A DANISH ZOOLOGIST AND HIS ROMANIAN COLLEAGUES

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Abstract. In 1956, two distinguished Romanian entomologists Mihai Ionescu and Wilhelm Knechtel participated at the International Congress of Entomology. There they met the eminent Professor Soren L. Tuxen, director of the Zoological Museum of Copenhagen and member of the Permanent Committee of the congresses of entomology, who had an excellent opinion on Romania, and who, later, expressed his wish to visit the country. The paper presents Professor Tuxen’s visit in Romania, when he saw many museums, several theatre performances and knew many scientists and men of culture.

Résumé. Deux distingués entomologistes roumains Mihai Ionescu et Wilhelm Knechtel ont pris part en 1956 au Congrès International d’Entomologie. Ils y ont rencontré le Professeur Soren L. Tuxen - directeur du Musée de Zoologie de Copenhague et membre du Comité permanent des congrès d’Entomologie, qui avait déjà une excellente impression sur la Roumanie et qui a exprimé plus tard son désir de la visiter. Dans ce travail on décrit aussi cette visite du Prof. Tuxen en Roumanie, lorsqu’il a vu plusieurs musées, a assisté à quelques spectacles et a connu de nombreux hommes de science et de culture roumains.

Key words: Professor Soren L. Tuxen, Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs, visit, Romania.

In the summer of 1956, a year of important political changes, in Montreal a prestigious event took place: the World Congress of Entomology. Romania sent professors Mihai Ionescu and Wilhelm Knechtel, both of them well known personalities in the specialists’ groups from abroad. They were pleasantly surprised when a colleague of them, with a good position in the international organizations, University Professor Dr. Soren L. Tuxen (director of the University Museum of Zoology from Copenhagen, member of the Permanent Committee of the Entomological Congresses), accepted the invitation of the Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs. Thus, Academician Mihai Ralea, president of the institute, received a letter, in which he was informed that Tuxen was to come in Romania, honoured by that invitation. This was normal taking into consideration that Tuxen appreciated his Romanian colleagues, and with Professor Mihai Ionescu having a correspondence for more than three decades! More than that, he wrote in a letter on 21st of August 1956 that “Since I have seen the exposition of Romanian folkloric art in Copenhagen I want to visit your beautiful country”.

The Danish was to come in Romania with another colleague, Dr. Hans Schesch, director of Skansen Sort Zoostrant-Falster, their visit being one of cultural exchanges, approved by the Romanian Academy. In the same year, another Danish specialist, Dr. Holger Rasmussen, was to visit Romania, too, being very much pleasantly impressed after. These visits and, implicitly, the Danes’ interest in us was not

English translation by Mihaela Barcan Achim.

1 Translated letter, preserved in the National Archives – Central Historic Archive, the fund of Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs, file II/108, f.7.
unknown by Det Danske Selskab (Danish Institute of International Cultural Affairs), led by University Professor Dr. Folmer Wisti, a subtle intellectual.

Professor Tuxen and his wife reached Romania on 18th of October 1956, travelling with the Orient Express, via Prague, entering Bucharest at 6h45′.

For two weeks, Tuxens had an interesting programme focussed on their professional and cultural interests. They visited The Village Museum and that of Folkloric Art, National Museum of Art, “Mina Minovici” Museum, Geologic Museum and, “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History. Also, in their programme there were included Peleş Museum, research stations from Sinaia and Cluj (including that one led by Professor Palacsay), as well the fish farm from Mamaia and that one from Agigea. Their hosts invited them to a concert at the Romanian Athenaeum and to some performances of the opera “The Barber of Seville” and of the operetta “The Bird Seller”, in Bucharest, and in Cluj, of the opera “La Traviata”. Also, they were invited to cinema to see the film “Protar Affair”.

They were honoured being invited to a dinner by the Romanian Academy, at the Scientists’ House.

The guests visited the Pioneers’ Palace at Cotroceni, where they admired the surrounding park and monuments, as well as the villages around Cluj from where they bought bells. They were very much impressed by the performance from “Țândarica” Theatre, appreciating this kind of theatre and regretting they have not such kind of performances in their country.

The greatest joy was offered by the Romanian biologists, university professors and museologists to Professor Tuxen, who showed him their collections and talked for a long period of time. For instance, at “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History he was very much impressed by the lepidopteran collection and his conference held in the amphitheatre of the faculty of Biology of Bucharest brought him a great satisfaction.

It’s true that in that bloody October “the fear which overwhelmed the guests after they found out the events from Hungary was hardly to move away. Of course, he was worried after he made a visit to the Danish Embassy. After that he changed his attitude in front of his guide, probably considering him political instructor, and refused all discussions on political issues.

2 The institute founded in 1940 with a state budget and by the local authorities, very active from 1957 when branches were developed in United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Italy. Danish Institute was interested in conferences, summer schools (since 1947, over 4500 persons attended them), research trips (only in 1957 it organized 32 such kind of groups). Details in the presentation of Det Danske Selskab, O contribuþie a Danemarcei la colaborarea internationalã (A contribution of Denmark to the international collaboration) sent to Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs, f.149-151.

3 Folmer Wisti visited Romania making some research trips in 1929 and 1931, returning then as a guest of the Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs, in 1958.

4 On 26th of October 1956, at 11.30 a.m., he presented the paper “On the outer genitalia and the insect names”.

5 Cf. information of the Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs to the International section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Labour Party, on 27th of November 1956, loc. cit., f. 25.

6 Overheard remark by Gh. Merkler. This attitude was amended subjectively and unfairly. In fact, the Tuxens were “some representatives of the Danish middle class”, professor being a “scientist who lives extremely modest in Denmark who came in the Popular Republic of Romania and who is afraid to express opinion on the political and social aspects of our country not to lose his position when he returns to Denmark”. In the report, loc. cit., f. 27.
Being a high spirit person, Professor Tuxen filtered well Romanian relations and was much above those who followed or analyzed his words and reactions. This is the result of what he did after he had returned his country. Few days after he finished his visit, he wrote to Gh. Merkler, praising him his guiding services and sending him photos made during the period when they were together: “we have the feeling that we saw and learnt a lot in Romania, within such a short period of time” and “many times we remember the beautiful nights spent at the Opera, as the night with “Rigoletto”; I think you feel the same”.

As the Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs offered them books (by Eminescu, Slavici, Sadoveanu, Bălcescu, Caragiale, Geo Bogza, Mihail Sebastian and so on), they read them when returned home and also listened the records. On the 15th of November, attending the conference held by two Danish specialists (Zahle and Holger Rasmussen) on Romania, Tuxen thought of his conference with the same subject, established for 22nd of November at the Danish Circle of Natural History. He was very much concerned on his “mistake” of not buying the book L’art Populaire Roumain from Bucharest (“Cartea Românească” Publishing House, which he found at the second-hand bookshop). He asked his new friends from Romania to buy it from him, offering in exchange the complete series of the journal “Entomologiske Meddelelser”.

On 17th of November 1956 he wrote politely to the director of the Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs, Aurel Baranga, thanking him for the presents. His wife admired very much the popular costumes, they being “a proof of the ancient tradition, the sense of beauty demonstrated by the pottery and the village houses; she was happy that these traditions are appreciated when visiting the Village Museum, the Museum of Folkloric Art, “Mina Minovici” Museum”. Also, on this occasion he praised the Romanian zoologists and museologists. But Professor Tuxen understood, discreetly and attentively, what his Romanian colleagues needed. As the director of the “Grigore Antipa” Museum presented him the museum collections, mentioning that, unfortunately, they did not have a giraffe. In winter of 1957, it was already bought and sent to Professor Al. V. Grossu. For Al. V. Grossu, W. Knechtel, M. A. Ionescu, G. Lupaşcu, Mircea Ieniştea, Constantin Mândru, V. Radu, he prepared a box with specialized literature, books and journals, precious gifts for specialists. The books and giraffe skin reached Bucharest after repeated interventions in Denmark and at home, towards the end of March 1957.

On the 1st of March 1957, at Copenhagen, Tuxen organized a cultural evening dedicated to Romania at the Entomological Association, presenting images and Romanian folkloric music. That was an opportunity to praise again his Romanian colleagues, especially their studies on insects.

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7 Ibidem, f. 31-32, in the letter of 16th of November 1956.
8 The same publication, in a complete collection, was sent for free to his friend Mihai Ionescu, member of the Danish Institute of Entomology.
9 Cf. the letter on 21st of November 1956, loc. Cit., f. 40. As a homage for the guests’ benefit, the Tuxens sent a China figurine made by the oldest factory from Copenhagen.
10 Cf. the letter on 19th of February 1957, loc. cit., f.54.
11 Cf. the letter on 22nd of January 1957, to Al. Buican, idem, f.56.
12 Their studies were appreciated also by the French biologist Bernard Camenge (studies on bats), Czech Otto Giroveæ (cave geology), Professor I. I. Sokolov (Moscow), Karl Viets (Bremen), Professor Louis Fage (Paris), Professor Martin Eisentrant (Stuttgart), by specialists from Paris, Stuttgart, Zagreb, Prague, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Dijon, Budapest a. s. o. About all these aspects wrote positively the newspaper “România liberă” of 11th of April 1957.
Meanwhile, the savant got the mission of drawing up “Zoology of Island”, a very important paper which also included scientific information gathered by the Romanian biologists.

His gifts for the Romanian scientists were not ceased those years. Tuxen sent entomological pins, specialized books and articles, different working tools. For instance, to Cărăuşu (Mrs. Cărăuşu studied crustaceans from the Black Sea), who worked at the Agigea Station, he sent papers and even crustaceans from the northern seas.

Sincerely admiring Romania, Tuxen bought a folkloric blouse and a sheepskin coat from Cluj. From the albums sent by the Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs they appreciated that of folkloric art, admired for “the wonderful costumes and the entire graphic design – special soft colours”14. In 1959 Professor Tuxen thanked to the Institute for another albume, The Village Museum, which was considered “a very precious gift, which makes us to repeat the visit of this extraordinary museum, very well organized.”15.

During those years, the Institute sent him frequently newly released books and records, as “The Danube Delta”, “Goldsmith masters of Transylvania” or “Darkening” by Camil Petrescu. So that a valuable and long correspondence began between the savant and the Institut. All those sent journals were used at the savant’s conferences from November 1958 and February 1959 held at the Society of Natural Sciences Schleswig – Holstein (Kiel) and, respectively, at the Danish-Romanian Association, and in Thisted, speaking highly of Romania.

An important moment in bringing closely bilateral relationships was Zaharia Stancu’s visit (15th–19th of July 1957) in Denmark. The writer was supported by the Associacion of Danish-Romania Friendship and had the opportunity of meeting the publisher Borgen (who translated and printed “Bare-footed”), the writer H. Scherfig, Folmer Wisti, Carel Coghill (representative of “Reuters” Agency), the director of the Public Library of Copenhagen, Carl Thomsen, with Martin Nielsen, director of the newspaper “Land of Folk” and other highly appreciated intellectuals. Seven newspapers from Copenhagen published the Romanian writer’s interview, who “replied with competence, well oriented politically, and who contested the rumours and calumnies of the press during the event from Hungary on the so-called students’ revolt of the Romanian Popular Republic”16. Removing the ideological ballast, it is obvious that the Romanian writer’s visit was a success, Romanian diplomatic factors underlining that “the media supported a favourable atmosphere to our country, for several weeks”17. We cannot ignore that, as a result of this visit, Romanian specialists were invited in Denmark, especially due to the promotion made by Folmer Wisti and S. L. Tuxen. Just only in 1960 the attending at the International Congress of Endocrinology (the 18th–23rd of July), the Conference on the diseases generated by viruses at fruit trees (the 2nd–28th of July), the 5th International Conference of Poliomyelitis (the 25th–28th of July) and the International Congress of Geology (the 25th–26th of August) succeeded in presenting

13 Cf. the letter to the Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs, addressed to Al. Buican, the 9th of April 1957, by which Tuxem thanked for the albume Tuculescu and announced the sending of the biological material for his friends from Dobrogea, f.75.
14 f. the letter on 11th of April 1957, idem, f.78.
15 Cf. the letter on 6th of June 1959, idem, f.106.
16 This way Zaharia Stancu’s visit was commented in the report of 15th of August 1957, loc. cit., idem, f.138.
17 Ibidem, f.141.
the availability of the Danish authorities for those who promoted Romanian science. The “battle” from the Romanian culture was also sustained, those years, by theatre, literature, music, by the invitation of some Danish personalities in Romania. Professore Tuxen maintained his attention to us, enlarging the group of those interested from the scientific point of view in Romanian results by his students. Since 1961, he planed a student expedition which he led, supported by Denmark’s Internationæle Studenterkomite of Copenhagen. Of course, the Institute of International Cultural Affairs and the National Office of Tourism established this trip and the route: Bucharest – the Danube Delta – Sinaia (with Bucegi Mountains), Brașov (including Poiana Brașov), Bran, Valea Ialomitei, the caves Ialomita and Dâmbovicioara. Maps, tourist guides, booklets and other informative issues on the Romanian geography were sent to the 31 students from Studentenradet ved Københavns Universitet and to the student president, Henning Petresen.

The group, led by Professor Tuxen, reached Bucharest on 23rd of June 1962, and, in the same day they were received at the Institute of International Cultural Affairs headquarters. They were informed on the archaeological discoveries recently made, Tuxen thanking for the Romanian hospitality.

Finally, the Danish specialist fulfilled an older desire: to see the caves from the Carpathian area and the Danube Delta. The trip ended on 9th of July. On the 19th of January 1963, when the vice-president of the Institute of International Cultural Affairs, Octav Livezeanu, received the official gratitude sent by the director of the University Zoological Museum of Copenhagen, professors R. Sparker and S. L. Tuxen sent to Bucharest an invitation to Professor Constantin Motăs, director of the Speleological Institute, for holding two conferences at the University of Copenhagen. Well-known in the international scientific world for his papers on hydracarians, the Romanian specialist was awaited for September 1963. Professor Motăs was honoured and those who invited him argued the choice of their invitation: «La Roumanie a toujours été un pays prédéminant dans la science qui s’occupe d’explorations des grottes, soit leur géologie, soit leur faune».

Institute of International Cultural Affairs submitted a request to the leading board of the Romanian Academy, respectively to the first secretary of this institution Academician Ştefan Milcu, asking them to take in consideration the importance of this visit and not to refuse it because Professor Tuxen “contributed to the popularization of the Popular Republic of Romania in Denmark”.

18 For instance, the Romanian Institute of International Cultural Affairs sent to Det Danske Selskab: Anuarul statistic, Ghidul României, art albumes (Voroneţ, Delta Dunării, etc.), Romanian Etymologic Dictionary or that of the Modern Romanian Language, Vâlcea Bistriței, Sculptori români, Maestrii picturii din secolul XIX, Ghidul muzeelor, etc., but also Caragiale’s, Sadoveanu’s, Eminescu’s works, etc.
20 See the letter, f. 133.
21 See the invitation, idem, f. 132.
22 Cf. the address no 1057/5.II.1963, idem, f. 137. Indeed, S. L. Tuxen, held a conference within the programmes of bringing image to the events of the 23rd of August 1944, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, after he returned from the wonderful expedition (at the request of the International Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Labour Party). Is he really talked to the Danes about the official policy of Romania or about the wonderful places he had seen?
Doi entomologi români, Mihai Ionescu și Wilhelm Knechtel, academicieni de mai târziu, au participat în 1956 la Congresul Internațional de Entomologie. Acolo l-au întâlnit pe distinsul Profesor Dr. Soren L. Tuxen – directorul Muzeului Zoologic din Copenhaga și membru al Comitetului permanent al congreselor de Entomologie, care avea o impresie excelentă despre România și care, mai târziu, și-a exprimat dorința de a ne vizita țara.

În lucrare se relatează despre vizita Prof. Tuxen în România, când a vizitat mai multe muzee, a fost la o serie de spectacole și a cunoscut numeroși oameni de știință și cultură. Între aceștia s-a înscris și Profesorul Emerit Constantin Motas, care, în septembrie 1963, a fost invitat pentru a prezenta două conferințe despre aspecte ale explorărilor subterane și cercetărilor științifice faunistice și de geologie din România, la Universitatea din Copenhaga.

Received: January 9, 2009
Accepted: March 4, 2009

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