

GERMAN POLICY AND THE DIPLOMATIC AGENDA OF ROMANIAN NEUTRALITY (1914-1916). THE PROSPECTS FOR AN ALLIANCE WITH SWEDEN

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Abstract:

In the summer of 1915, concerned about Italy's entry into the war in alliance with the Entente powers yet encouraged by the victories of its armies on the Eastern Front, the German diplomacy attempted to encourage Sweden and Romania to abandon their neutrality in order to give a decisive blow to Russia. In several reports dispatched from Berlin, Alexander Beldiman, the envoy to Germany who was also Romania's representative in the Scandinavian countries, raised the possibility of Sweden's entry into the war on the German side. After he had identified Russia as the common historical enemy of the two countries, the Romanian diplomat suggested forging an alliance under the leadership of Germany. A strong alliance was thought to ensure Sweden's ascendancy in Finland and the Baltic states, and Romania's supremacy in the East at the Black Sea. Although this plan was rejected by the liberal government, Beldiman's initiative in a period of neutrality remains an alternative in the Romanian political circles to Entente supremacy.

Rezumat:

În vara anului 1915, îngrijorată de intrarea Italiei în război în alianță cu puterile Antantei, dar încurajată de victoriile armatelor de pe Frontul de Est, diplomația germană încearcă să determine Suedia și România să renunțe la neutralitate pentru a da o lovitură decisivă Rusiei. În mai multe rapoarte trimise de la Berlin,

Alexandru Beldiman, ministrul care reprezenta România în Germania și pe lângă statele scandinave, invocă posibilitatea intrării Suediei în război de partea Imperiului German. După ce identifică Rusia ca dușmanul istoric comun al celor două țări, diplomatul român sugerează posibilitatea încheierii unei alianțe sub conducerea Germaniei, o ligă puternică ce urma să asigure preponderența Suediei în Finlanda și în provinciile baltice și supremația României la Marea Neagră. În final, acest plan a fost respins de către guvernul liberal, dar inițiativa ministrului român la Berlin rămâne o alternativă la supremația Antantei în cercurile politice românești din perioada neutralității.

Keywords: neutrality, alliance, diplomacy, Romania, Sweden, World War I

Romanian and Swedish Approaches to Neutrality

From the beginning of the Great War, Romania and Sweden adopted policies of neutrality. The decisions of the two countries were, however, rooted in different histories. For the governments of Sweden, the policy of permanent neutrality had become a traditional approach to foreign affairs¹, a necessity born from strategic considerations as well as the pacifist feeling within a significant part of public opinion. During the Great War, Swedish diplomacy had barely managed to impose respect for its neutrality on the belligerent powers. The Allied naval blockade and Germany's submarine warfare had caused considerable economic losses, even though the government of Hjalmar Hammarskjöld consistently acted to protect the commercial interests of neutral states². For Romania, however, armed neutrality was only provisional. Located at the crossroads of interest of Austria-Hungary and Russia and near the area of the outbreak of conflict in the Balkan Peninsula, Romania formally rejected the idea of permanent neutrality. The fulfillment of national unity required going on a war footing, either with Germany against Russia, or, conversely, with Russia against Austria-Hungary. Since 1914, aware of the high stakes of the game, the Ioan I.C. Bratianu government had been negotiating the intervention in the war alongside the Entente powers. This was to happen in two years' time³.

By the outbreak of war in 1914, there were important similarities and differences between the two countries which make the employ of

¹ In 1914 the centennial of the signing of the Kiel Treaty (1814) was celebrated. This agreed to dynastic union with Norway and started an uninterrupted period of peace.

² Krister Wahlbäck, *The Roots of Swedish Neutrality* (Stockholm: The Swedish Institute, 1986), 25.

³ Constantin Kirițescu, "Preludiile diplomatice ale războiului de întregire. Tratatul cu Antanta", *Viața Românească*, XXXII, no. 4 (1940).

comparisons necessary. Sweden and Romania were both bordering the Central Powers and already well-integrated with the German economy. Both nations had influential ruling groups which, owing to tradition or education, leaned towards Germany. Severe internal crises confronted the governments of both countries. In Romania it was the Peasants' Revolt of March 1907 and its aftermath. In Sweden there was a battle over the franchise, between 1905 and 1908, as well as a crisis over defence policy in 1912-1914. In foreign affairs too, frontier problems had remained unsettled. Governments and ruling groups in both states were intensely suspicious of Russia's aims and ambitions. Fulfillment of national interests required going on a war footing, with Germany against Russia, or, conversely, with Russia against Austria-Hungary. To a large extent these suspicions influenced Romanian and Swedish policies towards other states. For a long time and in many ways, Germany had offered these countries the best conceivable security against Russia⁴.

On the other hand, in general, Sweden's policy of strict neutrality proved favorable for Germany. Although there was no treaty of alliance between Berlin and Stockholm, even before 1917, Sweden was regarded by many as Germany's neutral ally⁵. In contrast, Romania, which had signed the extension of its commitments towards the Central Powers in 1913, refused to participate in the war and displayed a neutral policy favorable to the Entente. Sweden, through its telegraph network, had no hesitation in arranging the transmission of the German Government's secret telegrams abroad⁶. Conversely, Romania banned the transit of German arms to Turkey which was, nevertheless, allowed for the Allies' to Serbia⁷. Even though public opinion was sympathetic towards Germany in both countries, in Romania, the majority of the population did not view entering the war on the side of Central Powers positively. In pursuing a policy of neutrality, however, both states possessed certain strategic assets, which apparently increased their bargaining power. Due to their positions in Europe, Sweden controlled the only land route between Britain and Russia, while Romania the one between Russia and Serbia. In fact, Sweden's permanent neutrality clearly favored Germany, while for the Central

⁴ Maurice Pearton, "The Theory and Practice of Neutrality in the First World War - The Romanian Contribution. 1914/1916", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A. D. Xenopol"*, Supliment IV (1983): 114.

⁵ Mikael Malmberg, *Neutrality and State Building in Sweden* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 113.

⁶ Dr. Ion Hurdubentiu, *Istoria Suediei* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1985), 263.

⁷ Ion Agrogoroei, "1914-1918", in *România în relațiile internaționale 1699-1939*, eds. L. Boicu, V. Cristian, Gh. Platon (Iași: Editura Junimea, 1980), 387-388.

Powers, Romania's provisional neutrality was an obstacle to military cooperation with Turkey and Bulgaria, their Balkan allies. The Governments of both countries found profitable commercial outlets and political advantages to gain from their neutrality. Despite the Allied blockade, Sweden supplied large quantities of iron ore, timber and food⁸, while Romania exported grain and vegetables⁹.

German diplomacy towards the neutral states

Meanwhile, Germany's policy towards the neutral states took the form of acts of aggression which generated adverse consequences as the war progressed. The policy towards neutrals was an integral part of the strategy of the military command, to which it was subordinated. The aggression against Belgium was the signal of a determined policy undertaken by Berlin towards any state with peaceful ambitions. Neutrality, as recognized by international commitments, was no longer a guarantee for the sovereignty or territorial integrity of a state. The interests of the belligerents required the negotiation of this legal status in terms of foreign policy. The international recognition of neutrality became the result of political compromise which laid bare the shallowness of the commitments made at the Hague Conference of 1907. The hard battle for the neutrals meant that Germany was defeated by her own weaknesses. At the beginning of the war, it lost the support of Italy and Romania, because of the rigidity of her commitments to Austria-Hungary. Since 1917, the United States had attacked Germany as a result of unrestricted submarine warfare. Gains were not limited, but ultimately proved insufficient. Turkish cooperation meant control over navigation in the Straits. Bulgaria, a belligerent, also helped Austria-Hungary to defeat Serbia and keep Romania alert. But this was not enough to win anything else but the war in the East.

Germany and Sweden send out feelers to Romania

Despite an ineffective strategy, there were times in the first years of the war when Germany seemed capable to achieve improved and friendlier relations with neutral states. In the summer of 1915, the Berlin diplomacy, disappointed by Italy entering the war on the side of the Entente powers, attempted to take advantage of Russian defeats on the Eastern front in

⁸ Gerd Hardach, *Der Erste Weltkrieg 1914-1918* (München: dtv), 26.

⁹ Anastasie Iordache, "Romania in anii primului razboi mondial", in *Istoria Românilor*, Tom II, vol VII, *De la independență la Marea Unire (1878 -1918)* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003), 415.

order to conclude a separate peace. Gottlieb von Jagow and Arthur Zimmermann, in consent with Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg and Marshal Erich von Falkenhayn, Chief of Army General Staff, conceived the strategy meant to give the coup de grace for Russia: the drawing of Sweden and Romania into the war alongside Germany. At first sight, this was a bold, even utopian project. Nevertheless, it involved the complicity of various intermediaries and many characters from the aristocracy: Ludvig Douglas, Marshal of the palace at King Gustav V's court, Prince Max von Baden, the German banker Max Warburg, Wedel, the diplomat and former ambassador to Stockholm. Besides them, a plethora of intellectuals and officers, the Swedish "activists", included professors Rudolf Kjellen, Gustav Steffen, Gösta Mittag-Leffler and left-wing publishers such as Adrian Molin, Otto Garters and Yngve Larsson. They all needed to persuade the Stockholm Government that Sweden would have more to gain if she offered Germany military cooperation. But while Knut Wallenberg, the Foreign Affairs Minister, responded cautiously to the German diplomatic offensive, Arvin Taube, the ambassador in Berlin, hastened to suggest that the German alliance with Sweden was almost a certainty¹⁰. However, the Swedish ambassador did not act outside government policy, whose mandate was to secretly probe Romania's attitude¹¹. On 25 June 1915, Taube handed the Romanian envoy Alexandru Beldiman an official communication, which underlined the Swedish government's concern about the expansion and length of the war. But the core of the message consisted of the recognition that it was becoming very difficult to maintain strict neutrality. The Stockholm authorities wished to hear the Romanian government's point of view, before taking any step that might have consequences for each of the neutral states¹².

¹⁰ Hurdubentiu, 264-266.

¹¹ Until World War I, Romania did not have diplomatic representation in Stockholm. Diplomatic relations existed until February 1898 by ministers of both countries accredited to Vienna, and later by ministers in Berlin. After Romania entered into the war, it closed its diplomatic legation in Berlin. The activity of consular offices in Sweden and Norway requires the setting up of a diplomatic mission in Stockholm. Romania's first diplomatic representative in the Swedish capital was Grigore Bilciurescu. The Legation was opened after 1 November 1916. For a historical overview see: *Reprezentanțele diplomatice ale României*, vol. II, 1911-1939 (București: Editura Politică, 1971), 87-119.

¹² Sweden's communicate, June 25th 1915, 42. Biblioteca Academiei Romane, sectia Manuscrite, Arhiva Alexandru Beldiman, I Acte 1a (The Romanian Academy Library, Manuscripts, Alexandru Beldiman Archive, I Acts 1a, hereafter BAR., mss.).

Beldiman's correspondence with Bucharest

Alexander Beldiman, law graduate, with a Ph.D. degree obtained in Berlin at 1877¹³ and a skillful pro-German diplomat¹⁴, immediately wrote to Bucharest. He consciously submitted detailed reports both to King Ferdinand and Prime Minister Bratianu, whom he considered responsible for the pro-Entente direction of Romanian foreign policy¹⁵. He dispatched a first report to the Romanian government on 13/26 June, by German courier. Addressed to King Ferdinand, it presented a number of important observations about the Swedish Ambassador Arvid Taube's communication. The overall presentation seems slightly exaggerated, but it also contained many truths. The report argued that Sweden was preparing a radical change in its foreign policy because of the danger of Russian expansionism. In this respect, Beldiman quoted alleged conversations with leading politicians from both Stockholm and Berlin. According to the report, concerned about Russian policy, the Swedish "patriots" had begun a vigorous campaign for raising public awareness. Germany generously saluted the military cooperation of Sweden. Great efforts were being undertaken towards signing a political treaty. Beldiman's report went beyond being a simple information note. The Romanian envoy's political reasoning revealed its subtext at the end of its exposure: "If it were possible, in the course of events, taking into account the common grounds on which both Romania and Sweden stayed in relation to Russia, reaching an agreement on common policy and actions with the Stockholm government, a formidable league under German leadership would result, from the North Cape to the Persian Gulf, which could solve the Oriental issue for a long time, completely and decisively eliminating the ever-nefarious Russian influence"¹⁶.

A second report was dated 15/28 June 1915. It provided the first objective analysis of Sweden's difficulties in maintaining its policy of neutrality. The Swedish trade outside the Baltic Sea was undermined by all types of obstacles. The media had long deplored the damage resulting from measures taken by the British Navy. The people revolted against acts of

¹³ Lucian Nastasă, *Itinerarii spre lumea savantă. Tinerii din spațiul românesc la studii în străinătate, 1864-1944* (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Limes, 2006), 227.

¹⁴ Arhivele Diplomatice ale Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al României (The Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, hereafter AMAE), București, fund 77, Dosare Personale (Personal Files), Letter B, no. 24.

¹⁵ Personal letter to Prime Minister Ion I. C. Bratianu, Berlin, February 6th/19th 1915. Arhivele Naționale ale României (The Romanian National Archives, hereafter ANC), București, fund Casa Regală (Royal House), folder 19/1915, 1-4.

¹⁶ Secret report to H.M. the King Ferdinand. A copy was also sent to Prime Minister Bratianu. BAR mss., Alexandru Beldiman Archive, I Acts 3, Berlin June 13/26 1915.

espionage by Russia, some of which were evidenced. Nevertheless, the dangerous Russian threat remained the main topic of discussion among politicians. Defeated on the Eastern Front and without Sweden attending the peace settlement, the Russian policy aimed, now more than ever, at the only free seaport available, crossing over the Scandinavian lands. Sweden would then remain isolated in the way of Russia's expansion, because Germany would have no interest in hindering it. Then, of course, in the case of victory by the Russian Empire, its vicinity would be a permanent threat to Sweden. The future of the Scandinavian kingdom required the abandonment of neutrality. The political parties were troubled by the issue, but King Gustav V and the government waited, showing prudence. Finally, the minister's thoughts led once again to the benefits of the new Romanian-Swedish alliance: "If, under German auspices, a Swedish-Romanian alliance results, based on the obvious common interests they have in relation to Russia, it would be an act of decisive significance in the current European situation and could make a powerful contribution to ending the present war"¹⁷.

Berlin's promises did not coincide with the attitude of the Bucharest government, which remained reserved. In a ciphered dispatch dated 25 June / 9 July 1915, the skillful Bratianu requested information about Sweden's relations with Denmark and Norway. To answer, Minister Beldiman was obliged to admit that a defensive alliance had been signed between the three Scandinavian kingdoms at the beginning of the war, to strengthen their position of neutrality. To overcome the bluntness which resulted from this commitment, Beldiman insisted on the principle of freedom of action in the foreign policy of the signatory states. If, during the war, one of the three powers was urged to adopt an offensive attitude, then the other two were obliged to observe benevolent neutrality. In essence, Beldiman's understanding of the commitments to neutrality of the Scandinavian countries remained contradictory. After agreeing that the stipulations of the commitments resulting from the meeting of the Scandinavian monarchs in Malmö (December 1914) remained secret and were not to be communicated to any foreign government, he claimed the signatories' freedom of choice. However, to reinforce the impression of an independent foreign policy, the Romanian diplomat underlined the potential threats which made the interests of the Scandinavian kingdoms converge, more than the neutrality they maintained.

¹⁷ Secret report to H.M. the King Ferdinand. A copy was also sent to Prime Minister Bratianu. BAR mss., Alexandru Beldiman Archive, I Acts 3, Berlin June 15/28 1915.

The commercial and shipping interests of Norway were closely related to England. Public opinion sympathized with the old liberal institutions of England, closer to the spirit of the Norwegian people. German militarism and imperialism were firmly rejected. But, just as in Sweden, Norway politicians were aware of the danger of Russian expansion towards the North Sea. Russia's access to the nearest sea could only be obtained by sacrificing a part of Norwegian territory. Narvik and Lyngenfjord ports were threatened. Controlling the former required the annexation of northern Sweden, one of the richest regions in iron ore. However, the direct distance between Lyngenfjord port from northern Norway and the Russian border is no more than 40 kilometers. For a long time Russia had coveted access to this free port. It wished to ensure access in an agreement with Norway. However, all negotiations had failed. Russia's presence in the region threatened the integrity of the Scandinavian kingdoms. It was therefore impossible to imagine that Norway would adopt a hostile attitude towards Sweden. Fighting for its own interests against Russia, the Swedish kingdom also fought for those of the Norwegians, as well as for the Turks and the Germans, who, while defending the Straits against Russian invasion, were successfully promoting the real interests of Romania¹⁸. Admitting that Sweden would not be prevented by its Scandinavian neighbors from giving up its neutrality, all that remained for Minister Beldiman to do was to clarify the official position of the Swedish government. Having little evidence that the Scandinavians would depart from political expectation, he hesitated to give a verdict. He happened to find the solution while he was reading the German press. In correspondence from Stockholm published in the German newspaper "Vossische Zeitung", he read the statements made by Prime Minister Hammar skjöld in front of the delegates at a peace conference held in Sweden¹⁹. The message seemed sharp and simple. Sweden would act to maintain neutrality but the government should carefully consider all the situations in which peace became problematic. In addition to the circumstances of a foreign invasion, there were cases of other, similar, extreme threats. It would be dangerous to irresponsibly push Sweden's entry into the war. This would be just as dangerous as it would be to

¹⁸ Report addressed to First Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu. B.A.R. mss., Alexandru Beldiman Archive, I Acts 5, Berlin, June 26th/ July 9th 1915.

¹⁹ „Ministerpräsident Hammar skjöld über Schwedens Neutralität“, *Vossische Zeitung*, 6/19 Juli 1915.

understand that Sweden wanted peace so much that it could be treated arbitrarily without any danger²⁰.

Neutrality, therefore, but not at any price! This was certainly a conclusion that satisfied Beldiman's ego, except that, unlike the Swedish Ambassador Arvid Taube, Beldiman did not receive any confirmation from Bucharest. The Swedish proposal did not even comply with the general understanding of international courtesy. Aware that he would not find support in the government position, he tried to put pressure on the King. This procedure was verified during the reign of Charles I. Formally, Beldiman hoped to find an understanding from the newly crowned King Ferdinand. The first attempt dated from 29 June /12 July 1915, when he presented the sovereign with the secret memorandum written by the German State Secretary, Zimmermann, about Germany's policy towards the Scandinavian countries. The document revealed the true political strategy behind the reorganization of relations with the Scandinavian countries. Germany offered Sweden a free hand in deciding the future of Finland. Finns would regain their historical rights and full autonomy. Only the new state's relations with Sweden remained to be settled. A new idea was put forward. A federal organization would include Sweden, Finland and the Baltic provinces. The Russians would draw up the details but it would be managed independently. Furthermore, the German Government was willing voluntarily to concede a border adjustment for Denmark. The Danish population in Schleswig was to be awarded to the neighboring kingdom of Sweden. Zimmerman's memorandum also foresaw the possibility of Romania entering the war, in alliance with Sweden. Compared to the political developments in the East, Romania's duty, deriving from the position it occupied at the Black Sea, was to assume the same decisive role which Sweden possessed in Northern Europe²¹.

A second chance came into view in the shape of the secret report of 17/30 July 1915. Written in German, the document was intended as a warning on Romanian-German friendship. It stressed the idea that the deplorable impression made in Germany by the prevention of transit of its munitions through Romania to Turkey could easily be removed if a favorable response to Sweden's intentions came from Bucharest. To be more explicit in its intentions, Minister Beldiman also outlined a strategic

²⁰ The report of Minister Alexandru Beldiman to His Majesty the King about the statements made by Hjalmar de Hammarskjöld, Prime Minister of Sweden, on the problem of maintaining neutrality. B.A.R. mss., Alexandru Beldiman, Archives, I Acts 8a-b. Berlin, July 19th 1915.

²¹ Secret report addressed to His Majesty the King. B.A.R. mss., Alexandru Beldiman Archive, I Acts 7. Berlin, June 29th / July 12th 1915.

plan. Negotiations for a Romanian-Swedish secret alliance must remain a closely guarded secret. But since they could not materialize without discussion with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, the King was consulted and given the opportunity to meet secretly with Bratianu in Sinaia. Because a visit to Bucharest seemed intrusive, he sought to avoid it. To ensure communication beyond any doubt, Barbu Stirbey, who had a relationship of trust with Beldiman, was prepared to play an intermediary role²².

Romania declines the Swedish proposal

But all these efforts were vain. Beldiman's arguments would have convinced anyone who would have listened to them. But who would listen to them in Bucharest? The Liberal government did not reject the idea of discussions with neutral states. Instead of Sweden, Italy emerged as a discussion partner. Romania was secretly negotiating a proposed alliance, which would lead Italy to join the war simultaneously. But Bratianu was wrong. In the end, Italy committed to the Entente, before Romania managed to clarify its frontiers in the diplomatic negotiations²³. While Beldiman informed Bucharest of Sweden's intentions, Bratianu concentrated on negotiations with Russia. Poklevsky-Koziell wrote to Sazonov that Romania would call a military convention before entering the war²⁴. The die had already been cast. Romania showed too little interest in signing an alliance with Sweden. There was a total lack of political will. The subject itself gradually fell from the agenda. In the following year (1916), it appeared in the spotlight only sporadically. But the press still showed interest in the subject. The conservative newspaper *Iașul* published an editorial, on 16 February 1916, under the signature of Nerva Teohari, suggestively entitled "A Romanian-Swedish alliance?" The analysis started from a phrase in a speech of Sazonov to the Russian Duma: "Because of its history Russia is not interested in the Scandinavian shores, but in a completely different direction, in order to seek an outlet to the free seas." What lay behind the expression used by the Russian Foreign Minister? Perhaps Sweden was preparing its armaments or mobilizing its forces near

²² Geheimer Immediatbericht an Seine Majestät den König. B.A.R. mss., Alexandru Beldiman Archive, I Acts 4. Berlin, 17/30 Juli 1915.

²³ Eliza Campus, "L'activité diplomatique de la Roumanie entre les années 1914 et 1918", *Revue Roumaine d' Histoire*, tome VII, no. 6 (1968): 1112.

²⁴ S. Poklevsky-Koziell's telegram to Sazonov, referring to the discussion with I. I. C. Brătianu, about Romania entering the war, June 5th/18th 1915. *1918 la români. Desăvârșirea unității național statale a poporului român*, vol. I, *Documente externe 1879 – 1916*, (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983) 172.

the Russian border? Or perhaps the article recently published in *Svensk Loesen* magazine concerned the common interests of Romania and Sweden? We will never know precisely. We only have the wishful conclusions of the columnist: "The distant voice of Sweden comes on time. What we ourselves could not commit to at present, we will certainly succeed in doing with the soldiers of King Gustav"²⁵. The 8 March 1916 edition of the same newspaper pointed out that Sweden had sent a diplomatic representative to Bucharest. Baron Joachim Beek-Fries arrived in Bucharest with Commander Oscar Ströemm, to present their credentials to the sovereign²⁶. Beldiman also discreetly signaled the event from Berlin. Surprisingly, he added nothing extra²⁷. He seemed disappointed, since, as he wrote to his good friend N.D., another convinced Germanophile, that he had quietly been excluded from the negotiations as a guarantee that the alliance would not be concluded²⁸.

With Romania's entry into the war and the death of Ambassador Arvid Taube, the cause seemed lost forever²⁹. The correspondence of Minister Beldiman reflected the latest developments. He fled to Copenhagen after the closure of Legation in Berlin³⁰. But the Romanian government received information from another source: the Stockholm reports by Grigore Bilciurescu. From conversations with well-known members of the entourage from the Court, the Romanian minister discovered that conservative politicians were sympathetic to the cause of Germany. Most Swedish people shared the same thoughts, because up to 1870 Francophile feelings had almost completely cooled. Kinship of race and language and the prestige of the German dynasty lay behind this conversion. Since the outbreak of the war, German propaganda in Sweden, economic ties with Germany, British intervention in foreign trade, but also the successes of the German armies, had altered the sympathies of public. The feeling of Scandinavian solidarity suffered most. From the separation of Norway from Sweden, public opinion in the Scandinavian countries moved in opposite directions. Each of the three Nordic kingdoms adopted a policy of neutrality. However, general sympathy for Germany could not

²⁵ *Iașul*, no. 210. February 16th 1916.

²⁶ *Iașul*, no. 228, March 8th 1916.

²⁷ AMAE, Folder 71/1914, E2, Second part, vol. 27 (1915 -1918). Legation from Berlin, no. 1080, February 29th/March 18th 1916.

²⁸ Lucian Boia, "*Germanofili*". *Elita intelectuală românească în anii primului război mondial*, (București: Editura Humanitas, 2009), 41-42.

²⁹ Hurdubentiu, 269.

³⁰ Official statement on the occasion of the Nordic Ministerial Conference. BAR, mss., Alexandru Beldiman Archive, I Acts 11 a-c. September 23th 1916.

lead Sweden to take part in the war. Even the idea of the historical threat from Russia, which had infiltrated popular consciousness for decades, no longer represented a fundamental argument. Sweden would enjoy the benefits of neutrality up to the end of war, because this policy provided its citizens with life in peace and prosperity³¹.

Conclusions

As we look back at the conduct of all the decisive events in the war, we cannot be certain how things would have developed had this project succeeded. Would Sweden have managed, in alliance with Romania, to unbalance the situation on the front? Difficult as may be to assume this, we must not forget that it was American intervention in 1917 which tipped the scales of the war. The question which remains is: What are the causes of the failure? Let us assume that everything depended on German influence. But even Germany did not have sufficient power to conclude such an arrangement. In Romania, the death of King Charles I was a turning point in the direction of foreign policy. From now on, government documents in Bucharest reflected Germany's war only in a negative way. In Sweden, German propaganda placed excessive emphasis on the historical image of the Russian invader. But it had little effect. Public opinion did not abandon its pacifist inclinations.

There were family links between the ruling houses in Romania and Sweden. Elisabeth of Wied (Carmen Sylva) was the niece of Sophie Wilhelmina Pauline Henriette, who was married to Oscar II, the King of Sweden. Cordial relations were increasingly strengthened after international recognition of Romanian independence.³² Why did dynastic relations not lead to a treaty of alliance? In the past, dynastic relationships represented only a historical argument. They encouraged, but did not guarantee, the conclusion of the alliance. The authority of the monarchs did not significantly change the political will of the governments. Finally, ministerial responsibility prevailed.

Alliances are more difficult to negotiate in times of war. Mainstream politicians refused to endorse diplomatic efforts. The project only ignited the interest of the opposition. The indecision of the Swedish government was matched by the lack of interest of the Romanian government. Pacifism in Sweden and nationalism in Romania were major obstacles. Of all the players, only Alexander Beldiman regretted the abandonment of the

³¹ AMAE, Folder 71/1914, Stockholm, vol. 59.

³² George Cristea, *Regi și diplomați suedezi în spațiul românesc. Secolele XVII-XX* (Cluj Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2007) 189-238.

project. The Minister of Romania in Berlin did not forget Bratianu's behavior during neutrality, nor the attitude of King Ferdinand. In the context of Romania being defeated and of German military occupation, the charges piled up, one after another. "Romania deceived and sacrificed" this was the headline of an article published in the foreign press and reproduced in the *Gazette of Bucharest*. Prime Minister Bratianu was "decapitated". The abdication of King Ferdinand was also anticipated positively.

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