



ORIGINAL PAPER

The Development of the Collaboration Established between King Carol II and the Politician Armand Călinescu before February 1938

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Abstract

The paper intends to describe of collaboration between Carol II and Armand Călinescu not only from a descriptive perspective, but more like from an analytic point of view, taking into account the arguments that determined the beginning and the development of this relationship. The reason for studying this topic is the importance of these two personalities in the Romanian history; it is true that the period of their close collaboration was very short (from 1938 to 1939), but those two years were marked by essential events, that influenced the future evolution of Romania.

Keywords: *King Carol II, Armand Călinescu, Government, political parties, National Peasants' Party*

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Introduction

In the first part of the paper, I will make a brief description of the two statesmen, insisting especially on Armand Călinescu, as the most important parts of King Carol II's life are already known; at the same time, I will try to identify the different stages of their interaction, beginning with their first approaches, continuing with the period that Armand Călinescu was the Ministry of Internal Affairs and finishing with Călinescu as the President of the Council of Ministers. The second part will effectively describe the relationship of collaboration between Carol II and Călinescu, their meetings representing the core of the research. In the third part, I will try to find the reasons that the King took into account when he appointed Armand Călinescu in Octavian Goga's Government, in December 1937. The fourth part will try to identify Călinescu's main initiatives as Ministry of Internal Affairs, a position from which he had a close collaboration with the King and at the same time a position from which he demonstrated his loyalty to the Sovereign. In the end, I will try to conclude which were the main reasons that established a relationship of collaboration between the King Carol II and the politician Armand Călinescu.

Carol II and Armand Călinescu – establishing a relationship of collaboration

As an active person, with a stubborn nature and sometimes being easily influenced by some of the people that he surrounded himself with, the King Carol II wished not only to be involved in the Romanian politics, but to essentially influence its evolution. His fickleness made him abandon his royal prerogatives in the years that followed the World War I, but his wish to be involved in politics again determined him to claim the Throne of the Romanian Kingdom in June, 1930. After becoming King, his autocratic personality made him constantly try to dominate the policy-makers and to obtain a large independence in order to be able to unilaterally take the state decisions. In this respect, he set in motion different actions, such as: appointing governments of national union, dividing political parties in order to enfeeble their strength, creating around him an influential political and economical group on which he could lean on, orchestrating the coup d'état from February 10th/11th, 1938, elaborating a new constitution, outlawing traditional political parties, creating a single political party.

Regarding Armand Călinescu's personality, before entering the political life, he worked as a lawyer. He graduated the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Philosophy from the University of Bucharest. He had a PhD in Juridical Sciences in Romania and a PhD in Economical and Political Sciences in France (Paris) (Chivulescu, 1998: 12). His wish of entering politics was expressed very early; his father tried to enroll him in the National Liberal Party, as one can find out from the conversations that Mihai Călinescu had with Ion. I. C. Brătianu. Nevertheless, young Călinescu joined the Peasants' Party in 1919 and he quickly approached Ion Mihalache, the leader of this party; their good relationship did not change until the dissensions that appeared in 1937. In 1922 he became the leader of the Argeş county organization of the National Peasants' Party (NPP) (Călinescu, B., 1990: 22), while in 1928 he was appointed as the Prefect of same county (Călinescu, B., 1990: 83). He was elected as a NPP deputy for the first time in 1926 (Nedelea, 1991: 153) and, after that year, he was constantly present in all the future legislatures (Chivulescu, 1998: 15). In 1929 he was appointed as State Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Domains and beginning with 1930 he became State Secretary in the Ministry of Internal

Affairs; he held this last appointment each time a Government was led by the National Peasants' Party (Savu, 1967: 61-62). His earnestness and work devotion were his main characteristics beside his speaker's talent, which he showed in the Romanian Parliament (Călinescu, A., 1993).

Taking into account my research, I consider that the relationship of collaboration between Carol II and Armand Călinescu can be divided into three different stages. The first stage includes their approach period and the strengthening of the trust relation between the Sovereign and his politician; this part can be chronologically placed before the coup d'état from February 10th/11th, 1938. The second stage covers the period from February 1938 to March 1939, when Armand Călinescu was appointed as Minister of Internal Affairs; he was actually the true leader of the Government and he consolidated the position of "King's man". The third stage includes the period when Armand Călinescu led the Government as the President of the Council of Ministers (March to September 1939); his relationship with the King was closer than in the previous years and he was *de facto* and *de jure* leader of the Government.

The present paper will comprise the first stage of their relationship, while the period that follows after the coup d'état will be analysed in different future studies. Returning to this first stage, I see it divided into three essential intervals, namely: the period of approach between the Sovereign and the young national peasant leader, placed before the establishment of the Goga-Cuza Government from December 1937, the second period, that includes the appointment of Octavian Goga's Government and the reasons that led the Monarch to entrust to Călinescu the Interior portfolio and the third stage which includes the actions the new Internal Affairs Minister undertook to fulfill the mission given to him by the King.

The approach period between Carol II and Armand Călinescu

For the first part of the period when Carol II was on the Throne of Romania, his relationship with Armand Călinescu does not go beyond the established framework with most of the young political elite of that time; in order to have a clear picture of the connections set between the two, I will point out some of the defining elements of the political life of the 1930s and where exactly on that spectrum one can find Armand Călinescu.

Ever since coming to Romania and ascending on the Throne, on June 8th, 1930, King Carol II sought, on the one hand, to be as much involved in the policy of the country as he wanted to become the main decision maker; on the other hand, in order to be able to hold a strong control in the state, he tried to come closer to as many politicians as possible. At first glance, the desire to approach the political elite may seem justified, given the position that the Monarch occupies within the powers of the state; what needs to be emphasized is that the King adopted a rather exclusive policy, namely, whether the politicians were in the category of those who agreed with him and implicitly agreed with the "counselors" around him (Țurlea, 2010), or they were seen as opponents, in which case Carol II did everything possible not to have to negotiate with the respective politicians.

The leaders of the two big parties – the National Peasants' Party and the National Liberal Party – Iuliu Maniu and respectively Constantin I. C. Bratianu (NLP chairman beginning with the year 1933) were placed in the first category. It is true that Maniu, Prime Minister in office at Carol's arrival in the country, passed to the opponents' camp only after several months of unsuccessful attempts to place himself (as party chairman) and

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implicitly the political parties in a position privileged to the King. This is why the Monarch tried to approach younger politicians from the second echelons of the large parties; an eloquent example was Gheorghe Brătianu who responded to the appeal to go to the Royal Palace with Carol's coming to the country, and disrespecting the NLP directive by this gesture was excluded from the party (Scurtu and Otu, 2003: 288). Following the same principle, helped by a contest of circumstances, in January 1934, to the surprise and indignation of the old leaders of the NLP, the King appointed young liberal Gheorghe Tătărescu as Prime Minister (Scurtu and Buzatu, 1999: 283-285).

Where exactly in this continuous "game of power" was Armand Călinescu? As mentioned above, he had a spectacular evolution in the political career, the important position occupied within the NPP and the public functions he held, imposing him as one of the young politicians of the country.

Starting from these two premises – the Sovereign's attempt to come closer to the young political elite and the rise of Armand Călinescu among this elite – there was at least a supposed approach between the King and the future President of the Council of Ministers. The first contacts were formal, being made in the official framework and by virtue of the position each one occupied. During the reign of King Carol II, Armand Călinescu, as evidenced by his writings, was increasingly involved in party politics and country politics, becoming so much more interested in the actions of the King; in his journal, there were kept many references on the evolution of the relationship between him and the Monarch. Following this information, it can be observed that there were no animosities between the two and a mutual appreciation characterized their relationship.

Beginning with 1933, at the same time with the establishment of Alexandru Vaida-Voevod's Government, Carol's affinity for Călinescu was obvious, the latter being kept in the new Government as a State Secretary of the Interior, even though the Minister had been changed – G. G. Mironescu replaced Ion Mihalache. Regarding this situation, Puiu Dumitrescu, the King's personal secretary, told Călinescu that although there were voices opposing him at the Royal Palace, Carol said he appreciated him a lot and therefore did not want to be a barrier on his career (Călinescu, A., 1990: 136).

It can be noticed that King Carol II, by speculating the disagreements within the NPP, managed to maintain and amplify the "dissidence" of the "centrist" group, whose leader became, in time, Armand Călinescu. Those who were part of that group were identified, on the one hand, by the opposition they made to Iuliu Maniu within the party and, on the other hand, by the kindness they showed to the Sovereign. In this respect, the benevolent attitude of the King in regard to Călinescu is an eloquent example of Carol's approach (Nedelcu, 1981: 262).

The Sovereign's interest towards the young national-peasant leader can be observed in 1935, when he can be found in the letters that Ion Sîn-Georgiu, the informant of the King (Călinescu, A., 1990: 260), sent to the Sovereign. The laudatory praise that Sîn-Georgiu made to Călinescu contained information about the young politician's culture and talent and, at the same time, there were references about his special political qualities. Along these letters two other aspects were relevant to the King: on the one hand, the shaping of Călinescu's position as an "opponent" to the policies promoted by Maniu and, on the other hand, the loyalty that he manifested to the Crown, both indicating that in the future Armand Călinescu could become very useful to the Sovereign (Nedelcu, 1981: 262-263).

Due to differences of opinion between the Monarch and the main leaders of NPP – Ion Mihalache and Iuliu Maniu in particular – a meeting occurred between the Sovereign

and Armand Călinescu as representative of the National Peasants' Party. Richard Franasovici, at the time the Minister of Public Works and Communications, suggested to Călinescu to ask for an audience to the King, this being part of the Sovereign's approach of getting closer to the national-peasant youth (Călinescu, A., 1990: 293). The audience took place on May 25th, 1936, when Armand Călinescu tackled two main problems: the administration and, respectively, the issue of the extremist currents (especially the Iron Guard). The meeting was a good opportunity for Carol to confirm and to strengthen his opinion about the peasants' leader of the young generation, whom he enjoyed seeing as a "steady man" (Călinescu, A., 1990: 303). Incidentally or not, since that meeting, the press conveyed the idea that Călinescu would have played for NPP the same role played by Gheorghe Tătărescu for NLP (Călinescu, A., 1990: 304); this role was that of King's liaison in the party, a person who, in the event of a disagreement between the Sovereign and the leaders of the old generation on the issue of Government, to be appointed as a Government member. Shortly after that, Călinescu proudly wrote in his journal that he had been the only one of the NPP secretaries of state that Carol had personally included in the guest list for a Palace reception from early June 1936 (Călinescu, A., 1990: 304).

For that period, Gabriel Marinescu (the Prefect of the Capital Police) was the person from King's entourage who most often came in contact with Armand Călinescu; he was the one who confirmed to Călinescu that he had begun to enter into Sovereign's grace, saying that Carol saw him as the most serious and most energetic man from NPP (Călinescu, A., 1990: 312). In a conversation with the General Nicolae Condeescu, another close person of the Royal Palace, Călinescu tried to clarify his supportive policy toward the Monarch and strongly argued that the King could rely on NPP "centrists", who were closed to him (Călinescu, A., 1990: 315).

For the end of 1936, Armand Călinescu recorded in his daily notes his first interactions with the King, during which the Sovereign began to express his direct regard to him and, at the same time, to suggest a possible collaboration. When going on two consecutive nights at the events held at the Royal Palace – a ceremony attended by the parliamentary committee of which Călinescu was a part and, respectively, a gala concert – the NPP politician had two conversations with Carol, both initiated by the Monarch. The general tone was a very good one suggesting closeness; during the discussions the King thanked him for his attitude adopted during the last period (Călinescu, A., 1990: 326-327). The Sovereign expressed his satisfaction with Călinescu's behavior because it showed opposition to the politics of Iuliu Maniu; the position of the young national peasants' leader had become closer to what the King desired than to what the party was proposing to undertake. Carol pointed out that Armand Călinescu's direction was in line with his own vision: "If you continue doing this, you will definitely please me" or "I advise you to go on the same way" (Călinescu, A., 1990: 326, 327). In his turn, Călinescu assured him of his devotion, underlining that "the serious people will be around the King" (Călinescu, A., 1990: 327).

At the beginning of 1937, Armand Călinescu continued to have a good relationship with the King, as different persons confirmed him – Gheorghe Tătărescu, Prime Minister at that time, Valeriu Pop or Gavrilă Marinescu (Călinescu, A., 1990: 330, 342, 347). A new audience with the King in May 1937 denoted the evolution of the relationship between the two; the Monarch, who proved to be kind but reserved at the previous audience, was more open to the young politician, discussing important issues related both to the internal and external policy (Călinescu, A., 1990: 348-349).

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The establishment of Octavian Goga Government – December 29th, 1937

The end of the only complete mandate of a Government during Carol II's reign – that of Gheorghe Tătărescu (1934-1937) (Brătianu, Carol II, Antonescu, 1992: 42-43) – brought the problem about the creation of a new Cabinet which had to organize elections for the legislative forum. The end of 1937 was abounding in events that led to a premiere on the outcome of the elections: long and sterile consultations between the Sovereign and some political party leaders; Ion Mihalache's refusal to become prime minister (Scurtu, Buzatu, 1999: 329) and the creation of a new NLP government led by Gheorghe Tătărescu; the vague promises of traditional political parties, which made the electorate become disinterested or turn to nationalist groups (Chistol, 2007: 600-601, Scurtu, Mocanu and Smârcea, 1995: 438); the signing of the November 25th non-aggression pact between Iuliu Maniu (NPP), Corneliu Zelea Codreanu ("Everything for the Country" Party) and Gheorghe Brătianu (NPL-"georgist") joined by Constantin Argetoianu (the Agrarian Party) (Argetoianu, 2001: 252).

Organized by an "worn-out" government and taking into account the aggravation of the party confrontation in the electoral campaign as well as the King's attempt to feed the fight, the result of the parliamentary elections appears as a predictable consequence: National Liberal Party – 35.92%; National Peasants' Party – 20.40%; "Everything for the Country" Party – 15.58%; Christian National Party – 9.15%; Hungarian Party – 4.43%; PNL-"georgist" – 3.89%; Radical Peasant Party – 2.25% (Scurtu and Otu, 2003: 377-378). Speculating the newly created situation – none of the parties obtained at least 40% of the votes (a premiere for the parliamentary elections in Romania) – King Carol II decides to appoint Octavian Goga as Prime Minister, although the political party led by him was only fourth in voters' preferences, with 9.15% of votes (Chistol, 2007: 627, Argetoianu, 2001: 308, Nedelea, 1991: 132-144).

Without insisting on the members of the new Cabinet or its significance in the Sovereign's political plan, I will focus on the implications of Armand Călinescu's appointment in that Government. By bringing a powerless politician to the leadership of the executive, the Monarch created more room for maneuver in imposing trustworthy people in the key posts of the Cabinet. In my opinion the most important was Armand Călinescu, who took over the Ministry of the Interior; Călinescu, together with the Premier Octavian Goga, and Ernest Urdăreanu, at that time Administrator of the King's Domains, established the governmental structure, by secretly meeting, with King's acceptance, in General Condeescu's house (Călinescu, A., 1990: 362-363; Argetoianu, 2002: 8).

With small but sure steps, Călinescu began to gain the King's trust; along with the Monarch's confidant – Ernest Urdăreanu – and the Prime Minister, who obviously had to participate in the consultations, the only one who took part in the creation of the new Government was Călinescu. Regarding the situation, in his notes, Constantin Argetoianu launched a scenario that could have been possible and could explain the trust that the Sovereign offered to Armand Călinescu. According to this scenario, the King would have pursued by the appointment of the new Government to create an "attack and defense instrument", at the same time relying on a rift within the NPP, "the pivot of the whole movement" being Călinescu. The leader of the Agrarian Party believed that if Călinescu had been followed by several NPP important members, the Sovereign would have wanted to drop down Goga and to appoint Călinescu as the new Prime-minister. Broadly, Argetoianu believed that the Monarch would have wanted to repeat the scenario followed

with the liberals, when the main character had been Gheorghe Tătărescu (Argetoianu, 2001: 319).

The debates on the composition of the future Government were established in the second half of December 1937, the main artisans of the new formula being, as mentioned earlier, Octavian Goga, Ernest Urdăreanu and Armand Călinescu; the latter had become, as Constantin Argetoianu argued, “the Sovereign's trustworthy man in the Council of Ministers, whom the King relied on to prevent the Government from making madness” (Argetoianu, 2001: 310). In the new Council of Ministers Călinescu, the Minister of the Interior, was in charge of a position which allowed him to thoroughly control the police forces and to impose censorship whenever he considered it necessary.

Along with Armand Călinescu, the King imposed three other NPP leaders in the Government, as follows: Virgil Potârcă interim until January 6th, 1938 at the Ministry of Agriculture and Domains and latter at the Ministry of Public Works and Communications; Vasile Rădulescu Mehedinți at Ministry of Justice and Dinu Simian, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Scurtu, 1983: 388). The exclusion from NPP was one of the immediate consequences that Armand Călinescu and his party colleagues, who had held positions in the Government, had to face (Argetoianu, 2001: 310). Although Călinescu explained his actions, on the one hand, by his loyalty to the Crown and, on the other hand, by his desire to separate from the politics led by Iuliu Maniu as president of NPP (Călinescu, A., 1990: 362), he was seen, along with his “separatist” colleagues, as traitor (Argetoianu, 2001: 307, 309). The most violent reaction came, as expected, from the old leaders of the NPP and especially from Maniu (Scurtu and Buzatu, 1999: 335-336).

Armand Călinescu – the King's trustworthy man

The appointment of Armand Călinescu was not accidental, his entry into the new Government, as the leader of one of the most important ministries – the Ministry of Internal Affairs – was made in order to accomplish several objectives that the King had in mind. One of the most important tasks that Călinescu had in the new Government was to fight the Iron Guard and its leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. After the disturbing result (for the King) which the “Everything for the Country” Party had obtained in the elections, it was clear to the Monarch that the popularity of the Guard did not diminish, but, on the contrary, it was in full ascension (Scurtu, 1983: 386). Călinescu's appointment is also explained by the fact that he was one of the most virulent opponents of this organization, a politician who constantly fought by taking positions and acting against the representatives of the Iron Guard. As a part of the government, the new Minister of the Interior was thus going to fight against the legionnaires (Carol II, 2001: 135).

By putting Călinescu on the list of Ministers, Carol accomplished another goal – the breakup of the “centrist” group of NPP, which led on the one hand, to the weakening of the party and, on the other hand, to the decrease of influences that Maniu manifested inside NPP, as some national-peasants' members began to see him guilty of Călinescu's departure. Armand Călinescu's appointment as Interior Minister – “a guarantee” for the sovereign (Carol II, 2001: 135) – was also made by Carol with the intention of counterbalancing the extremist actions that Octavian Goga and Alexandru C. Cuza could have put into practice once they had been given the Government.

Arriving in office, Armand Călinescu did not disappoint his royal “supporter”; only two days after his appointment – December 31st, 1937 – the new Minister organized a meeting attended by the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary General of the Ministry,

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the Gendarmerie Commander and the Director of General Safety; taking into account the difficult situation of the country, the Minister of the Interior sent a series of clear directives that were meant to maintain order (Nedelcu, 1981: 331). Among the first measures adopted by Călinescu was the suspension of different publications, such as “Adevărul” (“The Truth”), “Dimineața” (“The Morning”) and “Lupta” (“The Fight”) (Călinescu, A., 1990: 365). In less than a week since the assumption of the new position, Călinescu replaced the head of the Gendarmerie, where he appointed General Bengliu, a close friend of his, and also installed several NPP prefects (Nedelcu, 1981: 331). Among the actions taken by the Minister of the Interior to strengthen his position in the Government and, at the same time, to combat the infiltration of legionnaires in any sector of the Internal Affairs, one can mention: a strict record and monitoring the persons or institutions that intervened the Ministry of Interior; the limitation for the provincial police personnel to travel to the capital; the abolition of the outside interventions regarding the promotions in the Ministry (Nedelcu, 1981: 331; Mușat, Ardeleanu, 1988: 773); various measures to ensure the secrecy of telephone conversations (Nedelcu, 1981: 371).

Shortly after his appointment, the initiatives taken without consulting the Prime Minister determined the antipathy of the CNP leaders to Armand Călinescu, the next step being the conflict between the two parts (Nedelcu, 1981: 333); his position in the Government was not affected, however, as his actions were always supported by the Sovereign (Călinescu, A., 1990: 373). Initial disagreements within the Government were transformed, with the onset of the new electoral campaign, in open conflicts between the CNP representatives and the police forces that were under Călinescu's command (Nedelcu, 1981: 332, 333); referring to the groups created around the three personalities of the Government, Călinescu, Goga and Cuza, Constantin Argetoianu mentioned those divergences as “the war of the three roses” (Argetoianu, 2002: 10), which proves that the conflict became known to the public opinion. In this respect one can mention the clashes that took place in Craiova in the first days of January 1938 (Argetoianu, 2002: 11).

The Minister of Internal Affairs, acting not as a member of the Government, but as “the King’s trusted man”, gave orders that sometimes referred directly to the CNP members, who paradoxically acted upon the instructions of their leader – the Prime Minister Octavian Goga. The hardest retaliations from the law enforcement forces headed by Călinescu resisted the members of the Iron Guard (Călinescu, A., 1990: 373-374) a formation on behalf of which the students organized protests strikes (Argetoianu, 2002: 71; Nedelcu, 1981: 373).

All the actions taken by Armand Călinescu, along with his increasing devotion to the Monarch, made him acquire the King’s confidence, as Ernest Urdăreanu himself testified (Călinescu, A., 1990: 366; 367). Carol, convinced that he had made the right choice for the Interior Ministry, began to consult Călinescu for different aspects that were not necessarily the subject of his ministerial position. An example of this was the invitation of the Minister of the Interior to conduct the work of the Economic Council, although, as he himself said, he was not running a ministry in the economic area. Moreover, within that meeting, Călinescu made proposals with which the King agreed; referring to that, Armand Călinescu noted in his journal: “I proposed that and Rex [the King] approved” (Călinescu, 1990: 366). Mentioning this phrase is very important, because during their close collaboration, especially after the establishment of the monarchical authority regime, Carol, having strong confidence in Călinescu's expertise and also his good faith, started to take into consideration his advices; the formula mentioned above was thus often used by Călinescu in his daily notes.

The cooperation between the King and the Minister is also proved by the very frequent meetings of the two or by the meetings between Armand Călinescu and Ernest Urdăreanu (the King's most reliable person at the Palace) (Călinescu, A., 1990: 364-377); moreover, the close connection between them was proved by their agreement during their direct meetings. As it was previously mentioned, Carol did not hesitate to consider the proposals that the Interior Minister made; at the same time, Călinescu, highly calculated by nature, consulted the Sovereign for the smallest details in order to carry out the tasks that the King drew to him (Călinescu, A., 1990: 373).

Conclusions

In my opinion, the loyalty that Armand Calinescu proved to the King during the period of the Government led by Octavian Goga and the promptitude he had shown in complying the tasks that he was given represented only a part of the factors to be taken into account in analysing the development of the collaboration between the Sovereign and Călinescu. If I have to make a forced comparison, considering only these two qualities of the Minister of Interior, one can compare him to Gheorghe Tătărescu, who was also a close collaborator of the King and, at the same time, a political man whom the Monarch appreciated. From my point of view, what distinguished Armand Călinescu from the other politicians with whom Carol II interacted was his vision regarding the political scene and, more importantly, the opinions that Călinescu had regarding the problems of Romanian politics. Paradoxically, two men with different principles cemented their collaboration on similar beliefs, on the one hand, regarding the manner of acting in the political sphere and, on the other hand, on the way that the state institutions should function.

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