

THE WAR EXPERIENCE OF THE ROMANIAN ARMY

*Col. (ret.) Professor Viorel ORDEANU, PhD**
*Col. (ret.) Professor Benoni ANDRONIC, PhD***

Abstract: *The authors, starting from constitutional statement according to which Romania is a unitary and sovereign state, located in Central Europe, full member of Nord Atlantic Treaty Organization and of European Union, researching the military history of the Romanian nation, concluded that it is a military power by tradition, that ensures its national security and exports security in the Old World (Europe, Africa and Asia), as part of its political and military alliances.*

The article is a research of the military campaigns that Romanian Army took part in during the difficult history of the nation it defended, and also presents a series of lessons learned from the army's victories and defeats.

Keywords: *Dacian territory; forming of Romanian people; Romanian Countries; military campaigns; military power.*

Introduction

In *Antiquity*, part of Kingdom of *Dacia* (Figure 1) was conquered by Romans and the Dacian-Roman population was formed. Dacia was a military power that extended its territory in all directions: in the East it conquered the Scythians, up to current Odessa, in the North the Celts, up to current Lvov, in the West Pannonians, up to current Budapest, and in the South Thracians, up to current Burgas.¹

* Researcher 1, within Military-Medical Scientific Research Center, PhD in medicine, Professor at Titu Maiorescu University, Bucharest.

** Consultant Professor at „Carol I” National Defense University, corresponding member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists.

¹ Daniel Guță, Cât de întinsă a fost Dacia antică. Regele care i-a lărgit cel mai mult granițele, dar nu a reușit să aducă pacea în ținut, available at <https://adevarul.ro › locale › hunedoara › cat-intinsa-fost-dacia-antica...>, accessed on 02 09 2019.

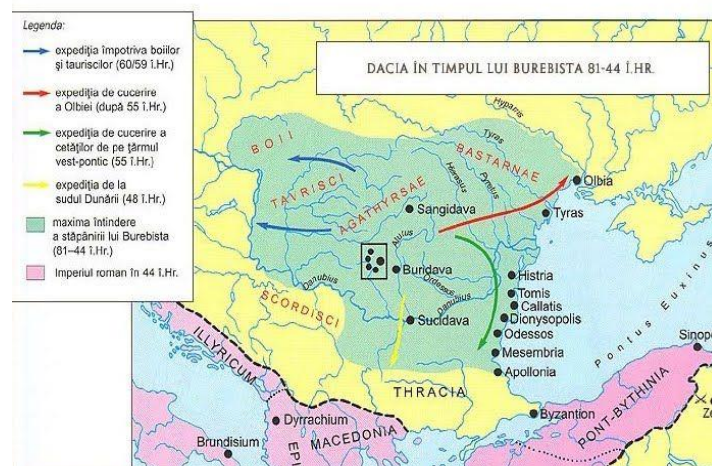


Figure 1. Dacian Territory²

In the *Middle Ages*, as a consequence of migrations from Asia (Slavs, Germanics, Cumans etc.) the *Romanian people* emerged, preserving the language, religion, habits and organization mostly from Romans. After Roman withdrawal, the state forms (*Romanies*) in Dacian territory, more or less independent, coagulated later in the form of the three Romanian states: *the Romanian Country* (Walachia), *Moldavia* and *Transylvania*. Around 1600, these were temporary reunited by ruler Michael the Brave (son of Pătrașcu the Good and princess Theodora, descendent of byzantine imperial family of Kantakouzenoi) and the country appeared in the Vatican archives as Dacia.³

In this period, the Romanian countries armies were involved in countless defense battles against all neighbors or invaders, between them (for political reasons) and in campaigns abroad. As such, an army corps led

² Cultura și civilizația dacică, Wikipedia, available at https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultura_și_civilizația_dacică, accessed on 02.09.2019.

³ Daniel Guță, Dacii din Arhivele Vaticanului. Cât adevăr ascunde cea mai bizară teorie a conspirației despre strămoșii noștri, available at <https://adevarul.ro/locale/hunedoara/dacii-arhivele-vaticanului-adevar...>, accessed on 03.09.2019.

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by Vlad the Impaler, fought for the defense of Constantinople⁴, Wallachian army led by Constantin Brâncoveanu participated in the Turkish siege against Vienna⁵, Stephen the Great fought in Pokuttya with the Poles⁶, Vintilă of Wallachia participated with an army corps in the Turkish campaign for conquering Caucasus⁷, while Transylvanians used to fight in the wars of Habsburg Empire. We can clearly state that all these battles and wars were not in the national interest, but in the political interest of temporary rulers, may they be Romanians or foreigners, that used the work and war force as they pleased.

At the beginning of *Modern Age*, the three Romanian countries were in a state of vassalage towards the great neighboring empires: Ottoman, Habsburg and Russian. After the Revolution in 1848, the national conscience, traditionally present in the population, was activated, while the Romanian intellectuals, educated in Western Europe, stimulated the Romanian spirit. As such, in 1859, by popular will expressed by vote, Moldavia and Wallachia got united under the name of *United Romanian Principalities*. The ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza, cavalry colonel, used for the first time the name of *Romania*, established the Capital in Bucharest and adopted the tricolor flag,⁸ formed by merging of the two flags. He also united the two armies, marking the moment with a common parade at Focsani, on the previous border; he organized a single Army, after the French model, and this is considered to be the act of birth of the *Romanian Army*.

⁴ Voievozi români în lupta antiotomană, Google sites, available at <https://sites.google.com/vievozi-romani-in-lupta-antiotomana/vlad-tepes> › mircea cel batran..., accessed on 03.09.2019.

⁵ Dragoș Ungureanu, „Condica vistieriei Țării Românești din perioada lui Constantin Brâncoveanu, 1694- 1703”, in Studii și Materiale de *Istorien* Medie, available at www.cimec.ro/istorie/Condica-vistieriei-tarii-romanesti-Brancoveanu, accessed on 04.09.2019.

⁶ Lupta de la Codrii Cosminului- cea mai mare victorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare asupra Poloniei, available at <https://istorie.pe.scurtr.ro/lupta-de-la-codrii-cosminului...>, accessed on 04.09.2019.

⁷ Gemil Tahsin, „Românii și Otomanii în secolele XIV XVI”, Editura Academiei Române, pdf., available at <https://www.academia.edu...>, accessed on 05.09.2019.

⁸ Luminița Cibotaru, București, Capitala de 150 de ani, jurnalul.ro, available at <https://jurnalul.ro/155-de-ani-bucuresti-capitala-romaniei>, accessed on 05.09.2019.

Wars, battles and military campaigns of the Romanian Army

In 1866, the German Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Siegmaringen, who was an artillery officer, was elected Ruling Prince of Romania. He reorganized the army following the German model, modernized the endowment: uniforms, rifles, artillery, fortifications, ships (first motorized ship of Romanian Army, torpedo boats) etc., having in mind an independence war against Turkey. In 1870, Prince Karl participated, as German officer, in the Franco-Prussian war and was promoted to marshal of Prussia⁹. In 1877, when the Russians started the war against Turkey, the Russian army led by archduke Nicolae had great difficulties and asked Romania for help. The Prince Karl, being higher in military rank, specified the condition that the Romanian Army be under his command. The strategy was symmetric to the one adopted in Dacia conquest by Emperor Trajan: he crossed the Danube on a bridge of ships at Drobeta (where further on the famous bridge was going to be built by Apollodor of Damascus) and at the same time through southern Dobruja, at Adamclisi. Karl crossed the Danube on a bridge of ships at Calafat, to attack the fortifications of Vidin, and also at Braila, to attack in Dobruja at lower Danube and the Black Sea harbors. So, one main direction and one secondary direction. The mobilization was an example of organization: the young ones, mostly peasants, were incorporated (with the request to have: sandals, hat, bottle of water, a bag with dry cheese and baked polenta) and considering the bad communication and transportation conditions of the time, it all took two weeks. Another remarkable thing is that all the Romanian students abroad signed for it, alongside the professional military. The Romanian Army, counting 70,000 combatants, won in the battles of Pleven, Smârdan, Vidin etc., against much larger forces.¹⁰

In these battles, other things were observed: the efficiency of the new Krupp guns with slotted barrel against the Turkish artillery; the precision of heavy artillery that bombarded the armored ships; the torpedo boats with

⁹ Mircea Brie and Ioan Horga, *International Relations from the Balance of Powers to the end of the European Concer*, University of Oradea, Romania, PDF, available online, <https://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de> > MPRA_paper_44566

¹⁰ Andrei Avram, Războiul de independență, *Historia*, available at <https://www.historia.ro> > general > articol > razboiul-de-independenta, accessed on 06.09.2019.

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rams that sank the flagship of the Turkish flotilla; the medical service (organized and led by the physician and pharmacist General Carol Davila), but also logistics as a whole. The bravery of the Romanian Army was recognized all across Europe.¹¹

Nevertheless, winning some battles, may those be very important, does not mean winning the war. At demobilization, in 1878, the Russian Army occupied Bucharest and part of Romania (and this will not be for the last time), claimed Bessarabia and the lower Danube, etc. Karl withdrew with the Romanian Army in Oltenia (Lesser Wallachia) to show that he does not give up and requested help from European Powers. This is how an ally can become an enemy. On the other hand, at the Congress of Berlin, same year, the independence of Romania, including Dobruja and lower Danube, was recognized. From the point of view of European Powers, the foundation of *European Transport Corridor no. VII*, as we call it today, was put in place.

After 1878, the Romanian Army was reorganized and modernized, while Romania became considered a *military power* in Europe. In 1881, Prince Karl, ruler of Romania and supreme commander of Romanian Army, was crowned King Carol I of Romania. In 1888, he commissioned a cruiser from Great Britain, which he named after the Queen. The cruiser Elisabeta,¹² armed with 150 mm cannons and torpedoes, won the world sea speed race, being considered the fastest ship on Earth. At the end of 19th Century, in Pantelimon, the first unit of aerial scouts and artillery observers with balloons was founded.¹³

In 1907, in Romania, the first peasant rebellion took place, for economic causes and probably stimulated by the Russian Revolution of

¹¹ Efortul militar al României, Muzeul Național, IV, pdf, București, 1978, pp. 25-33, available at <https://www.mnir.ro/wp-content/uploads/publicatii/Muzeul-Național...>, accessed on 06.09.2019.

¹² Dan-Eugen Sambra, Crucișetorul „Elisabeta”: Vasul amiral al Marinei Române înainte de Primul Război Mondial (partea I – 1887-1893), Historia, available at <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/crucisatorul-elisabet...>, accessed on 07.09.2019.

¹³ Istoric, Forțele Aeriene Române, available at www.roaf.ro/istoric/forțele_aeriene_romane, accessed on 07.09.2019.

1905. The peasants sieged some cities, considering that the evil comes from the citizens. Police and Gendarmery could not cope with it, so the army (infantry, chivalry, artillery) was sent to defend the cities and attack the involved villages. The consequences were tragic, and the liberal Government was covered in shame.

In the first decade of the 20th Century, the Romanian interest for aeronautics emerged, the engineers Aurel Vlaicu and Traian Vuia built the first Romanian airplanes that joined the ones bought from France. In 1910, *the first Romanian military flight* took place¹⁴, when, in military maneuvers, pilot Aurel Vlaicu sent a written order of the Army Commander, King Carol I, from Wallachia to the Chief of Staff, Prince Ferdinand, in Lesser Wallachia.

In 1912, the First Balkan War started¹⁵, when Turkey was attacked by Bulgaria and other countries, to liberate some territories in the Balkan Peninsula. The European Powers helped the Ottoman Empire, to avoid chaos in Balkans. Romania joined in with the Cruiser Elisabeta that defended Turkey, but also transported a marine infantry sub-unit to defend the Romanian Embassy sector in Istanbul. In the Balkan Wars, on the Romanian – Bulgarian front, the young Romanian military aviation got noticed, with aerial reconnaissance missions.

In 1913, the Second Balkan War started, in which the Romanian Army attacked Bulgaria, crossing the Danube on a bridge of ships at Zimnicea, won a series of victories, occupied the Southern Dobruja (Bulgarians wanted to occupy Dobruja), but due to a terrible cholera epidemic (poorly managed) it had to retreat, every man for himself. On the whole, the human losses of belligerents were around 122,000 killed in combat, 20,000 as a consequence of wounds (infections) and 82,000 as a consequence of contagious diseases; it is duly noted that at that time there were no antibiotics. Professor Cantacuzino personally led the anti-epidemic

¹⁴ Răzvan Mihăceanu, 17 iunie 1910 - Aurel Vlaicu - Primul zbor din istoria aviației române, România Militară, disponibil la <http://www.rumaniamilitary.ro> › 17-iunie-1910-aurel-vlaicu primul zbor..., accessed on 07.09.2019.

¹⁵ Cristina Zetu, Războaiele Balcanice, available at <https://prezi.com> › ycpectkyhdko › razboaiele-balcanice, accessed on 09.09.2019.

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battle,¹⁶ treated military and civilians in Bulgaria, Dobruja and Brăila, built campaign hospitals for contagious diseases and managed to stop the epidemics. Such a large amount of anticholera vaccine was needed that no recipients were enough therefore he even used his giant samovar, from his office (which exists today in the little Cantacuzino museum). His success remained in the medical literature known as the *Vast Romanian Experiment*.

In 1914, still in the Balkans, the World War I started, but Romania was so exhausted after wars and epidemics that it remained neutral. King Carol I, as German born and German officer, would have wished for an alliance with Germany, but being a Romanian citizen (also converted to orthodox religion), he realized that the Romanian interest was alongside France. If he won alongside Central Powers, he would regain Bessarabia, but lose Dobruja, if he won alongside Entente Powers, he would gain Transylvania, the Banat and Bukovina, but could not claim Bessarabia. The dilemma was solved by the King's death, as they said, by *broken heart*. King Ferdinand (infantry officer) followed him to the throne and he was the one who, in 1916, allied with France, attacked Austrian-Hungarian Empire, received military support from Russia as troops and from France as modern equipment. The French Military Mission, led by General Henry Berthelot, brought experienced specialists in modern warfare, machine guns, heavy artillery, ammunition, chemical bombs, armored cars, planes, metallic helmets, anti-gas masks, etc., while the French Medical Mission¹⁷ brought physicians specialized in sanitary tactics, campaign surgery and infectious diseases, but also nurses, medicine, ambulances, band aids, autoradiographs and other medical equipment¹⁸. All these were brought in by the *Northern Route*, that means France – Atlantic Ocean – Russia – Romania, at Iasi, the transport taking over a month. For the French comrades who fell doing their duty in Romania, a monument was built in the Cișmigiu Park, in Bucharest.

When the Russian Revolution started, the Russian troops on the front

¹⁶ Ion Giurcă, „Epidemia de holeră din Bulgaria din anul 1913 - consecințe asupra armatei române”, article in Revista de istorie militară, nr. 3-4/2013, pp. 78-79.

¹⁷ Otilia Bălinișteanu, Misiunea Franceză, „o-bula-de-oxigen-pe un trup muribund”, Ziarul Lumina of 22 februarie 2018, available at <https://ziarullumina.ro> › misiunea-franceza-o-bula-de-oxigen-pe un trup muribund, accessed on 09 09 2019.

¹⁸ Idem.

refused to fight anymore or abandon their positions. The Romanian Army, already in withdrawn position in Moldavia, tried to fill the gaps. The Germans moved to offensive, with artillery, including chemical bombs, but the Romanian resistance, with the French heavy cannons, destroyed the German batteries; here, a German Major, laureate of Nobel Prize in Chemistry, died after he had been brought in specifically for the chemical attacks. The Romanian units won both in defensive and offensive battles and managed to push the front to the west. However, the *revolutionary* Russian soldiers were unhappy with the Romanian resistance, frictions and even battles taking place between the allies, the harbor-city of Galati was bombarded by the Russian artillery.¹⁹ The Romanian Army found itself in the situation of fighting in the west with the Austrian-Hungarians and Germans, in the south with Bulgarians and Germans, while in the East with the Russian allies. So, after the retreat to Iasi, a further previously planned retreat in Russia in Kharkov was no longer possible for the King, the Government, the General Staff and Professor Cantacuzino.²⁰ The National Bank Treasure had already been sent to Moscow, *to be safe*, so safe that even today it has not been returned. A truce was signed, and the Romanian Army was demobilized. In 1918 USA sent 2 million soldiers to Europe and president Wilson has established the people's (nations's) right to self-determination.²¹

Nevertheless, the evolution of international situation was unpredictable. The Russian Revolution that made Russia a republic and ended the war was crushed the same year by the Bolshevik Revolution of Lenin. The soviet Russia was about to be formed (which included Russian colonies in southern Siberia); same for soviet Ukraine (with the Western border on the Eastern Carpathians), soviet Hungary (with Eastern border on

¹⁹ Bogdan Condurăţeanu, Bătălia pentru Galaţi. 12 ianuarie 1918, România Digitală, available at <https://www.romaniadigitala.ro> › batalia-pentru-galati-12-ianuarie-1918, accessed on 10.09.2019.

²⁰ Cel mai greu an din Primul Război Mondial, disponibil la <https://www.digi24.ro> › Special › Campanii Digi24 › Triumful unei naţiuni, accessed on 10.09.2019.

²¹ Eugen Siteanu, Pages of the History and Philosophy of International Security (1789-1933), în Revista de Ştiinţe Militare, Nr. 3 (58), Anul XIX, 2019, p. 47 („În anul 1918, SUA a trimis în Europa două milioane de soldaţi şi Wilson a expus propunerile sale de pace (14 puncte), inclusiv dreptul popoarelor la autodeterminare”).

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the Eastern Carpathians) so neighbor with Ukraine, while in Germany Emperor Wilhelm the Second abdicated and the revolution started. Some rebellions were also in Bulgaria, with individuals who wished for the Northern border to be on the Danube Delta, so neighbors with soviet Ukraine,²² but also in France. Basically, Romania would have been left with Wallachia and Lesser Wallachia. Only that international politics is not made only according to the will of great powers. Lenin, upset about the Ukrainian independence demand, sent the Red Army and destroyed the Ukrainian one. The German population was in favor of a Republic, but against revolution, so the latter was crushed. The Romanians did not want that Hungarians occupy Transylvania. General Berthelot, who just finished the assignment in Romania, was named Commander of the Allied Army in Balkans, with the headquarter in Thessaloniki. In order to help Romania on the Western front, he moved towards North, in the fall of 1918, crossed the Danube, and liberated the region from the rest of the Central Powers (banished the German forces from Romania)²³, thus covering the back of the Romanian Army. This remobilized quickly, the soldiers having the war experience and the units being endowed with modern equipment, with support from the Romanians in Transylvania, it liberated the entire Romanian territory up to the traditional border, Tisza. „*The same as other countries have their founding fathers, like-for instance-Italy, for which king Victor Emmanuel 2nd is called „padre de la patria”, so does Romania in the person of the great King Ferdinand 1st the Unifier, who reunited all of the Romanians living on both sides of the Carpathians into a single, centralized state: i.e., the Greater Romania, in 1918*”.²⁴ Because a risk for a counterattack from Hungary existed, King Ferdinand personally supervised the crossing of

²² Campania din Balcani (Primul Război Mondial), Wikipedia, available at [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgaria_în_timpul_Primului_Război_Mondial](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgaria_%C3%82n_timpul_Primului_R%C3%A2zboi_Mondial), accessed on 10.09.2019.

²³ Aurel V. David, Generalul Berthelot – un francez cu inimă de român, text extras din volumul Studii de istorie a înălțării și declinului nației românești, Editura TENPUS DACOROMÂNIA COMITERRA, București, 2006, pp. 449-476, available at [http://fscro.eu/generallul-berthelot-un-francez-cu-inimă-de-roman](http://fscro.eu/generallul-berthelot-un-francez-cu-inim%C3%A2-de-roman), accessed on 22.09.2019.

²⁴ Florian Tucă, Eugen Siteanu, *King Ferdinand 1st, Father of the Homeland*, în Revista de Științe Militare, Nr. 1/2017, p. 133.

Tisza²⁵ to attack Budapest and defeat the Bolshevik revolution. The cavalry division was the first that entered Budapest²⁶ (Figure 2) and realized that the revolution had just been crushed by the population, but the new government still wanted the annexation of Transylvania. A large part of Hungary, including Budapest, was temporarily occupied by the Romanian Army in order to avoid the annexation of Romanian territories (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Romanian cavalry division enters Budapest²⁷

²⁵ Ziarul Românul din 12 august 1919, nr. 84, Vizita suveranilor pe frontul Tisei, disponibil documente.bcucuj.ro › 1919 › BCUCUJ_FP_P2581_1919_008_0084, accessed on 10.09.2019.

²⁶ Gheorghe Moise, Campania armatei române în Ungaria, available at <https://ro.historylapse.org> › campania-armatei-romane-in-ungaria..., accessed on 11.09.2019.

²⁷ Idem.

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Figure 3. Temporary occupation of Budapest²⁸

Romania was about to be reunited with the other Romanian territories, forming the Greater Romania, since 1918 until 1940, when it was forced to give up part of them without a fight. After 1944, Romania had the current surface: more than 237 thousand square kilometers land, plus the adjacent sea area, summing up to more than 300 thousand square kilometers. Population had been in a permanent dynamic, rose and dropped, currently counting around 21.5 million people, out of which 85% Romanians, 97% Christians, most of them Orthodox, with a density of more than 90 people per square kilometer.²⁹ As size and economic power, Romania is the seventh country of European Union and 45th in the world, in the first quartile of the global ranking. One can say about Romania that it is the biggest small country or the smallest big country.

At the peace conference in Paris, in 1920, attended by all the involved powers, the Romanian delegation consisted of Brătianu, Titulescu,

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Unirea cea Mare de la 1918 - act românesc și european, disponibil la <https://www.politiadefrontiera.ro> › main › i-unirea-cea-mare-de-la-1918, accessed on 11.09.2019.

Cantacuzino, Marshall Averescu and others.³⁰ The structure of Greater Romania was ratified, while King Ferdinand, named *The Unifier*, who was symbolically crowned at Alba Iulia, as Michael the Brave, realized that the Army had to be reorganized and modernized. This was done following the French model, procuring tanks, aircrafts, anti-aircraft or field artillery (the 75 mm French gun was the best in the world), battleships, including destroyers and river warships (he made the strongest fluvial flotilla in the world) etc.³¹

After the death of King Ferdinand, a critical period emerged, with military princes succeeding the throne: his grandson, Michael the First, then the son, Carol the second, and again Michael. All of them foresaw the war, tried to get closer to the great European Powers, built fortification lines on the Dniester, strengthened the navy (destroyers, subs, torpedo boats, etc.), built the aircraft factory in Brasov (Romania was the fourth world producer of military aircraft, while the Romanian airplane IAR 80 was the fastest hunting plane before World War II), coastal artillery, ensured the afforestation of the beach zones with risk of landing; on social plan they built dual scope constructions: street and area of Bucureștii Noi, the sport area of Tineretului, Herăstrau Park etc. Due to violent political struggles, the army intervened against the fascist coups of 1939 and 1941³².

In 1941, after a period of neutrality, Romania joined World War II against USSR in order to recover the lost territories: Bessarabia, Bukovina, Hertsa and Snake Island; it did not ally with Germany but joined it and German allies in fight. After reaching the objectives, Marshall Antonescu did not stop moving forward, but continued to support the German war effort against the Soviets, for the same reason as in the World War I. Romanian units ended up fighting on the Don, on the Volga and in

³⁰ Viorel Virgil Tilea, „Acțiunea diplomatică a României, nov. 1919 – Mart. 1920”, Tipografia poporului Sibiu, 1925, pp. 14-21, disponibil la file:///C:/Users/benon/Downloads/BCUCLUJ_FG_211675_1925.pdf., accessed on 11.09.2019.

³¹ Constantin Corneanu, Armata română, consolidarea statului și afirmarea națiunii române, disponibil la <https://www.aesgs.ro/armata-romana-consolidarea-statului-si-afirmarea-natiunii-romane-2>, accessed on 11.09.2019.

³² Gheorghe Buzatu, „România sub imperiul haosului 1939-1945”, PDF, <https://www.scribd.com/document/Gheorghe-Buzatu-Romania-sub-imperul...>, accessed on 12.09.2019.

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Caucasus, almost matching the historic record of distance. One can note that the Romanian units, way less endowed than the German ones, fought the Russians on equal ground; the mountain huntsmen, marines and aviation were particularly brave. In conditions of bad circulation, underdeveloped street networks and mud- and snow-covered fields, in which the German armored cars got stuck, the Romanian cavalry and the horse-pulled artillery could keep marching according to plan. General-Major Corneliu Suciu remembers: “*I was a soldier and marching with the rifle on my shoulder through freed Bessarabia, while chanting Vrem Ardealul!*”³³. When the Red Army, technically supported by USA, repels the German attack, the Romanian Army also gradually retreats till Moldavia.

In 1944, the risk of defeat was obvious for the Romanian Army, but also the danger to end the war with territorial losses in both East and West or worse, King Michael the First announced on the radio the proclamation under which Romania would not fight anymore against USSR; moreover, he invited the German Army to leave the Romanian territory immediately. However, the Germans, in the same way as they did in Italy and Greece, tried to conquer Romania: they bombed Bucharest from airplanes and tried to occupy it, they also tried to bomb Constanta with the artillery and occupy it. An important role in the avoidance of city bombing was the one of Rear admiral Horia Macellariu.³⁴

After short, but fierce battles, the Germans had to retreat, as the entire

³³ George Achim, „*Revolte-și consimțiri*”, available at <https://ro.scribd.com/doc/17602072-gorge-achim-revolte-si-consimtiri>, accessed on 12.09.2019.

³⁴ Horia Macellariu, as a former deputy of German Vice-Admiral Helmuth Brinkman, commander of German Command „*Black Sea Admiral*”, contacted him, who had orders not to give in Constanta and fight for it no matter the price and seize Roman fleet. Romanian Admiral went on board of the powerful German battery named „*Tirpitz*”. In his memoir book called „*În plin uragan*”, Romanian admiral described his discussion with the German admiral: „*It was only between me and him; we looked at the situation together and determined him to retreat without putting up a fight or causing destruction, which would have caused victims among the innocent population. (...) So, the battle between the German fleet and the Romanian fleet was actually fought between me and Admiral Brinkmann, in the German battery Tirpitz.*” As a consequence of these discussions, the German fleet withdrew without fighting on 25 August 1944, available at https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horia_Macellariu, accessed on 14.10.2019.

army was against them, just as the vast majority of the civilian population. This attitude was also due to deep anti-German resentment caused by loss of the Romanian territories (Figure 4) to German allies (USSR, Hungary and Bulgaria), in the *Vienna Award*,³⁵ as well as the despising attitude of the Germans towards the Romanian citizens, which may be felt today.



Figure 4. Loss of Romanian territories after the Vienna Award.³⁶

The Romanian Army fought bravely to free Transylvania and continued (from the same strategic reasons) the fight in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Austria, until the end of war, being the fourth contributor to the German defeat. However, at the peace negotiations, Romania was considered defeated country and paid heavy compensations.³⁷

After the war, the soviet troops remained in Romania, some of them almost 14 years, as occupation troops, supported the coup (King's abdication, communists raise to power, nationalizations, etc.). Then, on

³⁵ Dictatul de la Viena drumul spre pierzanie, *Istorie pe scurt*, disponibil la <http://www.istorie-pe-scurt.ro/dictatul-de-la-viena-drumul-spre-pierzanie>, accessed on 14.09.2019.

³⁶ Idem.

³⁷ Ion Calafeteanu, *Spolierea României la Tratatul de Pace de la Paris*, *Historia*, accessed on <https://www.historia.ro> > sectiune > general > articol > spolierea-romaniei, accessed on 15.09.2019.

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August 9th, 1946, together with diminution and reorganization of the army, almost 9,000 officers were let go, most of them competent, who fought on the front and had the World War II experience. They were replaced with elements brought directly from production, with no military training whatsoever, but attached to the communist ideals. In all this time, for a better supervision of the Romanian Army, the Soviets sent advisors – in reality, secret services officers – to all commands.³⁸ The traditional uniform was discarded and a new one, of soviet design, was adopted. The Soviet military Regulations were translated and implemented. Because at the end of war the national defense industry was destroyed (the weapons industry had been shut down), the warfare technique (aircrafts, tanks, artillery, light weapon, etc.), sometimes inferior to the existing one, started being imported from USSR. Then the confiscation and partial destruction of fleet and aviation, of huntsmen and cavalry took place. Some military retreat in the mountains and organized subunits of partisans, waiting in vain for the American troops,³⁹ without knowing that a secret agreement between Churchill and Stalin established the division of Europe after war, and Romania was sold to USSR for Greece. After the death of dictator Stalin, the situation eased a bit. Slowly, the army started to be modernized, while new units were formed: jets, rockets, radiolocation, tanks, ships, etc., all of Soviet production. In 1956, the Hungarian anti-Soviet Revolution put the Romanian Army in state of alarm, especially because of the claims for Transylvania that turned the discrete sympathy of Romanians in open hate. In 1958, at the sign of the Treaty with USSR, under which it withdrew its occupational troops completely, a powerful anti-Soviet state of mind, augmented by the stories of former combatants, of the returned prisoners and of the rumors that still had an extraordinary circulation power. The Romanian Army was in alarm state during the Cuban missiles' crisis (1961), when the USSR nuclear missiles targeted the USA territory, as a response to the American nuclear missiles that targeted the USSR territory, with the risk

³⁸ Din Istoria Armatei Române (1948 – 1989) – Pagini uitate, pagini necunoscute, available at www.rador.ro > ROMANIA > Istorie orală, accessed on 17.09.2019.

³⁹ Ion Gavrilă Ogoareanu, *Brazii se frâng, dar nu se îndoiesc*, vol.1, Editura MARINEASA, Timișoara, 1993, pp.7-8.

of a nuclear war on the horizon. In this period, it was agreed that the foreign military units could not enter the country unless on approval, while on the Romanian territory no nuclear weapons could be installed or stored (lest the country should become a legitimate target for nuclear bombing). This is how the famous Declaration of April 1964,⁴⁰ when the Chief of State, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej announced the independence from USSR, became possible, with multiple implications, including military ones. However, as a coincidence, the next year, the head of state suddenly died of cancer, while in his office a radioactive source was later found.

The new head of state, Nicolae Ceausescu, played the national card from the beginning and tried to implement a series of reforms. In 1968, the Prague Spring happened⁴¹, with an independent orientation against USSR. The Warsaw Treaty troops invaded Czechoslovakia: a USSR army group, one subunit of every allied state, plus a battalion from Bulgaria. Knowing that Romania would not agree, Bulgarians crossed our country by train, as civilians, with the weapons in their luggage, while the customs, supervised by State Security, did not see anything either on entrance or exit. As the discussions of the time were (*the military folklore* was very much developed back then), this episode triggered a series of purges in the state institutions.⁴²

The Army took the situation very seriously, the battle alarm was conveyed to every unit; we should remember that even the Medical Military Institute (a non-combat unit) had the mission to protect the Northern Rail station, together with the Rail station command. It was said that in Bukovina there were attempts of entrance with armored cars and demonstrations of strength that were met with fire, in the limits of the International Rights.⁴³ The atmosphere of heroic unconsciousness and the declarations from the West, USA and China, moved the invasion danger away from Romania.

⁴⁰ Colecția „Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej”, arhivelenationale.ro › site › decjaratie independenta › Gh-Gh Dej, accessed on 15.09.2019.

⁴¹ Bianca Pădurean, Pagini de istorie: „Primăvara de la Praga”, available at <https://www.rfi.ro › politica-100327-pagina-de-istorie-ani-primavara-praga>, accessed on 16.09.2019.

⁴² According to Col. (war veteran) Virgil Ordeanu, at that time engineer officer in the Ministry of National Defense.

⁴³ Idem.

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The year 1968 represented a new vision of Romanian defense: motherland defense by all people; the Supreme Commander led the Army and the military units of the other Ministers, Secret Services, patriotic guards from enterprises and institutions, he coordinated the preparation of land and economy for defense, according to the traditional Romanian doctrine of a *war of all people*.⁴⁴ Actually, this doctrine was applied in Europe by Yugoslavia and Swiss Confederation. The Romanian Army was reorganized again, purged, the uniforms were changed again (coming back to French tradition), new units were founded, the endowment with modern equipment continued. All the light weaponry was built in the country, as well as transport vehicles, light, medium and heavy tanks, cannons, tanks, rockets, jet planes, ships (including the flagship cruiser Romania, that became the destroyer Muntenia and currently the frigate Marăşeşti), modern fortifications, but also the military education modernized. The weapon industry was developed, modernized, exports started towards the Arab countries, tanks in Egypt, ships in Vietnam, etc. In this period, the Romanian Army was in alarm state during the Turkish invasion in Cyprus (1974) and the British one in the Malvinas (1982). Large field exercises with troops, aviation and ships were organized. Thus, in 1988, an exercise lasting from spring to fall was organized, when units of 1st Army (Wallachia) occupied positions in the Southern Carpathians and had to cross mountains to help the 4th Army (Transylvania) to stop a hypothetical enemy at the Gate of Mureş and the Gate of Someş, to occupy Transylvania. This extraordinary deployment of forces was made under the admiring supervision of the military delegates in Bucharest and probably modified the plans of Romanian invasion.

In 1989, the volatile international situation, when the Romanian Revolution started, the Army received the drill alarm and not the battle one, even when provocative agents (probably foreigners) wounded or killed soldiers, while in some situations the soldiers responded to the aggressors. A particular case was in Cluj-Napoca, where the alarm sounded with the yell

⁴⁴ Petre Opreş, *Doctrina militară a României, asemănătoare cu cea a Iugoslaviei*, available at <https://jurnalul.ro/scinteia/special/doctrina-militara-a-romaniei-asemanatoare-cu-cea-a-iugoslaviei-519821.html>, accessed on 18.09.2019.

*the Hungarians are coming!*⁴⁵ However, when the forces killed protesters, the Army joined the latter and the Revolution.

Actually, it used to be said that *the Army is the weaponized arm of the people, while the Security is the weaponized arm of the Party.*⁴⁶ Naturally, the Army fought alongside people with no exceptions, while part of the State Security fought alongside the authorities. Minister of Defense, General Vasile Milea, stated that the Army would not shoot at their own people and killed himself (the Army announcement stated that *he was suicided*)⁴⁷. As they said in the Army, Soviet units attempted to enter the country. Two armed airplanes landed in Otopeni, but both were disarmed and sent back under aerial escort (the airplanes were seen from the Training Center of Antiaircraft Artillery). It was said that some Soviet soldiers were captured in close proximity of Ministry of Defense, while their uniforms and signs were buried at Regiment I Infantry. Border officers claimed that at Galati, units of Army 14 of USSR (the one destined to occupy, if needed, Istanbul and the straits) tried to cross the border, *to help the Revolution*. The border patrol occupied battle positions on the bridge, the negotiator told them that the bridge was mined and could not be crossed, while when their position was that they would cross the river on foot, they were told that the river was mined as well both upstream and downstream, but also that the Revolution did not need them. So, at the order of General Ștefan Gușă, the Chief of Staff of the Army, one battalion blocked an Army. General Raul Buliga, Commander of Army 1 said, *there is no need to be stronger than the enemy, many times showing that you do not agree with him and standing your ground is enough.*⁴⁸

After 1990, the Romanian Army was again reorganized, drastically reduced, there were changes in uniforms, endowment, doctrines, regulations,

⁴⁵ According to Colonel dr. Viorel Vlădău, at that time officer in the 4th Army Command.

⁴⁶ Sorin Șerb, La Revoluție, protestatarii au fost uciși de Securitate, brațul înarmat cu mitraliere al PCR, Actualitatea românească, 02 februarie, 2019, available at <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/la-revolutie-protestatarii-au-fost-ucisi-de-securitate-bratul-inarmat-cu-mitraliere-al-pcr/29747698.html>, accessed on 19.09.2019.

⁴⁷ Vasile Milea: „Ceausescu mi-a spus să trag în popor”, Jurnalul Național, 22 noiembrie 2004, available at [www.hotnews.ro › stiri-arhiva-1250266-vasile-milea-ceausescu-a-spus-sa-trag...](http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-arhiva-1250266-vasile-milea-ceausescu-a-spus-sa-trag...), accesat la 20.09.2019.

⁴⁸ Afirmație repetată în cadrul pregătirii militare la Comandamentul Armatei 1.

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etc. Strange enough, General Ștefan Gușă died of cancer, General Victor Stănculescu, who faked a leg fracture to avoid the retaliation ordered by Ceausescu in Timisoara, and other officers who supported the Revolution were trialed and discharged, even the first Head of post-revolutionary state, Ion Iliescu, was accused of genocide.⁴⁹

The campaigns abroad were resumed, because after World War II no Romanian unit had crossed the border, except the shooting grounds with soil-soil, soil-air and air-soil missiles in Kazakhstan (USSR). The Romanian Army participated, with campaign hospital no. 100 in the Persian Gulf War, in Saudi Arabia, 1991. This was known as Romanian Field Hospital No 50 ONMA (Other Nations Medical Assistance) of the Multinational Force, in Operation Granby (with British command) of the *Desert Storm 1991*, that followed *Desert Shield 1990*. The British Commander appreciated the hospital as being *old but good*. After the war, the hospital was deployed in Somalia and later in Angola. These were followed by NATO multinational military missions, after the ones of *peace making* (invasion) and *peace keeping* (occupation) in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, etc.

Conclusions: This short historic perspective of Romania and its Army also explains the Romanian hard feelings towards some neighbors, especially Russia, may it be as empire, Soviets or modern, but also towards others that attacked Romania or tried to gain profit at the expense of our country.

Although there were instances, and not only a few, when the Romanian Army was caught unprepared in the frenzy of the global events, with an improper endowment, in the context of the agitated existence of Romanian nation, it has always been the warrant of the territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

In the international conflicts on both European and national territory, but also as part of the multinational missions of the North-Atlantic Alliance, the Romanian Army, through its soldiers' professionalism and sacrifices on the battlefields, did its job and earned the nation respect, as well as that of

⁴⁹ Ondine Gherguț, Iliescu acuzat de genocid împotriva romilor din București, România liberă, available at <https://romanalibera.ro> › special › investigatii › iliescu-acuzat-de-genocid, accessed on 20.09.2019.

its allies.

The activity of Romanian Army, lately renamed The Army of Romania, decisively contributed to the acceptance of Romania as NATO Partner and, in 2004, as member of the North-Atlantic Alliance, and later as member of European Union.

The Romanian Army showed in the global conflicts and is still proving nowadays the military power of Romania, in conflicts and in peace keeping around the world, with a notable participation, with dozens of units and subunits, with thousands of professional voluntary soldiers, with dozens of soldiers that fell on the line of duty or were wounded, important material loss, such as combat technique and other materials, human, material and financial costs, without the perspective of recovering this sacrifice through any kind of economic advantage.

The Army is nowadays a modern military organism, comparable with the ones from the North-Atlantic Alliance, capable of giving an efficient response to whatever armed aggression towards the Romanian security, and that has done and will do its duty, confirming the Romanian status as a military power.



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