the highest dignitaries of Argeș County. In 1821 he was designated bailiff of Lovișteea, and later he made it to the position of ruler of Argeș. The opening of the Great Popular Assembly of 1831 found Dincă as the steward representing his county. He had been appointed by General Pavel Kiseleff and invited to take part in the work of the Assembly as a Deputy. His salary was similar to a governor's, and 8 horses were used for his transportation. According to archival documents, Pavel Kiseleff offered Dumitru Brătianu, Dincă's son, a scholarship for Paris, but the father, proud and dignified, refused³.

After the elections of November 1831, Dincă Brătianu was re-elected as deputy in The Great Popular Assembly and carried out his mandate until 1844. While partaking in the works of the Assembly in Bucharest, he was hosted by Alexandru Vilara, a prominent figure of the city and part of the entourage of the Court. As he stated in the letters sent to his son Dumitru in Paris, Dincă highly valued the stewardship work and embraced innovative ideas, proving himself a progressive thinker. It is rumored that he was the only one at the Assembly wearing German clothes. In spite of the taunting he received from conservatives, he was very knowledgeable, the letters he sent to his sons and friends in Bucharest serving as proof⁴. Born into a boyar family, he had the Brătianu nature, being gentle, tall, blond, good, upright, and very faithful. Most of his letters hold evidence of this faith, starting or ending in mentions of the Virgin Mary, God, or Jesus Christ⁵.

Dincă Brătianu proved himself to be the right man for his times because he was open to novelty, a lover of progress and modernity. In 1830-1840 he requested the establishment of a glass factory, knowing that the wealth of a nation would increase with its economic development. Along with other deputies, he strongly opposed the proposal of Wallachian mines being leased to Alexandru Trandafilef, a foreigner, who was supported by

² Apostol Stan, *Grupări și curente politice în România între Unire și Independență* (1859-1877) [Political groups and currents in Romania between the Union and Independence], București, 1979, p. 39.

³ Library of the Romanian Academy, *Manuscripts, Brătianu Fund*, Parcel LIII, Document 5.

⁴ Ibidem, Letter 4/CCCCI.

⁵ Ibidem, Letter 3/CCCCI.

Tsarist Russia. Freeman⁶ were always thankful because he defended their lands. In the will left to professor Gheorghe I. I. C. Brătianu, Ionel Brătianu gave his son Lalu Mountain, thusly underlining the fact that Dincă himself had been a lover of natural beauty, having possession not only over estates, but also over a mountain. Since 1834, when he became the administrator of Argeş county, a position he held during the reign of Alexandru Dimitrie Ghica, Dincă enjoyed great appreciation from the Regulatory Rule [*Domnia Regulamentară* in Romanian], and on the 6th of December 1839 he was promoted to the rank of Steward [*Clucer*]⁷.

By operating a profitable commercial business, selling cattle and cereal inside the country as well as exporting them, through work and efficient administration of his estates, Dincă Brătianu soon became one of the wealthiest inhabitants of Argeş. His wealth and status helped him advance the social ladder from lower boyar to Great Steward, as he was mentioned in *Arhondologia Țării Românești* [The Chronicle of Wallachian Nobles]. Sabina Cantacuzino, his granddaughter, described him as „a hardworking man, appreciated for his seriousness. He was honest because he handled many legal matters, being a true magistrate”⁸. He died on February 10th, 1844, and was buried in the vestibule of the Royal Church in Curtea de Argeş.

Teodor C. Brătianu (1812-1884), the eldest son of Steward Dincă Brătianu, was in contrast with his brothers because he was a conservative and represented the old regime, although he had modern views and wore German clothes. He enlisted in the militia, but retired at the age of 33, upon obtaining the rank of major. He then traveled abroad to buy horses for his stud farm in Tigveni, his estate. He differed from his brothers, Dumitru and Ion, because of his instruction and education, and until the end of his life held conceptions that were diametrically opposed to theirs⁹.

As the first born, Teodor Brătianu inherited the large house in Pitești and the estates of Tigveni and Morărești. He managed to increase his wealth due to the fact that he was stingy to the point of starvation. He lent money with high interest rates, even to his brothers, if they found

⁶ *Moșneni* in Romanian [*moșnean* for singular]; another term with the same meaning was *răzeș/răzeși*. In medieval and modern Romanian history, specific to the territories of Wallachia, they were peasants legally un-attached to the land of the boyars, and instead collectively owned the land on which they lived and worked. In status, they were above regular peasants, which were dependent on the will of the boyars, whose land they inhabited and worked and to whom they paid special taxes in both money and labour. The *moșneni* only payed general taxes and answered directly to the ruler of the state, therefore being considered free citizens. This legal situation also existed in other territories inhabited by Romanians, but bore different names.

⁷ *Curierul Românesc* [Romanian Courier], year V, no. 76, 1834, pp. 300-302.

⁸ Sabina Cantacuzino, *Din viața familiei Brătianu* [From the life of the Brătianu family], Albatros, București, 1993, p. 18.

⁹ Anastasie Iordache, *Pe urmele lui Dumitru Brătianu*, Sport-Turism, București, 1984, p. 23.

themselves in difficult situations. He had opted for Tigveni insisting that his younger brother Ion exchange it for the Florica estate. An interesting event took place in 1858, when Ion C. Brătianu rebuilt Florica, and his brother Teodor, seeing its beauty, wanted to redeem the estate for a large sum of money. However, Ion C. Brătianu did not accept the trade, saying: „What would I do without Florica?”¹⁰.

Teodor Brătianu was a refined man, the tallest of his brothers, with beautiful hands, green eyes, thick eyebrows, and a ruffled mustache that made him look very stern. People called him *(The) Major* [*Domnul maior* in Romanian]. He had two marriages, resulting in four children: George, Grigore, and Constantin from the first, and Teodor from the second. The large houses that Teodor inherited in Pitești stood on *Ulița Boierească* [Boyar Street]. These houses had a large, straight courtyard, with surrounding outbuildings. In the back of the courtyard there was a house with a living room in the basement; on its walls there were portraits of all the voivodes. The staircase led to a beautiful porch, and from the porch the entryway was as wide as the building, the rooms having independent entrances. Behind the house there was an orchard that reached all the way to Argeș River. There was also a billiard table, which was used only on formal occasions, such as visits from dignitaries or other important people. The large boyar houses of Pitești did not have a main living room, and visits were received in the study or the bedrooms, with the bedding having been put away, the bed covered in damask quilts, and pillows set along the wall.

After his discharge, Teodor Brătianu played an important role in Argeș County because he used to practice commerce, bringing home animals such as thoroughbred horses, cattle, pigs, and bulls, having one of the most beautiful and diverse farms. Nonetheless, we find him alongside his brothers, Ion and Dumitru Brătianu, as a deputy in the Legislative Assembly of 1859¹¹.

From the description made by Ion C. Brătianu and Sabina Cantacuzino, it appears that Teodor Brătianu represented the old ways, that any change seemed dangerous to him, and that he considered any opposition to the established regime illegitimate. The liberalism of his brothers seemed hostile, and he was unfavorable to change in general. Not wanting to travel on railways, he traveled for a long time by the Brașov stanhope inherited from his father, which had no springs and was covered by a leather roof. Also, until 1881 he smoked from the chibouk, in oriental fashion. Teodor Brătianu's great stinginess made his brothers' lives quite difficult because he would either not lend them money at all, or he would do it with high interest, forcing them to borrow money from other people or to sell their lands in order to pay back their debts. For example, only after the War for Independence, appreciating the deeds of his younger brother, Ion

¹⁰ Sabina Cantacuzino, *Din viața familiei Brătianu*, p. 31.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

C. Brătianu, did Teodor forgo his debt's interest. He died in 1884 and was buried, alongside his father and mother, in the Hall of the Royal Church in Curtea de Argeș¹².

Dumitru C. Brătianu (1817-1892), brother to Teodor, was born in Pitești in the large house of Steward Dincă Brătianu, located on *Ulița Boierească* Street alongside the houses of their relations, such as the Lerescu, Budișteanu, Leurdeanu, or Rătescu families. On the banks of Argeș River, in this city, mentioned quite early in medieval records, Dumitru Brătianu spent his childhood. He discovered reading at an early age. Being his mother's favorite, Dumitru continued his studies in Bucharest at "St. Sava" National College. He was contemporary to brilliant people, such as Grigore Grădișteanu, Nicolae Bălcescu, Ion Ghica, and Alexandru Zane, and he was top of his class in the 4th grade in 1834¹³.

After graduating, he felt the need to receive a better education, which he could not access in his own country; therefore, his father gave him permission to study abroad in Paris. Dumitru was a handsome man, thin and well built, with curly hair, very elegant in his dress. He became an open-minded man, making lasting friendships to cultural figureheads of the time, and being appreciated by everyone, even after returning to his country. He married Eugenia Cialâc in 1865 and had six children: Lia, Dan, Stroe, Mărioara, Dinu, and Radu. Dumitru Brătianu was an intelligent and very cultured man, and was talented as a writer. He obtained his law degree in Paris. This led to him being more radical than local politicians, even compared to his youngest brother, Ion, known for his political flair of the times¹⁴.

Dumitru made his political debut by publishing in *Pruncul Român* [The Romanian Child] on July 17th, 1848, when he outlined his national ideal. He was strongly influenced by a general desire to fight and win, and was capable of feeling intense patriotism for his nation and its people. His participation, alongside other Romanian politicians, in the Wallachian Revolution of 1848 stood as evidence for the fact. Later on, in exile, together with other leaders, he founded the European Democratic Center in London.

After leaving France and the Association of Romanian Students in Paris, Dumitru Brătianu brought with him French revolutionary ideas to the Romanian Principalities. After he and his brother Ion joined the Revolutionary Committee alongside C. A. Rosetti, Nicolae Bălcescu, and the Golescu brothers, radical action was taken. Together with Ștefan and Radu Golescu, Dumitru C. Brătianu welcomed Cristian Tell at the Islaz camp. The

¹² Vasile Novac, *File din istoria Argeșului* [Pages from the history of Argeș], Paralela 45, Pitești, 2001, pp. 206-208.

¹³ Library of the Romanian Academy, *Manuscripts, Brătianu Fund*, Parcel LIII, Document 1.

¹⁴ Mihai Sorin Rădulescu, *Elita liberală românească (1866-1900)* [The Romanian Liberal Elite], All, 1998, p. 29.

Committee delegated Dumitru as diplomatic agent to Pest and Vienna; the mission was to create a link between Transylvanians and Kossuth. On August 2nd, 1848 he was appointed to the committee delegated to go to Constantinople and gain Ottoman approval for the new Constitution. As the committee failed its mission, Dumitru Brătianu and Nicolae Bălcescu left Constantinople leaving behind an official protest against the Sultan. The bloody end of the 1848 Revolution found Dumitru C. Brătianu disguised as Maria Rosetti's servant under the name of "Pedro", accompanying the convoy of exiles (amongst them, Ion C. Brătianu and C. A. Rosetti).

His political activity during his exile took place in Paris and London, where he acted through memoirs and petitions addressed to the Great Powers. He used radical language in his memoirs, because he believed that only through revolutionary fervor could the people be freed from foreign domination. Because of this radicalism, even his older brother, Teodor, avoided both him and Ion¹⁵. On December 23rd, 1858 Dumitru received an audience to Napoleon III, and on January 7th, 1859 he sent a letter to Count Al. Walewski, in which he complained about the abuses of kaymakams Nicolae Vogoride and Todiriță Balș. Brătianu called upon the French Foreign Affairs Minister and his sense of righteousness to intervene in Bucharest and to give necessary time to the appeals. Time was short, so he left Paris and returned to his country, stopping in Pitești first and afterwards departing for Bucharest, where he was awaited. His diplomatic efforts in the West, cordially received by Napoleon and the Chancellor of Prussia, encouraged the radicals who were at the forefront of the events in Bucharest to elect a Ruler. Among the four committees of the Elective Assembly, the Third included Dumitru Brătianu as a deputy from Pitești, alongside his brother, Ion, and Alexandru G. Golescu. Later on Dumitru was appointed as a Secretary of the Assembly. In their confrontation with the conservatives, the radical liberals supported the candidacy of Nicolae Golescu, who withdrew on January 23rd, 1859 in order to allow the election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. By Princely Decree, issued in Iași on January 25th, 1859, Dumitru Brătianu was appointed Minister Secretary of State in Wallachia. He was tasked with drafting the explanatory memorandum for the election of the Ruler, together with Vasile Boierescu, and thusly contributed greatly to the achievement of the Union of the Principalities, having been at the forefront of the struggle for the double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza¹⁶.

During Cuza's reign, Dumitru Brătianu acted vigorously alongside the radical liberals gathered in the "National Party", which had a Central Electoral Committee based at the Concordia Hotel. It included himself, Nicolae Golescu, Ion C. Brătianu, and others. Regarding the agrarian question, which was highly opposed by the conservatives, Dumitru Brătianu

¹⁵ Anastasie Iordache, *Pe urmele lui Dumitru Brătianu*, p. 249.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 240-249.

wrote an article in *Românul* [The Romanian] in which he described it as the most important issue from a political, economic, and social point of view¹⁷. He was later amongst the politicians, both radical liberals and conservatives, which assembled in the Coalition that dethroned Alexandru Ioan Cuza on February 11th, 1866, and aimed to elect a foreign prince from a ruling family in the West, that could strengthen the state and substantiate the constitutional regime. The Regency, following the resignation of the Mayor of Bucharest on February 12th, 1866 appointed an interim commission under the presidency of Dumitru Brătianu. The elections of March 6th, 1866 favored him as mayor of the capital, a position that he maintained until March 1st, 1867, when he was appointed Minister of Religious Affairs. He was successful in his diplomatic mission in Serbia, where he was tasked with purchasing gunpowder and ammunition, and also with strengthening relations between Mihail Obrenovici and Prince Carol I. In another mission, in France, he managed to secure the acknowledgment of Carol's rule¹⁸. On June 3rd, 1867 Dumitru Brătianu, as a minister, accompanied Carol I on a tour to the Mouths of the Danube, to Brăila and Galați, where they visited public institutions, military barracks, and historical monuments¹⁹.

Regarding the independence of the country, Dumitru Brătianu had one last audience with Napoleon III on July 31st, 1868. The emperor agreed with the action, but suggested that proceedings should not be rushed, because they could disturb European peace and alienate the Principalities from the sympathies of the civilized world²⁰.

On January 18th, 1870, in an audience with Carol I, Brătianu was told that parliamentary debates were going too slow, that the Senate rejected immovability, that there were numerous complaints against the contractors building the country's first railways, and that all of this led to a very difficult situation. In 1875 the National Liberal Party was formed through the coalition of Mazar Pasha, and Dumitru Brătianu found himself among its leaders. However, because of his radical ideas, he later drifted away from the party leadership and even from King Carol I²¹.

After the June 1876 elections Dumitru Brătianu was elected deputy for Ilfov county, but he later suffered a defeat by losing his position as Head of the Chamber of Deputies, because he lost the support of the radical liberals. Regarding the War for Independence, Dumitru Brătianu, through his policy and strengthened beliefs, considered that neutrality was the only alternative for Romania. He opposed the government led by his brother, Ion C. Brătianu, on the issue of neutrality with Turkey. In October 1878 Dumitru Brătianu's diplomatic mission to Constantinople became

¹⁷ Apostol Stan, *Grupări și curente politice în România între Unire și Independență*, p. 134.

¹⁸ Bucharest National Archives, *Brătianu Fund, Letters*, Letter 6.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, Letter 7.

²⁰ Library of the Romanian Academy, *Royal House Fund*, dossier 36/1868, p. 18.

²¹ Apostol Stan, *Grupări și curente politice în România între Unire și Independență*, p. 227.

permanent. In 1881 I. C. Brătianu resigned as head of government and retired to Florica estate, leaving both the positions of prime minister and foreign minister to his brother, who was recalled from Constantinople. The government formed by Dumitru Brătianu congregated Eugen Stătescu for Internal Affairs, General Gh. Slăniceanu for Warfare, Dimitrie A. Sturdza for Finances, Nicolae Dabidja for Public Services, V. A. Urechia for Religious Affairs, and Mihail Pherechide for Justice. The government would not last long because of internal struggles, and Dumitru Brătianu was not the man to control the turmoil and give a good direction. With the help of C. A. Rosetti, who joined the government, the liberal majority recovered their position quickly and, together with Metropolitan Calinic, signed an appeal for I. C. Brătianu to return to the party's leadership. Hence, the government of Dumitru Brătianu fell because Ion C. Brătianu came back not only to lead the party, but also a new government²².

Dumitru Brătianu had married the young Eugenia Cialăc in 1865. Her influence, together with the recent failures and his political ego, led him to create a dissident liberal group named „the pure liberals”, contrasting the party lead by I. C. Brătianu, the so-called „impure liberals”. Through *Națiunea* newspaper [The Nation] he started a fierce fight against them. In the autumn of 1885 he formed a united opposition and started an even stronger fight against the government lead by his brother. A motion adopted in November 1885 stated that the situation was extremely grave and that the government violated all public rights and freedoms. A Committee of the National Liberal Party, led by Dumitru Brătianu, was established. Throughout the country, many meetings and loud demonstrations of the United Opposition were held, entailing significant effort from Dumitru Brătianu. When the message of the Throne was presented in front of the Parliament, the United Opposition delivered an account containing all the issues the country was facing. Furthermore, the leaders of the United Opposition, consisting of Dumitru Brătianu, Lascăr Catargiu, and Gh. Vernescu, addressed a public appeal against the government. After the January 24th, 1888 elections, Dumitru Brătianu was voted in, with 136 votes, for the Chamber College of Ploiești. Also, following the same elections, a total of 52 deputies from the United Opposition were elected.

After an escalation of meetings and demonstrations of the United Opposition, on February 22nd, 1888 I. C. Brătianu resigned from his position. The king, strongly moved by the events, accepted the resignation of the government and entrusted the formation of a new one to the conservative Dimitrie Ghica, who was also appointed as the head of the National Liberal Party in 1879. On March 14th, 1888, after a repressed demonstration on the streets of Bucharest, Nicolae Fleava and Nicolae

²² Ion Bulei, *Sistemul politic al României Moderne* [The political system of modern Romania], Ed. Politică, București, 1987, p. 210.

Filipescu were detained. The government of Dimitrie Ghica failed, and the king appointed the government of Teodor Rosetti, the Minister of Internal Affairs. In 1890, Mihail Kogălniceanu paid a visit to I. C. Brătianu at Florica, informing him that he would leave Dumitru Brătianu's group. On March 24th, 1891 Dumitru returned to the National Liberal Party with his brother, where he gave a long speech at the party meeting²³.

After I. C. Brătianu's death on May 21st, 1891, Dumitru was proclaimed head of the National Liberal Party, but shortly afterwards, on June 10th, 1892, *Românul* [The Romanian] newspaper announced his own unfortunate death, stating that: „through his death, the last of the liberal forefathers, who built today's Romania through blood and sweat, faded away into history”²⁴.

Ion C. Brătianu (1821-1891) was the founder of the „Florica Dynasty”, but also the founder of the National Liberal Party and of Modern Romania. He was the third son of Dincă Brătianu and, alongside his brother Dumitru, took part in the most significant events of the second half of the 19th century, both at home and abroad, when Romania benefited from the ideal conditions to become a modern state among other European countries. When mentioning Ion C. Brătianu, we speak of the history of Romanians from 1848 to 1890, a time in which he played a central role. The so called “Vizier” from Florica was both charming and authoritarian, and managed to attract people, even his political opponents, when the timing was right. His modesty, ideological rigidity, and pride for his country guided his life²⁵.

As a child he received a severe and rigid education, being treated as an outcast by his mother (her favorite was his brother, Dumitru). He was sent to Tigveni estate, where he grew up away from his parents. When he returned to his parents' house in Pitești, he was most loved by his older sister, Ana Furduiescu²⁶. At the age of 14 he joined his brother Teodor's squadron as a cadet; after only 3 years he was promoted to the rank of second lieutenant [*praporgic* in Romanian, *praporshchik* in the original Russian] and assigned to Zimnicea garrison²⁷. As a Certificate of the National Militia stated, second lieutenant Ion Brătianu could read and write Romanian, Greek, and French. He was therefore eager for higher education, leaving for Paris, where his brother Dumitru was²⁸.

Of the estates he received from his father (Florica, Rătești, Mălureni, Brătieni-Galeșu, Lerești, Sâmburești), Ion C. Brătianu was left

²³ Ibidem, p. 215.

²⁴ *Românul* [The Romanian], year XXXVI, June 10th/22nd, 1892, p. 581.

²⁵ Ion G. Duca, *Portrete și amintiri* [Portraits and recollections], Humanitas, București, 1990, pp. 32-37.

²⁶ Sabina Cantacuzino, *Din viața familiei Brătianu*, p. 2.

²⁷ Bucharest National Archives, *Brătianu Fund*, document 9.

²⁸ Library of the Romanian Academy, *Manuscripts, Brătianu Fund*, Folder VI, tab 25-28.

with Florica, Rătești, and Sâmburești, the others being sold off when he needed finances for politics. In France, he met the great variety of leading revolutionary politicians. French ideas were then propagated by him and his brother, together with the Golești brothers, in the Romanian Principalities. Having returned to Bucharest, the Brătianu brothers acted quickly in establishing the Revolutionary Committee and participated in the revolutionary events, having an important role.

Even in exile, Ion acted to support Romanian politics and the ideals that followed²⁹. He fought alongside Romanian and foreign revolutionaries to prepare the Union of the Principalities. I. C. Brătianu played an important role in Alexandru Ioan Cuza's double election, when he noticed that a conservative named Vasile Boerescu was also encouraging the event. When everyone boasted about their contribution to the double election, Ion C. Brătianu acted vigorously by winning over the Palace guard, through Colonel Vlădoianu. Thusly the candidacies of Dumitru Brătianu and Nicolae Golescu fell, leaving the unionists to vote for Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the Ruler of Moldova, in the Elective Assembly. Because of diverging opinions between Cuza and I. C. Brătianu, the latter eventually formed a political coalition against the former. Romania had entered a new stage in its development and a „foreign prince” was needed to move forward. Through the political effort of Ion C. Brătianu, Cuza abdicated, and the Regency took action to bring in the „foreign prince”. The main actor in this endeavor was Ion C. Brătianu, who managed to sway Prince Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen to accept the throne of the Romanian Principalities. In spite of many obstacles, Brătianu succeeded in bringing Carol to Bucharest on May 9th, 1866, and on May 10th Carol took an oath of allegiance towards the Romanian people³⁰.

The liberal factions could not be consolidated, and the strong personality of Prince Carol took the radicals by surprise. Therefore, around 1870 Brătianu distanced himself from the Prince and took up anti-monarchical initiatives in an attempt to bring him on what Brătianu considered to be the right path. In this sense, after the events in Ploiești in 1870, Ion C. Brătianu maintained a policy which made him the closest collaborator of the King³¹.

The liberal opposition during the Lascăr Catargiu government led to the increasing rapprochement of the liberal factions and, after joining ranks, they established leagues in some of the large cities of the country. They also published *Alegătorul liber* newspaper [The free voter], and on May 24th, 1875 formed the National Liberal Party led by Ion C. Brătianu.

²⁹ Bucharest National Archives, *Brătianu Fund*, dossier 26.

³⁰ Ion C. Brătianu, *Cuvinte către români* [Speeches to Romanians], Ed. Politică, București, 1934, pp. 20-30.

³¹ Nicolae Chiachir, *Istoria popoarelor din sud-estul Europei în epoca modernă* [The history of peoples in South-East Europe in the modern age], Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1987, pp. 243-245.

The party formation took place in the house of English officer Lukeman, who had served in the Turkish army (hence the so-called “Coalition of Mazar Pasha”). On July 24th, 1876 Ion C. Brătianu was appointed president of the Council of Ministers, a Council that on May 9th and 10th, 1877 proclaimed Romania’s Independence in Parliament. The sacrifice of the Romanian army on the battlefield brought the fledgling Romanian state before the Peace Congress in San Stefano and Berlin. Considering that at the San Stefano negotiations in February 1878 the representative of Romania, Colonel Eraclie Arion, was not welcomed to discussions because Russia compromised directly with the Ottoman Government, in Berlin Ion C. Brătianu and Mihail Kogălniceanu, after great insistence, achieved the Independence of Romania, with Dobrogea and the Danube Delta becoming part of the Romanian state³².

The great liberal governance of 1876-1888 proved the competence and work ethic of Prime Minister Ion C. Brătianu, who undertook important political changes to develop Romania as the 1848 leaders had envisioned. The National Liberal Party’s plan to modernize Romanian society consisted of the adoption of economic laws, the settlement of the Strausberg question, ministerial responsibility, the organization of communes, of the army, the law against foreigners, and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Romania in 1881³³.

The United Opposition managed to topple Brătianu’s government, but after a few months it was noticed that the new government did not live up to expectations, so Ion C. Brătianu received a visit, at his estate in Florica, from his brother and other political figureheads that wanted him to return to the leadership of the country in order to resolve its newfound predicaments. In 1889, when the trial of the I. C. Brătianu Cabinet was supposed to happen, Mihail Kogălniceanu paid an unexpected visit at Florica and broke relations with Dumitru Brătianu, after realizing the truth about his brother. He then payed a second visit in 1890 to announce him that he was going to leave Dumitru’s political group. On March 23rd, 1890 Ion C. Brătianu visited his brother Dumitru and, after reconciliation, they announced the unification of the National Liberal Party on March 26th. On October 30th, 1890 Dumitru Brătianu arrived in Pitești and persuaded his brother to join and aid him. Returning to the National Liberal Party, Ion C. Brătianu held a long speech at a party meeting on March 24th, 1891, in which he stated: „I cannot explain how the Crown tolerated this, how the people could endure, for 3 years, such a state of affairs, which is so shameful, outrageous and dangerous for the country and for the dynasty”³⁴.

³² Constantin C. Giurescu, Dinu C. Giurescu, *Scurtă istorie a Românilor* [Brief history of the Romanians], Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1977, pp. 244-247.

³³ Mihai Manea, Bogdan Teodorescu, *Istoria Românilor* [History of the Romanians], Ed. Didactică și pedagogică, București, 1994, pp. 158-162.

³⁴ Anastasie Iordache, *Pe urmele lui Dumitru Brătianu*, pp. 324-329.

Ion C. Brătianu passed away on Florica estate on May 4th, 1891, with his wife, his children, his sons-in-law, and his brother Dumitru at his side. Grigore C. Cantacuzino, through a newspaper of the time, announced that „the illustrious statesman passed away after suffering for 10 days, and with him, so disappeared the worthiest man of history and politics the country has seen in the last centuries. With him, so disappeared the highest and most noble expression of patriotism. Today marks a dark day for history and politics of Romania”³⁵. On May 21st, 1891 *Voința Națională* newspaper [The national will] published the proclamation of Dumitru C. Brătianu as head of the National Liberal Party, which ended briefly.

Ion C. Brătianu had been a man of small stature, agile in his movements, handsome, with wavy hair turned gray by the emotions of 1877, eyes full of vigor and unusual profoundness, but full of kindness and leniency; he held no envy, was unable to quarrel, honest to his friends, and true in front of his opponents. Impressions of those who met him are remarkable. For example, Dimitrie Moruzi-Kneazul, after he had been a man devoted to Ion C. Brătianu, being his favorite policeman³⁶, had left the National Liberal Party and, by being brother-in-law to *Nababul* (G. Gr. Cantacuzino), fought fiercely against the liberals for over 20 years. In spite of that, accounts say that whenever Kneazul mentioned Brătianu’s name he had tears in his eyes, keeping his portrait almost like a religious icon above his bed, until his own death. The mother of Nicolae Filipescu, who was herself a hardline conservative, would not allow badmouthing of Brătianu in her presence, because she believed that he stood out from the rest and that he deserved the praise of his compatriots. Alexandru Djuvara confessed that, during the time of the United Opposition, when he used to live on Colța Street in a house next to the illustrious man, he delivered a virulent speech against Brătianu. Passing by his house, the latter knocked on his window, and said in a sad and gentle tone: „What are you doing, young man? Are you having second thoughts on your speech? You’ve been unfair, very unfair, you’ll realize one day, but I treasure your great talent!”. And Djuvara confessed that he had never felt a greater remorse in his life, a remorse that did not leave him as long as he lived³⁷. 25 years after Ion Brătianu’s death, when Tache Protopopescu went abroad for treatment, before crossing the border, first went to Florica to the grave of the great politician and there, alone, unknown to anyone, cried for a long time in front of the quiet cross³⁸.

Strict and charming, Ion C. Brătianu had been able to reconcile rivalries. Nicknamed *The Vizier*, he exhibited vast authority over his party and public duties. This authority was not based on fear or tyranny, but on

³⁵ *Națiunea* [The Nation], year X, no. 2540, May 5th, 1891, p. 1.

³⁶ Dimitrie Moruzi-Kneazul was the Prefect of the Police in Bucharest between March 20th 1885 and March 23rd 1888, December 22nd 1904 and March 12th 1907, and 1913-1914.

³⁷ Ion G. Duca, *Portrete și amintiri*, pp. 26-27.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

love, trust, respect, gratitude and admiration. He did not subjugate hearts, but won them over; people followed him because they loved him. But when the country was at stake, things changed completely, the modest Brătianu became proud and uncompromising³⁹. Even though Ion C. Brătianu was ridiculed, abandoned by friends, targeted by political assassins, and brought before justice, he died a more generous, understanding, trusting, a better man. This solemn end defined the man, at the same time describing the glorious page of Romanian history in which he took part with great devotion⁴⁰.

As a sign of gratitude, on May 22nd, 1921 Ion Brătianu's family relocated his remains from their initial site to the chapel which had recently been built by his son, Ionel. The blessing of the chapel had already taken place two days earlier. On a Friday evening, Ionel Brătianu had the tomb unveiled to the vault. Old Brătianu had been sleeping there on a flower bed for 30 years. The next day, the coffin was removed and another built to fit the sarcophagus in the chapel. After being placed on a stretcher, the coffin was adorned with oak branches on its sides, a large tricolour flag was laid on top of it, and it was then covered with roses. That morning, Vintilă Brătianu, Măriuța Alimănișteanu, Maria Pillat Disescu and Al. Plagino had arrived. On Sunday, at 10 o'clock, two special trains arrived at Florica station, followed by Prince Carol's train at 11. Held in Deal, the church service began at 11:30 and was carried out by First Metropolitan Miron Cristea, Metropolitan Bălan of Sibiu, the Archbishop of Câmpulung, and the priests from Golești and Târgul Dealului. The whole hill ["deal" in Romanian] was crowded by important people, but also by peasants, which attracted attention with their folk costumes. The service was short. The coffin was carried on the shoulders of the eldest peasants from Rătești; later it was lowered, followed by the comparatively smaller coffin of Florica, which was also carried by two veterans. Another service was held right before the house in which he had spent those 30 years. After the memorial service, the First Metropolitan delivered a touching speech from the porch of the church, the most emotional of all that followed. Inside the sarcophagus, a parchment signed by the metropolitans, by Prince Carol, by old friends and his family, was placed. After the ceremony, 16 officials lunched with Ionel Brătianu and his wife Eliza in the dining room of the mansion, and over 100 people were seated on the large terrace, converted into a dining room. This ceremony was a just reward for a lifetime of sacrifice and work for the development of the Romanian homeland and nation⁴¹.

³⁹ Ibidem, pp. 32-39.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 39.

⁴¹ Sabina Cantacuzino, *Din viața familiei Brătianu*, pp. 189-193.