

BETRAYALS IN THE NATION UNION WAR

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Abstract

Romania's history includes some painful episodes in which the leader's actions directed at upholding the loyalty vows made to the country's earth and to their alliances have been undermined. There was such an event in World War I, in which officers of the Romanian army were involved. We refer to the betrayals of colonel Alexandru D. Sturdza and that of lieutenant-colonel Crainiceanu, both important officers in the Romanian army and coming from well-known families. Their actions were met with suspicion by the German officers and their betrayal was harshly approbated, both by the Romanian officers and by the rehabilitated military bodies, which sentenced colonel Sturdza to death in contumacious, military degradation and confiscation, whereas lieutenant-colonel Crainiceanu was executed by firing squad. Punishing this act of high treason represents just one of the many expressions of honor displayed by the Romanian army and its leaders throughout the years.

Keywords: *World War, army, betrayal.*

In the history of the world, there have been many betrayals and agreements with the enemy. From a mythological point of view, the first betrayal was the one from the Garden of Eden which led to Adam and Eve's exile from Heaven.

Later, the brothers sell David, an Egyptian merchant. In the old history, Judas betrays Christ for 30 silver coins. Romulus kills his twin Remus, and betrayals are constant among the human species, as if they were trying to prove the Latin adage: "Homo homini lupus est."

In the history of the Romanian Principalities, from their formation and a long time after this, there have been many attempts to undermine the actions of the leaders, a significant situation was that in which the first Romanian unionist, Mihai Viteazul, was killed.

In the nation reunion war, between 1916 and 1918, there have been some horrible events which involved important officers from the Romanian army.

The Romanian nation, over time, was a friend of many of the world's people. This situation occurs during the peaceful periods. During conflagrations, every Romanian citizen has a moral and Christian duty to the country, to its alliances, and to the ones who have concluded those alliances.

The Romanian soldiers have always been faithful to the country and they obeyed the loyalty vows made to their leaders.

After the peace from Buftea, in 1916, when the country's capital was conquered and destroyed by the enemy troops, The Royal Court led by king Ferdinand withdrew together with the army on the left bank of Siret. Meanwhile, with the help of the allied countries, especially France, the Romanian army began an intense reorganization activity, instruction and endowment with modern arms, getting ready for the big offensive which would follow and lead to the liberation of the entire Romanian territory.

The Royal Court, the army commanders (the marshal Averescu, the general Eremia Grigorescu, and others) together with the representatives of the political parties (Iuliu Maniu and his assistants from Transylvania, I. Mihalache, and the Bratianu family in the Kingdom) were convinced and managed to persuade a large number of people of the correctness of the alliances made by the Royal Court and the governors. This phenomenon was induced both in the civilians and in the soldiers, who have played a significant part in the final victory.

In such conditions, of complete abnegation on behalf of the Romanian people and its army, which aimed at recompleting Romania, two superior Romanian officers and their aides, on February 6, 1917, colonel Alexandru D. Sturdza,

the commander of the 7th Mixed Brigade from Vrancea, and lieutenant-colonel Constantin Crainiceanu, betray the military vow to the country and king.

Colonel Alexandru D Sturdza came from one of the oldest and most important families in Romania. His father, Dimitrie Sturdza, a man of culture, academician and an important political figure, had been a close assistant of Ion C. Bratianu, following him at the helm of the National Liberal Party and four times prime minister, between 1895 and 1909. He was the son-in-law of the well-known conservatory politician P.P. Carp. He completed his military studies in Germany and became Commander of the School of Officers before the beginning of the hostilities, and after 1916 he was entrusted to commend the 7th Mixed Brigade that was performing in the Vrancea Mountains.

Colonel Sturdza's betrayal was premeditated. When marshal Averescu asked for his replacement from commending the 7th Mixed Brigade, Sturdza blamed lieutenant Ciulei, who was wrongly sentenced to death and executed. Moreover, in one of his king Ferdinand's visits on the front, Sturdza who had already connected the German troops, accompanied King Ferdinand close to the enemy lines, therefore exposing him to enemy bullets or handing him over to the enemy (quote from I.G. Duca).

German commanders did not welcome him with open arms, but with reluctance, taking into account the fact that a nation with integrity doesn't easily accept betrayals and betrayers.

In his attempt to exculpate himself, butting the blame on the Russian army which didn't want to fight on the front anymore, Sturdza is met by the commanders of the German troops and allowed to try to fulfil his plan together with another betrayer, colonel Constantin Crainiceanu, who remained in commend of the regiment in the crippled country (Popescu, 2012).

Addressing the Romanian prisoners and deserters, colonel Sturdza has only obtained the membership of 22 deserters. Moreover, from the group of war prisoners, the aviator lieutenant Cantacuzino-Puscasu ends up in front of the betrayer colonel Sturdza, spits him in his face, rips the epaulets of the Romanian army and tramples them. Despite this defiance by an officer

of the Romanian army, Sturdza continues to publish the manifests, which he gave to the 22 soldiers who seemed to join him, some of them ending up in the hands of the colonel Constantin Crainiceanu, who was on Sturdza's side and some were given to loyal Romanian officers.

In such conditions, on February 26, 1917, The War Council sentences Sturdza and his deputy to death and military degradation. At the same time, Sturdza's wealth had to be confiscated and there were also damages to the state amounting to 10 000 lei.

Today, descendants of his family require restitutions and other damages. We wonder how much is worth 10 000 taking into account the interests of the time, which haven't been paid up to the present day?

Lieutenant-colonel Crainiceanu was prosecuted on the same day for high treason and initially sentenced to 15 years of hard labour, thanks to his ascendancy: he was the son of General Grigore Crainiceanu and nephew of another well-known person, General Prezan. He, however, ordered quashing the initial sentence and judging the act of treason once again. The Military Court sentenced him to death by firing squad, and the sentence was implemented on the Holy Friday of 1917.

We represent, in copy, the proof of betrayal and the front order addressed to the Romanian army by the great general Eremia Grigorescu, born in Tg. Bujor, close to the front.

Colonel Sturdza's Manifest:

"I, Colonel D. Sturdza, whom you have fought shoulder to shoulder, speak to you the following:

I want to create a new army, well equipped with war machines and led by kind-hearted leaders. I want us to get rid of what was lost, to chase away the Russian robber from our country and to come back as soon as possible to our homes. We will be helped by the two hundred thousand Romanian prisoners, who I will set free..... You have been deceived by deceptive words about a national ideal; You have seen, how this ideal collapsed because of their ease and abjection. Wake up and stop believing the lies they feed you Disavow yourselves from those who have bitterly cheated on you.

You have sworn faith to The Romanian Country, not to some villains who lead you to death.

If you have faith in your arm, head and in my advice, come immediately to me. I am waiting for you in the Vrancea mountains. You will receive signs from me. I will free our prisoners. Everything is ready. Together with them we will form a new brave army, with God's help, and we will reconquer everything that we have lost, we will reunite what was broken and we will forever chase out the villain who took us where we are today.

Come immediately with your weapons towards me.

Let's free Romania. God will bless our deed.
Colonel Alexandru D. Sturdza"

General Eremia Grigorescu's Order:

"Soldiers!

Today.... I must tell you with a broken heart about a dirty deed, which has been committed by an individual who up to the 24th of January has stood among you, without any shame and who, under the beautiful Romanian uniform, has hidden a foreign and dirty soul.

I speak about a betrayer, the former colonel A. D. Sturdza.

Born and bred on Romanian land, having wealth and becoming rich due to your hard work, he managed especially know, when our beloved country is in danger, to ignore the oath taken to the King, the flag and country and to go into the enemy's ranks.

Colonel Sturdza's deed is a crime, committed by a thoughtless or lunatic mind. This criminal, however, isn't contempt only by going into the enemy's ranks; he tries to deepen the crime, as he is threatening our beloved country and putting our lives in danger.

He doesn't settle with selling himself and betraying our war plan to the enemy, but he aims at something more: he tries to form a new army from our soldiers who are prisoners at the enemy and from deserters, and with it to fight against us and therefore to spread brotherly blood on our Romanian land.

He tries, through brotherly battle to bring victory to the enemy. Victory for the Germans, for Hungarians, for Bulgarians and for the

Turkish, our enemies for centuries and our present-day enemies.

In his aberration, the former Colonel Sturdza tries, on our land and through manifests thrown from aviation, to advise you to follow him; he wants you to do the same using this base deed, knowing that the more will join him, the better it will be for him

He urges you to fight alongside the enemy, promising you heaven and earth.

Brave soldiers! Don't let yourself fooled by the words of a criminal and betrayer. Don't forget that you have sworn faith to His Majesty, The King, to the country and to the flag.

Be and remain faithful to your oath! (...) " (Manolache, 2012). Despite this betrayal, the king, the government and the Romanian army have continued to prepare and strengthen the war capacity on the Siret-Namoloasa defensive line. I was a child when my father, Ion Fatu, told me, in the 50s, about colonel Sturdza's betrayal and about the talks between general Mackensen and his deputy, general Falkenhayn, on August 5, 1917, at the German headquarters from Magura Odobesti, which could be seen from the hills of Siret, and that on August 6 they will be having coffee in Iasi. In that beautiful night, Romanian soldiers in scant attire, with all the bombardment of the German canons, have pierced through the frontline and conquered, in the death angel from Marasesti, the German troops. Here is the anthem that led our soldiers into battle:

"Here it is forbidden to pass

It is written from my order

Which frightens

The brash Mackensen"

This led to the ballade sang by the Romanian soldiers during this deadly fight:

"The cannon booms above

I couldn't care less

Just like God enters

In tough fight

In terrible fight

Close to Marasesti

Torrents have been destroyed

From the German troops

The cannon booms above"

Mackensen's dream of having coffee in Iasi collapsed in the terrible fights near Marasesti.

Colonel Sturdza's faith was quite cruel, despite the fact that he wasn't shoot, as he should have been. He became a refugee in Germany, held different positions and his attempts to come back to Romania were all refused by his wife, the daughter of the well-known politician, P.P. Carp. His last attempt was followed by marshal Antonescu's refusal in 1941... It is certain that he died far away from the country, alone and without being comforted by anybody.

On the death of marshal Averescu, General Mackense, in his letter of condolence sent to the Romanian Government, claims that marshal Averescu defeated Mackensen three times in his life: as an Officer School student, at Saint-Cyr, near Paris, France, in a riding competition at the

same well-known military school and in the death angle from Marasesti (Ilie, 2011).

Despite the harsh realities of those times, the Romanian Army proved a high level of patriotism on the battlefield, having King Ferdinand at the helm, together with the brave leaders of the Army: Alexandru Averescu, Eremia Grigorescu, Prezan and other generals who have sacrificed their lives in the interest of their homeland.

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