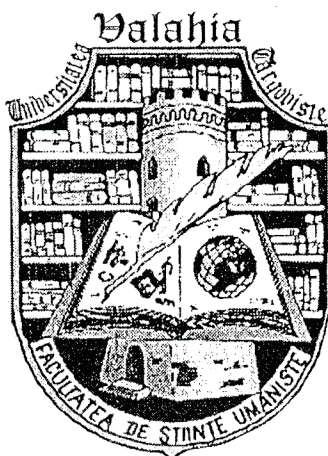


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MIHAEL STURDZA – ROMANIAN DIPLOMAT IN COPENHAGEN

*Oana Gabriela Laculiceanu**

Michael Sturdza was a Romanian politician and diplomat with an important contribution in the Romanian foreign policy through the activity developed in the framework of his diplomatic missions in different countries as well as Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Prince Michael R. Sturdza was born on the 27th of April 1886 at Roman descending from an old boyard family whose name is closely related with the history of our country.

In 1913 he entered the diplomacy. He successively received diplomatic missions in Durazzo, Bern, Budapest, Vienna, Washington, Riga, Helsinki and Copenhagen.

Michael Sturdza was appointed Extraordinary Envoy and Plenipotentiary Minister in Denmark on the 30th of May 1938. (*Romanian diplomatic yearbook*, 1943: 67) The Romanian Legation in Copenhagen had been established on the 20th of June 1934. By that time, Romania's King, wishing to intensify the relations between Romania and Denmark and to strengthen more the friendship that united them, decided to establish a permanent Romanian diplomatic mission in Copenhagen. Romania had then legations in three Scandinavian capitals. (*Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives*, jnr. 110.U.1921-syst 217 – Romanian Legation in Copenhagen, doc. no. 694/2.06.1934). On Nicolae Titulescu's proposal, George Assan was appointed extraordinary envoy and plenipotentiary minister in Copenhagen on 24 September 1934 (*Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives*, Gesandt George Assan, doc./2.06.1934). In the same time, Erik Biering, the Danish minister in Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria was transferred from Beograd to Bucharest. The first negotiations for extending the relations between the two countries began in the same time with the discussions for a new commercial agreement. George Assan had been undersecretary in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and he received then his first diplomatic mission.

The establishment of the two legations from Copenhagen and Bucharest allowed a tighter co-operation and approaching between the two countries in the economical, cultural and scientific fields.

Denmark was like Norway and Sweden, one of the most firm supporters of the League of Nations Pact. In common with other weaker powers, it saw an interest in the establishment of an international system based on non-violence and justice including an effective sanction system against overt aggression and treaty violators. The Scandinavian countries had a great moral authority in the international relations. For this reason Romania wanted to establish legations in the capitals of these countries.

During his diplomatic mission in Copenhagen, Michael Sturdza showed a great interest to the Scandinavian policy in the years before the Second World War. Policy that he compared with Romania's orientation in the foreign relations. Among his sources of information were the local press, local politicians and his colleagues from the other legations in Copenhagen.

In a monthly rapport of the Copenhagen legation from December 1938 Michael Sturdza said that the Nordic countries would adopt a completely neutral attitude in the event of a new war. The Danish Foreign Minister, Munch had made a speech on the occasion of the New Year Eve, expressing Denmark's desire to maintain good relations with its southern neighbour, to "not annoy this neighbour". Denmark's south border was a possible object of dispute with Germany. Referring to this question, Mr. Munch stated that the south border was that of the Danish people, "no border is totally pure but that of Denmark is exceptionally pure" said he. The German minority from the North of the border was a little larger than the Danish minority from the south of the border but there was a small number of Germans spread all over the province. This weak minority had large liberty and it was treated with great concern when expressing its wishes. Therefore, from this point of view, there shouldn't be a reason for Germany to break the good relations with Denmark (*The Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry*, fond 71 / 1920-1944, Denmark, vol. 15, Relations with Romania 1921-1944, f. 182-186, monthly rapport of the Romanian Legation from Copenhagen/December 1938). The principal aim of Danish foreign policy was to undertake nothing that might cause displeasure in Germany and increase the danger of a German attack. Denmark was therefore the only one of the Scandinavian countries that in 1939 accepted Hitler's offer of a nonaggression pact. P. Munch was convinced that it was in Danish interest that the three other Scandinavian countries accept the German offer. In this way, a common Nordic

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façade of diffuse solidarity could be shown to the Germans and strengthen Denmark in bilateral relations with Germany and prevent the international spotlight being directed solely at Denmark in this matter. Accordingly he initiated a diplomatic offensive in order to persuade his colleagues. But his appeals for Nordic solidarity were in vain because the other countries thought that a treaty would conflict with neutrality (Henning 1950: 220).

The possibility of the outbreak of a new war caused unrest both in Romania and in Denmark. Michael Sturdza observed with great interest the Danish position. Denmark maintained constantly its wish to remain neutral in the event of a conflict. In case of war, Denmark declared that it would suspend the armament export to both fighting parts. The attitude of the Scandinavian countries would be the same as during the war of 1914-1918, with the difference that now Finland was taking also part of the Neutral Nordic Powers group.

Germany wanted the Scandinavian countries to maintain the same export proportion to the belligerents as it was before the war declaration. In that case, Germany promised it wouldn't disturb the trade of these countries. Peter Munch was satisfied with this attitude of Germany (*The Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry*, f. 212, Telegram no. 6027 from Mihail Sturdza to M.A.S.).

On the 6th of September 1939, Michael Sturdza wrote from Copenhagen to Grigore Gafencu, the Romanian ministry of Foreign Affairs about Denmark's optimism hoping to remain neutral until the end of the conflict. Peter Munch, the Danish Foreign Minister motivated this optimism by the following arguments: Germany wanted to keep between her and her western enemy as many neutral countries as possible, there weren't hostilities between Germany and Russia that could bring unexpected complications in Baltic zone and Scandinavia, the Baltic was in the German sphere of influence therefore an attempt of France or England to force the straits was impossible, the routine of Scandinavian countries trade was already created from 1914-1918 (*The Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry*, f. 211, Telegram no. 6040/ 6.09.1939 from Mihail Sturdza to M.A.S.).

Sturdza said also that if France and England wanted to support Poland they would have to find a way for their armies. In Europe they were interested only in the North Sea littoral, the Italic Peninsula and the Balkan Peninsula. Assuming that the war operations could start only in the same time – because the control of the Mediterranean ways of communication was a condition sine qua non of the war operation in South-Eastern Europe – Michael Sturdza affirmed that there weren't but two possibilities of action: through the North Sea Littoral and through the Mediterranean. The risks for the Scandinavian Countries and for Denmark were bigger as they were associated with those of Belgium and Holland. Assuming that England and France wanted to support Poland and they would try to find the advantage of surprise through Belgium or Holland, there wouldn't be any reason for Germany not to conquer Denmark and get in this way an important geopolitical position (*Ibidem*). Michael Sturdza paid very much attention to Denmark's relation with Germany whose role in the international relations was essential also for Romania. In a reply to a ministerial telegram Michael Sturdza analyzed all the factors that could influence the Reich policy towards Denmark and the Scandinavian countries. He considered that a German aggression towards Denmark could have been determined by the following reasons: economic reasons (Denmark was a country with intensive agrarian production and Germany could have prepared her conquest for obtaining supplies from her during the war); the Schleswig question (which did not a great importance for Germany) and the lack of trust in the sincere desire of Denmark of maintaining her neutrality (the Danish Government was made of a social-radical coalition opposed to the Nazism by her ideology. Therefore it was natural for Germany not to trust Copenhagen (*The Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry*, f. 213, Rapport no. 5512/ 14.01. 1939, from Sturdza, to M.A.S.).

The Romanian diplomat exposed at the same time the factors that could determine Germany to maintain peaceful relations with Denmark and the Scandinavian countries. These were economical and political factors. Denmark neutral and impartial would have guaranteed Germany a permanent source of Swedish iron supplies necessary for its war industry. For both Great Britain and Germany the lesson of the last war was that economic pressure on Germany had been of decisive importance. Moreover, in the light of Germany's territorial losses after Versailles and the exploitation of new mineral resources in Scandinavia, it was reasonable to assume that Germany's economic dependence of indigenous Scandinavian products would be greater in both relative and absolute terms that it had been in 1914-18. But if Germany would have conquered Denmark, the immediate reaction of the other Scandinavian countries would have imposed the conquest of Norway and Sweden against their forces and their spontaneous allies. For Nazi Germany, Scandinavian neutrality was of value as long as it ensured that German wartime trade equalled or, if possible, exceeded peace time levels. The logic of German strategy was thus the maintenance of the status quo. The importance of Scandinavian resources for the German war economy, amply demonstrated in the First World War, was reinforced by a number of developments during the inter-war period. Since Germany's drive for agricultural self – sufficiency

was still far from realization by the late 1930s, it was clear that Denmark would remain an important source of supply for foodstuffs in war time. Above all Germany depended on Scandinavia for supplies of iron ore (Salmon 1997: 322).

There was disagreement in Germany as to whether it would be necessary to occupy Danish territory. For Admiral Carls, the most ruthless of the navy's strategists, an occupation of Denmark was essential both to secure command of the Baltic and to create a jumping – off point for expansion towards the Atlantic. While agreeing with Carls that the Danish question is a matter of life and death for Germany, Reader remained non-committal about the merits of violating Danish neutrality. He considered that, whilst bases in Denmark, the Netherlands or southern Norway might improve Germany's tactical position, only an occupation of the Channel coast would be of decisive strategic value (Salmon 1997: 329). On the other hand, an unprovoked German attack against Denmark would have immediately determined the entrance of England in war and Germany didn't want that. She wanted England to be a friend or to be neutral or to not have a direct contact with Russia. (*Ibidem*). Scandinavian resources could also be of importance to Great Britain, but its geographical position, naval superiority, financial resources and world wide empire would give Britain access to alternative sources of supply and the capacity to deny such access to Germany. Britain's principal aim in wartime would be to enlist the Scandinavian countries in an economic blockade. Germany by contrast, would require only business as usual (Salmon 1997: 317).

Towards the end of the 1930s Romania regarded with great tension the situation from Finland which had a conflict with Soviet Union. In October 1939 the Romanians were watching with great interest the evolution of the negotiations between the two countries hoping that Finland would continue to repel any Russian attempt to violate its integrity, sovereignty and neutrality. The Romanian interest in this situation derived from the fear that Finnish indulgence would encourage Russia to raise the much discussed question of Bessarabia (*Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives*, jnr. 5.L.14, Romania-Foreign Policy, pk.1, rapport no. 8/20.11.1939). The soviet pressure on Finland caused unrest also in Denmark. Dr. Munch believed that Finland would make use of arms for defending itself if the soviet demands were similar to those made to Letonia and Estonia. The Soviet Union's security concerns in the Finnish Karelian territory led to the Winter War in 1939 after Soviet Union attacked Finland. After months of courageous fighting, Finland lost part of Karelia and some nearby islands. These events caused a great unrest in Romania around the arming because Romania's military power was appreciated as weak by the specialists being trained more for the military parades than for war (*Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives*, jnr. 5.L.14, Romania-Foreign Policy, pk.1, rapport no. 7/28.06. 1937).

The Danish minister considered that Berlin was not able anymore to control the soviet expansion in the Baltic region and that could represent a dangerous situation for Germany. (*The Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry* , f. 196. Telegram no. 6196, from Sturdza, to M.A.S.). One of Sturdza's colleagues from the American legation affirmed that the soviet expansion in the direction of the Occident represented for Romania an element of security that the governments from Bucharest, Sophia and Beograd should take advantage of to create a common barrier against Russia. (*Ibidem*, f. 210, Telegram no. 6097, from Sturdza, to M.A.S.). Michael Sturdza who always had a pro-German position (due to his adhesion to the ideas of the Iron Guard) considered that the solution for Romania and for civilized Europe was the alliance with Germany against communism.

Sturdza was recalled on October 10, 1939 to the Central Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives*, jnr. 5.L.14, Romania-Foreign Policy, pk.1.f. 100, Royal decree/ 6 octombrie 1939, from Sturdza, to M.A.S.). He returned to Denmark after the German capitulation and remained there for two years. During all this time he tried to convince Hitler to allow a group pf Romanian Legionnaires to fight on the Eastern front together with the German troops. He didn't get any answer. In Denmark he received a friendly welcome along with the other refugees, despite the internal difficulties caused there by the war. In 1944 he left Denmark and went to Vienna where he established together with other legionnaires a Free Romanian Government led by Horia Sima who intended to fight by Germany's side. As their tentative of resistance failed, Sturdza returned to Denmark where he remained for another two years. He spent the rest of his life in exile.

With no doubt we could say that Michael Sturdza had an important contribution for a better co-operation and approaching between Romania and Denmark. He obtained the sympathy and appreciation of the Danish authorities which is proved also by the "Dannebrog Officer" decoration received from the King of Denmark. His rapports concerning the Danish foreign policy had a great significance for the Romanian authorities from Bucharest. Although Romania and Denmark were two distant countries in the interwar period both from the point of view of geographical position and that of bilateral relations, on a closer inspection we can identify very similar aspects which link up with important themes of this period. Both were small states and their fate was decided by the Great Powers of the time. They had a common enemy in the eve of the Second World War:

Germany and they both were victims of the Reich during the great conflict. Another similarity was the fact that both of them had territorial disputes with neighbouring small and great powers. Denmark had a dispute with Germany over Northern Schleswig and Romania had to face the requests of three revisionist's states: Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria. Their foreign policy in the interwar period was oriented after that of the great powers and for this reason the Romanian - Danish relations were at that time, to both countries, secondary to their relations to the great powers.

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