

ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA'S REFORMS CONCERNING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE SYSTEM

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Abstract: *In this article we aimed to highlight the immense contribution of ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza to the modernization of the national defense system of the young Romanian state resulting from the Union of January 1859. The ruler unified the Armies of Moldova and Wallachia and then undertook a set of measures that led to the quantitative and qualitative increase of the Army and the other components of the defense system. Numerous normative acts of European inspiration were adopted, exchanges of experience were made in the line of training, equipment and the foundations of a modern military education were laid. In 1866, Romania had a modern, well trained and equipped Army.*

Keywords: *Alexandru Ioan Cuza, ruler, Romania, national defense system, national interest, Army, training, endowment, legal regulations, military education.*

Alexandru Ioan Cuza, born on March 20, 1820 in the town of Bârlad (the only town in Romania where two heads of state were born), and died on May 15, 1873, in Heidelberg, Germany, he was the first ruler of the United Principalities and of the national state of Romania. By his election as lord of Moldavia, on January 5, 1859, and of Wallachia, on January 24, 1859, the Union of the two principalities was accomplished. He was ruler of Moldavia until 1862 and ruler of Wallachia until 1862, ruler of the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia after 1862 and of Romania until February 23, 1866. He is buried at the Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery in Iasi.

Cuza's reign represented an extensive process of modernization of the state by transposing the principles and aspirations of the revolution of 1848, completing the process of transition to a modern political regime. Each political and/or military approach was well analyzed, the goal being only one, the promotion of national interests and the expansion of the country's autonomy.

Looking at the place and role of the Army within the Romanian State, there was an exchange of ideas, clashes of opinions, regarding its structure and physiognomy. Noting that "all the guarantee of our national independence, the preservation and respect of our law and territory are from

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now on in our power and in our hands", the publication *Curierul Principatelor Unite* showed the need to carry out a "reorganization of military power on the basis of a new system".

There were other publications of the time that showed that the mission of the Romanian Army must be the defense of the homeland, that "we shall not declare war, nor attack anyone; it's about the defense of everything that man has most sacred - nationality"¹.

Alexandru Ioan Cuza was the initiator of reforms and actions that would lead to profound changes in the field of the country's defense, to the creation and consolidation of the unified national army. He paid special attention to the military organization that was imposed by the defense needs of the young modern Romanian state. The military body had to be reorganized, strengthened, equipped, prepared, so as to face any situation, all the more so since the Ottoman Empire and Austria, not recognizing the Union, wanted military intervention north of the Danube.

It began with the unification of the army of Moldova and Muntenia by establishing, in April 1859, the military camp at Florești (near Ploiești), at first under the command of General Constantin Milicescu, later, under the command of Cuza. Arranged halfway between the borders with Turkey and Austria, this camp was intended to prevent an invasion and at the same time to exert pressure on Austria engaged in the Franco-Serbian-Austrian war. For half a year, almost 12,000 Mountain and Moldovan soldiers trained together under the direct supervision of the ruler. Simultaneously with the standardization and improvement of the training process in the camp, the feeling of belonging to a single country, to a single nation, developed. In addition, the camp marked the birth of the feeling of dignity and value of the Romanian army ready for any sacrifice for the country.

Later, in 1861 new military camps were organized at Malmaison, Floreasca and Colentina in Bucharest, and in 1863 1st Cotroceni where a large and modern shooting range was built.

In order to have a single leadership, on November 12, 1859, the General Staff was established, at the head of which was appointed general Ion Emanoil Florescu. It was restructured in 1863 into four sections: army correspondence works, topographical works, engineering and artillery works and public works belonging to the Army.

By merging, in 1862, the ministries of war from Iași and Bucharest, the Ministry of War of the United Principalities was established, to whose command General Ion Emanoil Florescu was appointed. The supreme commander of the Army Forces continued to be Cuza, the Minister of War

¹ *Anunțătorul român*, February 1859.

being only "the ruler's intermediary for the command and administration of the army"².

The measures adopted by Alexandru Ioan Cuza and his close associates - Mihail Kogălniceanu, generals Savel Manu and Ion Emanoil Florescu - related to the unification and improvement of the military system and the foundation of the basic doctrinal principles combined the national tradition with the experience accumulated in other countries, especially in France.

Through the measures undertaken, the numerical and qualitative growth of the troops, the diversification of weapons, the provision of a high-performance military education (approximately three decades before the establishment of the War School), the initiation of an own arms industry to equip the army, the provision of the legislative framework that confers respect, discipline, order, strength, to the new military structures.

Initially, it was decided to introduce the uniform and unique equipment, and on September 1, 1862, in a festive setting, the units were handed tricolor flags, red-yellow-blue with the motto Honor et patria, the tricolor established as the state flag of revolutionary power since 1848. On this occasion, the ruler insisted on the symbolic power of the flag that represents Romania. "The flag is the symbol of devotion, faith, order and discipline that represents the army. The flag is at the same time the past, the present and the future of the country, the entire history of Romania"³.

In 1863, three territorial commands were established: in Bucharest, for the troops stationed in Muntenia up to Olt, in Iasi, for the units deployed in Moldova, and in Craiova, for the troops stationed west of Olt.

Through the Law for the organization of the armed forces in Romania, adopted in November/December 1864 (so 160 years ago), it was established that the country's Army should consist of the permanent army, with its reserve, the militias, made up of border guards and patrolmen, with their reserves⁴ and the mobs⁵ which could be mobilized in exceptional situations.

Both theoretically and practically, the Permanent Army, the central element of Romania's defense system after the Union of 1859, experienced important qualitative and quantitative changes under the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, being a flexible, modern, efficient instrument of the country's defensive military power.

² *Monitorul oastei*, year V, no. 27, December 19, 1864, p. 457.

³ *Mesagii, proclamații, răspunsuri și scrisori oficiale ale lui Cuza Vodă*, Vălenii de Munte, 1910, p. 90.

⁴ All Romanian citizens aged between 20 and 26 were included.

⁵ They included all men capable of fighting over the age of 26, divided into three mobilization classes according to age.

During the seven years of Cuza's reign, the strength of the Army increased gradually. If at the time of the Union the two armies had approximately 10,000 soldiers and officers to which were added 3,000 soldiers from the non-permanent territorial formations, in 1865 the permanent Army reached an effective strength of over 19,000 combatants joined by more than 24,500 from the troops territorial. This increase was due to the new methods of recruitment and the establishment of new units and sub-units of different arms⁶. According to the law of 1864, recruitment was done by conscription⁷, voluntary enlistments⁸ and reemployment. Thus, in 1860, two more infantry regiments were created with two battalions each, a hunter battalion, two cavalry squadrons that were added to the existing two and the first engineer regiment in the Romanian Army. The four artillery batteries were assembled in an artillery regiment, while measures were taken to equip the flotilla "with the necessary ships".

In 1866, the types of weapons in the structure of the permanent army were: infantry (composed of line regiments and hunter battalions), cavalry (of lancers and hunter regiments), artillery (of an artillery regiment with six batteries and a division of pontoonists), the genie (from a regiment with two battalions), the flotilla (from companies of sailors and the respective ships).

The border guards, who were part of the territorial formations, were organized in pickets and were arranged on the alignment of the Carpathians and the Danube, and the patrolmen, constituted in squadrons and battalions, were located in all the existing territorial districts. They prepared in their localities at least once every two weeks and concentrated for maneuvers once a year for a month. The horses of the Dorobants were their property or the property of the localities they belonged to.

Important measures were also taken regarding the organization of the gendarmerie, the administration troops, the intendant and the health service, at the head of which Dr. Carol Davila was appointed.

Within the Ministry of War, committees and councils were created for approval studies, such as the technical council, the permanent council of army instruction, the central committee for solving financial problems, administrative councils in the entire army, etc. which led to the effective resolution of numerous problems.

In order to achieve a level of European-level training, the necessary legislative framework was ensured through the elaboration of regulations and the adoption of laws of a military nature. In 1860 the United

⁶ *** *Istoria militară a poporului român*, vol. IV, Bucharest, 1987, p. 413.

⁷ Annual calls by drawing lots, a system applied throughout the country except for the border areas that provided soldiers for the border guard troops.

⁸ Volunteering lasted 4 years and was the form of military service satisfaction by Romanian citizens between 17 and 30 years old, who had to fulfill several conditions. What was meant by civil and moral status, as well as physical and intellectual training.

Principalities Army Training Act was passed together with the Home Service and Garrison Command Regulations, the Military Hierarchy Act in 1862, the Promotion Act in 1862, the Position of Officers Act in 1864, the Soldier Service Regulations in 1863, The Pensions Regulation and, in 1865, various other regulations were adopted that covered each type of weapon, etc.

It was very correctly assessed that only through the school "can the military institution be developed and strengthened"⁹ and as a result military education received constant attention during Cuza's time. Literacy schools were reactivated due to the high number of illiterate recruits. The military school in Bucharest, created by the union of the Military School in Iasi with the one in Bucharest, was organized into two sections: one for the training of artillery and engineer officers, the other for the training of infantry and cavalry officers. The school for the children of the army for children aged 12, sons of officers, non-commissioned officers or active soldiers, was established. The School of Arts and Crafts was created and subordinated to the army. For a good physical training of military personnel, the foundations of the normal military school of fencing, gymnastics and target shooting were laid in Iasi. In order to train instructors for all types of weapons, a model detachment was created in Bucharest. And the military health education experienced an upward evolution. It is noted that during the reign of Cuza, the foundations of a high-performance military education were laid, which provided the Romanian army with the necessary military personnel.

And to equip the army with weapons and equipment, special measures were taken that led to the development of the national defense industry¹⁰, and the development of relations with external partners. In 1861, in the buildings of the former Mihai Vodă monastery in Bucharest, the first military workshops aimed at repairing and manufacturing equipment and harness for the army began their activity.

In 1861, the Directorate of Infantry Establishments was established with three sections: Pyrotechnics and the Arsenal in Bucharest and the Powder Factory in Târgșor, near Ploiesti. In 1863, the Army Arsenal was created in Dealul Spirii, an arms factory. A cannon foundry was established in Târgoviște, later being transformed into a warehouse. In Brăila, the flotilla Arsenal was created to carry out maintenance and repair work on ships.

As a result of the good relations of the Romanian ruler with Napoleon III, most of the modern armament with which the Army was equipped during this period was purchased from France. Looking at the

⁹ *** Istoria militară a poporului român, vol. IV, Bucharest, 1987, p. 438.

¹⁰ De accesorii, muniții, reparare a mijloacelor de luptă, etc

results obtained in equipping the army with new weaponry, brought especially from France, the argument is the letter addressed to Napoleon III, in which the ruler Cuza mentioned:

„At my election... The United Principalities possessed only 4,000 or 5,000 Russian rifles from the time of Empress Catherine and about 10 worthless guns of Russian, Turkish and Austrian origin. Powder, projectiles, staples only came to us from Austria; I could not fire a single rifle shot without her permission. Today I possess 70,000 rifles, bought in France; the 25,000 rifles which I owe to the generosity of Your Imperial Majesty have been distributed to the communes where I have established a guard service.... My artillery numbers 72 rifles, built in France, after French models.”

Also, a French military mission came to the country at Cuza's request. This contributed to the improvement of the organization of the Romanian army, to the acquisition by the military of the handling of the new weaponry included in the equipment of the units with different weapons. At the same time, Cuza sent several officers to applications and studies in Italy, England, Prussia and, above all, in France, and officers from European armies participated in the maneuvers of the Romanian army.

In February 1860, the first issue of the newspaper Monitorul oastei appeared, a weekly addressed to "all military ranks". In 1864, Military Romania and the Military Yearbook of the Romanian Army appeared, and in 1865 a Military Almanac was published.

During the seven years of his reign, Cuza created a modern Army, a General Staff, a Consultative Committee (1865), a Permanent Council of Instruction (1865) and other well-structured central governing bodies, 7 infantry regiments, 2 cavalry, one of artillery, 14 batteries, one battalion each of hunters, engineers and firefighters, a river flotilla, other troops and services, a regular army totaling about 20,000 soldiers, to which were added 25,000 border guards and patrolmen, a well equipped and trained army, despite the difficult financial situation.

From the beginning of his reign, he was intensely concerned with the problems of military firefighters. Cuza's reign is of particular importance to the history of firefighting. During his time, on May 24, 1860, the Law was promulgated to reward the soldiers participating in the "Spirit Hill" Battle, by which a bronze medal with the inscription "Pro Virtute Militari" was awarded to all the soldiers who took part in that event.

It must be emphasized that the first legal provisions regarding any Romanian pension system, in this case the military service pensions, as well as the state aid granted to disabled soldiers or those who died in the campaign, are all due to Cuza. This preoccupation of his with the army started from the idea of respect, honor and dignity for those capable of proving the ultimate sacrifice. Cuza's legislation was based on a thorough

and substantiated study of some provisions of French legislation that still exist today on the European continent, in most NATO and EU member states, not being "special pensions" according to some contemporary politicians.

For the consolidation of the Union and the affirmation of the Romanian State, Cuza promoted a firm foreign military policy to defend the country's sovereignty, establishing relations with the supporting powers of Romanian politics, primarily with France. Political-military relations with small and medium-sized countries were developed, and support was given to the national liberation movements of neighboring peoples. Cuza constantly expressed his interest and intention to complete the Union with the other provinces inhabited by Romanians, from the composition of the great European empires.

Cuza's reforms aimed at the Army were based on the ruler's knowledge and skills in the military field, so his military training. In the fall of 1837, Cuza entered the Army with the rank of cadet; he obtained a "step from the front job", then climbing the steps of the military hierarchy to the rank of colonel, and during the reign of Prince Grigore Alexandru Ghica, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was appointed minister of war (1858).

The major political-military decision regarding the organization of the national army was based on some principles still valid today, but insufficiently applied.

In the reform program initiated by Cuza and his associates since the beginning of 1859, the national defense and the modernization of the Romanian military system represented a primary concern. Because a well-endowed, well-equipped and well-trained national army was always the indispensable condition for obtaining full independence from the state and achieving the national unity of all Romanians. The main initiator of the reforms and measures that led to profound changes in the field of the country's defense, to the creation and consolidation of the unified national army, was the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza himself.

Although he made a special contribution to the Union of Moldova with Wallachia and undertook radical reforms in all areas (we cannot omit some mistakes), in February 1866, a broad coalition of the parties of that time, known as the "Monstrous Coalition" . due to the different political orientations of its members, led Alexandru Ioan Cuza to resign.



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