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THE ROMANIAN ARMY, 1916-1918: Organization, Equipment and Transformation

ABSTRACT: Romania's participation in the war was a result of her desire to create a modern State which was started with the Union of Moldova and Muntenia in 1859. It was evident then that when the desire for political unity was at its height – this corresponded to a large scale war involving not only Europe but the greater part of the rest of mankind – Romania would have to act in such a way as to liberate that part of its people under foreign dominion. Romania could not remain indifferent to the events taking place in her immediate vicinity leaving them to be resolved by others.

KEY WORDS: Romania, World War I, Great Union of Romania, 1918, Battles of 1917, Eastern Front, Romanian Front.

Preparation for War, 1914-1916

Romania focused its entire economic and military abilities and potential, during its years of neutrality during the Great War (1914-1916), to achieve its historical vision of waging a war to liberate territories occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and to attain national unity.

The outbreak of the war and the conduct of military operations adjacent to the nation's frontiers created exceptional and unprece-

dented complex problems for the Romanian national economy. Many industrial enterprises that depended on the import of raw and semi-processed material from the warring nations – which had been forced to limit their exports – were forced to reduce productivity. The execution of all public works was suspended. Banking operations were considerably reduced as much of the capital had been withdrawn by foreign banks (especially the German and Austro-Hungarian banks). The National Bank of Romania increased its withdrawal tax to 7-8 percent and the "Savings Banks" were assailed by demands for the return of money in their care. The costs of industrial goods increased substantially and agricultural products doubled in price, causing about inflation as well as speculation. The closure of Straits through which 97 percent of exports and 60 percent of imports were carried out adversely affected economic life, while the volume and value of external commerce fell substantially. Some of the traditional markets in the West were closed; external commerce was increasingly directed towards the Central Powers.¹

In this critical situation, when it was not possible to establish the 1914-1915 budget, Romania took significant measures to reorganize the national economy and satisfy internal needs as well as slow down inflation and speculation. Beginning in July 1914, prohibitive measures regarding animal exports as well as the means of transporting wheat and other cereals were put into effect. These were also extended to vegetables, oil production, plants, furs, leather and shoes, crude oil and other combustibles, telecommunications equipment, and metallic objects as well as gold and silver coins. Goods trains leaving the country were forbidden and foreign partners were obliged to transport them with their own means of transportation. New customs taxes were introduced and they were payable in gold (1915).²

In order to meet the increasing financial demands, especially those related to the war effort, Romania took four loans totaling 400 million lei at an interest rate of 2.5-4 percent. When the National Bank was required to pay back a part of the loan, it resorted to massive internal borrowing through public subscription at 5 percent inte-

¹ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial* [Romania during World War I] (București: Editura Militară, n.d.), p. 1:112.

² Costica Prodan and Dumitru Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War* (București: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1998), p. 13.

rest. The population responded and in three days, 4-5 May 1915, the sum of 408 million lei, exceeding all expectations, was raised.³

Romania took out many other major external loans to facilitate its foreign policy aims. For example, in December 1914 Romania took a secret 10 012 500 Italian Lire loan from the "Italian Bank" at an annual interest rate of 6.5 percent to pay for arms and ammunition produced from its factories. Another secret loan valued at 5 million pounds sterling was made from the "Bank of England" at an annual interest rate of 5 percent in January 1915 to pay for weapons ordered from Great Britain, France, and Italy. In October 1915, another line of credit for 7 million was opened from the same bank, also at an interest rate of 5 percent per year was opened.⁴ The British hoped to attract the Romanians to the side of the Entente by giving these loans.

Romanian politics in the area of national defense in those years was dedicated to the ultimate objective of bringing about national unity. Considering Romania's capabilities at that time, the material and financial efforts which it was able to muster were remarkable by their very magnitude. Thus, from the point of view of the budgetary allocation for the military, there was a significant increase as compared to prewar levels: for 1914/1915 – 98.112.472 lei representing 16.3 percent of the total budget; for 1915/1916 – 97 800 000 lei (16 percent) and for 1916/1917 – 115 000 000 (17.8 percent). To these must be extended the numerous credits which Romania received totaling, by 14 August 1916, 838 841 215 lei. It will be appreciated that the total spending for the military as at the beginning of May 1916, was 918 530 173 lei. The government of Romania, though the War Ministry headed by Ion I.C. Bratianu and the General Staff went on to establish the plans for the training and equipping of the army. This they did through the mobilization and utilization of all the resources and entire productive potential of the nation.

The measures taken to increase peacetime and wartime capabilities were aimed at the numerical increase in size of the Romanian army through the inclusion of some categories of youths who, at the time, were exempted from military service. To achieve this goal, the law on military recruitment and the organization of the military was revised and as a result 412,242 men were recruited.⁵

³ Gheorghe M. Dobrovici, *Istoricul dezvoltării economice și financiare a României și împrumuturile contractate. 1823-1933* [History of the economical and financial growth and the loans of Romania 1823-1933] (București: n.p., 1934), pp. 306-307, 312.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-294, 298.

⁵ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 16.

Special attention was given to the hierarchy through the increase in the number of officers' schools and the intensification of the training of the future commanders. In the years 1914-1916, a total of 1,167 active second lieutenants and 2,643 junior lieutenants were trained. The limits to the age of medical doctors in military service were increased and medical graduates were called to arms.⁶

Significant imports of ammunition, weapons, and equipment to meet the requirements of the army and to compensate for the shortfalls of Romanian industry were made. Special commissions of officers were created to visit Italy, France, Spain, Great Britain, Switzerland, the United States, and Russia to place orders for weapons and to ship them to Romania.⁷ Aside from deliveries from the members of the Entente, or from neutral states, Romania also sought to satisfy its war requirements from the Central Powers. Military hardware required for the equipping of the Romanian Army was imported from Germany, especially in the decades following the conquering of the independence. When the Romanians were about to be allied with the Entente, German exports were restricted and Romania received fewer and fewer weapons. In order to continue the delivery of weapons, Germany imposed conditions which compromised Romania's neutral stand. Thus, for example, it demanded passage for 25 wagons loaded with weapons and 14 aircraft as well as the tacit acceptance of passage of war materials towards Bulgaria and passage for the transportation of cereals and fodder to Germany. The Romanian Government was required to ensure on the railroads the transportation of 150 wagons of mineral oil. For political reasons, some of the German demands were met and the Germans in turn permitted the supply of war materials to Romania. Nonetheless, in 1915, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire ceased to supply the Bratianu government with anything that could be used in equipping the Romanian Army.⁸

One of the first measures taken in the context of the Plan for the completion, transformation and reformation of weapons, munitions and war materials as well as the Plan for the completion of equipment was the reorganization of national industries from peacetime production to wartime production. The Romanian government took respon-

⁶ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, p. 114.

⁷ Mircea N. Popa, *Documente în arhivele vest-germane referitoare la armata română în primele două decenii ale secolului al XX-lea* [German documents about the Romanian army in the first two decades of the XXth century], in *File din istoria militară a poporului român*, Editura Militară, p. 2:77.

⁸ Glenn E. Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial* [Romania in World War I] (București: Meteor Publishing, 2014), pp. 29-30.

sibility for investments and orders as well as for their control. The reorganization of industry for military production was a complex problem. Apart from Germany, none of the combatants established the same program, and this was due in part to their projection of a short military conflict. But, even from the earliest military operations, weapon consumption was immense and there was reason to turn to these "industrial armies" as the politician David Lloyd-George defined them. Bearing in mind the resources existing in the country, as well as the drastic reduction of the potential for imports in this field and the fact that military establishments had a reduced production capacity, the efforts made to meet the needs of the army by both the public and private sectors were remarkable.⁹

To this end, detailed studies on the establishments and the factories which could be used to fill orders on stocks of materials in view of a long term conflict were made by the Technical Industries Commission (inaugurated on 1 April 1915) and passed on to the Ministry of War in order to enable it to assess the internal resources available. The Technical Industries Commission was headed by Engineer Grigore Stratilescu and consisted of qualified individuals in this field. It had the task of organizing and controlling the way industry was utilized for the attainment of military ends. The country was accordingly divided into seven industrial regions, the production capacity was increased, and plans were made for the construction of new factories. A series of enterprises in Bucharest such as the "Wolf," "Vulcan," and "Lemaitre" factories and the "Fernic" naval dockyard in Galati and enterprises in the Prahova Valley, etc., were redesigned for war production. About 22,000 workers, technicians, and engineers worked in these state and private enterprises while another 1,000 unskilled workers were trained in special schools for the purpose of weapons productions.¹⁰

Military facilities such as the Arsenal of the Army (located in Bucharest), the Pyrotechnical Industry of Cotroceni, and the Powder Industry of Dudești were reorganized and modernized. Many different missiles were made at the Constanta port factory in late 1914 through the initiative of Engineer Mihai Cioc. At the same time, an office to coordinate services (the Section of Stages and Posterior Services) was also created.¹¹

⁹ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁰ Mihai Cioc, *Contribuția industriei naționale la fabricarea materialului de război și rolul ei în timpul războiului de desrobire a neamului* [The contribution of the national industry to the war effort] (București: n.p., 1928), pp. 8-16.

¹¹ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 17.

Measures were taken by the Administrative Directorate, led by General Constantin Zaharia, to increase the production of food and clothing for the military. Military bakeries were upgraded and thus the supply of these food items to various parts of the country was improved. A Central Health Council was created. Also, the Directorate of Military Health stocked medicines and other products required for the military and, with Dr. Constantin Angelescu, the Minister of Public Works, proceeded to organize fully equipped health trains.¹²

The Cartographic Service of the military prepared maps of the country and of the surrounding areas. On 23 November 1915, the General Directorate of Munitions was created in place of the Technical Industries Commission, as an executive body in the Ministry of War. It was under the leadership of Engineer Anghel Saligny. It coordinated the activities of many other bodies in the public and private sectors as well as military establishments and a special directorate for supplies from foreign countries.¹³

A contract with Italy which produced four "Deport" antiaircraft cannons, 50 million shells for the "Mannlicher" infantry gun (model 1893 with a caliber of 6.5 mm), over 100,000 shrapnel shells, over 100,000 kg of dynamite, and 140 tons of potassium nitrate, etc. Colonel Vasile Rudeanu, the director of the Superior Directorate of Armaments in the Ministry of War, was sent in February 1915 to France in order to make orders and sign contracts. The first contract for 5,123,000 lei was signed with France on 8 March 1915, as well as commissions of 1,024,780 lei approved by the Liberal cabinet in Bucharest on 18 April. The second accord was signed on 20 January 1916.¹⁴

Contracts were also signed with some enterprises in Switzerland, Great Britain, and the United States for the supply of weapons for modern warfare. Thus, from Great Britain, 300 motorcycles, 42,000 pairs of boots, and large quantities of medicines; from Switzerland, 100,000 Saint Chamond fuses, 10,000 kg of potassium chlorate, and 12 trucks; 40,000 revolvers and swords from Spain for the officers of the cavalry; 500 tons of brass destined for the munitions factories was obtained from Portugal, as well as three million cases for 11mm revolvers, various forms of equipment, and tents from the USA. The Thessaloniki, Nis, Turnu Severin route was used until October 1915 when Serbia was invaded by the Bulgarian, German, and Austro-Hungarian armies. After this, the only other route was through Nort-

¹² *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, p. 117

¹³ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 17.

¹⁴ General Vasile Rudeanu, *Albert Thomas* (București: n.p., 1934), pp. 70-72.

hern Russia via the ports of Arkhangelsk and Murmansk which were difficult and very long. Under these conditions, the supply of military hardware from Western Nations became very difficult and, in addition, some material destined for Romania was withheld by the Russians. This explains why only 9,982 "Lebel" fusils (8mm) had been received from France, as well as 266 machine guns, 82,000 revolvers, 24 long and short cannons of 120 mm, two anti-aircraft cannons, 100 mortars (58mm) with ammunition, 42,000 missiles for 105mm mortars, 168,000 missiles of 75mm, 10,000 missiles for 150mm 1912 model mortars, 80 aircraft of different kinds, sanitary materials, etc. Of the entire quantity of ammunition ordered from various foreign companies between 1914 and 1916, only 72 percent was received; by category, 80 percent of infantry materials were delivered, and of the artillery shells 1.8 percent.¹⁵

The non-fulfillment of contractual agreements as well as their tortuous transportation through Russia were causes for concern at the highest levels of the Romanian leadership. These problems were discussed with its allies in an effort to find solutions. At the beginning of the 1914 summer, measures for the reinforcement of border crossings were taken. In the Western and Southern Carpathians, as well as on the Danube and in the South of Drobodja, the mobilization and partial concentration of troops intended to enforce the neutrality decided upon by the Crown Council. Armed services training was also conducted.¹⁶ Under threat of attack by the Central Powers, Romania mobilized a part of its military force. Thus, the period of neutrality, which was intended for training, was more active than anticipated. At the same time, the 1912 contingent which had been put in reserve in 1914 was effectively kept under arms until the declaration of war, and from 1915 there were no more transfers from one segment to the other.¹⁷

In November 1915, the War Ministry approved of a plan to mobilize three army commands of the General Headquarters which consisted of five army corps, sixteen infantry divisions, five mixed territorial brigades, a border brigade, two cavalry brigades, three heavy artillery regiments, eight mountain batteries, and river pontoons, as well as aviation corps.¹⁸ It was decided that, aside from these commands and units, the number of units to be mobilized would be incre-

¹⁵ *România în Primul Război Mondial, 1916-1919*[Romania in WWI] (București: n.p., 1934), p. 1:46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Documente-Anexe, p. 1:83.

¹⁷ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, p. 121.

¹⁸ *România în Primul Război Mondial, 1916-1919*, pp. 1:158-159.

ased and the destination of some units with specific missions as well as the terrain they were to occupy would be made clear.¹⁹

The years of neutrality (1914-1916) were years of intense military preparation so that at the right moment, the army could contribute to the national goal of uniting all Romanians. During this period, efforts were made to equip, organize, and train the army to the standards of the military forces of the Central Powers. Surmounting numerous internal and external difficulties through sustained effort, a military force capable of effectively fighting its opponents was created. This process was characterized, as in other wars of liberation and national unity, by a mobilization of the entire human and material potential of the nation.

The Defeat of 1916

A series of measures aimed at defending the borders as well as for mobilization and precautionary concentration of some units of the Romanian Army were completed, in accordance with the Campaign Plan, during the period immediately preceding Romania's entry into the war. These measures proved to be useful when Romanian political and military leaders decided to enter the war. It would not have been possible otherwise since the Central Powers had placed their troops along the Romanian frontiers and would have been able to attack the moment Bucharest declared war.

Until 27 August 1916, Romania's borders were protected by twenty covering groups. Seventeen of these were spread along the Carpathians to the Danube, with each bearing the name of the protected area, and three were dispersed along the Danube and Romanian-Bulgarian conventional border. At the time of the general mobilization, the covering troops were organized in 150 battalions, 10 squadrons, and 102 batteries, totaling 174 000 men.²⁰

On the night of 27/28 August 1916 at 24:00 hours, the general mobilization of the Romanian was announced. It included the General Headquarters: four army commands; six army corps; twenty infantry divisions (ten days after Romania's entry into the war another three divisions were constituted); two cavalry divisions; one border guards brigade; five territorial cavalry brigades; two heavy artillery brigades

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Documente-Anexe, p. 1:222.

²⁰ Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, pp. 57-58, and *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, pp. 222-223.

with a total of thirty-two batteries; thirteen mountain artillery batteries; the artillery of the fortified zones Turtucaia, Silistra, and Cernavoda, with a total twenty-six batteries and fifty-two cannons; positional artillery with twenty batteries; antiaircraft artillery with 113 pieces; engineering troops; an air force with four squadrons; a Navy with two fleets on the Danube and the Black Sea; an automobile Corps; the Bucharest stronghold, and the fortified line of Focsani, Namoloasa, and Galati; the service units; the static formations, and the interior formations.²¹ The main branches of the Army included infantry, cavalry, and artillery divided into 365 battalions with 413 machine-guns and 161 position machine-guns, 104 squadrons with 40 machine-guns and 377 artillery batteries of various calibers.²²

Some 833,601 people were mobilized, of whom 658,088 were of the Army in Field; another 420,870 could be mobilized on order. This meant that the total number of mobilized men was 1,254,471; in other words, 16 percent of the population of Romania or 32 percent of the male population. The number mobilized was seven times greater than during peace time.²³

The Romanian Army was mobilized effectively in a short period of time, in an atmosphere of enthusiasm which was generated by the cause of liberating the Romanian fatherland under foreign dominion and bringing about national unity. The prompt execution of the mobilization created favorable conditions for the achievement of the element of surprise, which was the basis of the "Z" Hypothesis and on which the success of the first operations of the Romanian Army depended. The Romanian Army was arrayed according to the Campaign Plan. Some minor modifications were made due to the anticipated mobilization of troops for the composition of the reinforcing troops which were already in a state of battle preparedness in anticipation for their entry into the fray. The troops which were not placed in the reinforcing units were concentrated so they could be rapidly moved on the offensive.²⁴

²¹ *România în Primul Război Mondial, 1916-1919*, pp. 1:57-58.

²² *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, p. 223.

²³ *România în Primul Război Mondial, 1916-1919*, pp. 1:58-59, and Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, p. 29.

²⁴ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 32.

The "Resurrection" of 1917

The reorganization of the Army resulted in victories from the summer of 1917. It was started as early as the second half of December 1916 and was roughly finished at the beginning of July 1917. The stages of the reorganization of the Romanian divisions were successively finished by 28 February (3rd and 6th Infantry Divisions), 29 March (7th and 12th Infantry Divisions), 22 April-5 May (1st and 8th Infantry Divisions), in early of June (5th, 9th, 13th, and 14th Infantry Divisions), at the end of June (10th Infantry Division), by 15 August (11th and 15th Infantry Divisions), and by the end of November 1917 (4th Infantry Division, partially).²⁵

The Romanian Army General Headquarters decided to reorganize only those large units that were more effective than those that faced similar adverse elements. At the same time, it was pursued that the divisions should have a common structure that would permit greater mobility to conduct autonomous actions. The army corps lacking proper structures and services remained merely exclusive tactical organs of commandment meant to take over the command of two or more divisions. At the tactical level, all units and subunits of the specialty air force did not enter in the structure of a division (army cavalry, heavy artillery, technical troops, air force, services of supply, etc.).²⁶

The overall command of the Romanian Front, which included all Romanian and Russian forces shifted from Bucovina up to the Black Sea following inter-allied negotiations, was entrusted to King Ferdinand I of Romania. His primary colleagues were the Russian General V.V. Zaharov (after a short interim of General P.A. Letcitski, starting with May 3, 1917, he was followed by general D.G. Shcherbachev), who had the command of the Russian troops, and General Constantin Presan, who was appointed Chief of the Romanian General Headquarters, replacing General Dumitru Iliescu, who has been reassigned to France.²⁷

The Romanian Front started from near Vatra Dornei where it was linked to the Russian Front, then followed southwards the approximate line of the old boundary exceeding it with about 1-2 km (in the Bicaz region) and 1-2 km less, at a point south of Ghimes into the hands of enemy troops. From the Oituz zone in the southeastern direction it crossed the Vrancea region in the north, then passed through the Susita and Putna valleys. From Movileni it followed the Siret

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁶ Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, pp. 200-202.

²⁷ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, pp. 94-95.

river course up to its mouth at the Danube, having a bridgehead at Namoloasa; from here, along the maritime Danube (Sf. Gheorghe arm) to the Black Sea.²⁸

The starting point of the reorganization of the Romanian Army was the restructuring of the higher echelon commands. At the beginning of the war there were only two armies. The 2nd Romanian Army (commandant Alexandru Averescu, General of army corps) included the divisions located on the front of the Oriental Carpathians (west of Casin Monastery up to Racoasa), grouped in the 2nd Army Corps (the 1st, 3rd, and 12th Infantry Divisions) and in the 4 Army Corps (the 6th, 7th, and 8th Infantry Divisions); the 7th Mixed Brigade which was to be attached to one of the divisions to reduce the command. The 1st Romanian Army (commandant General Constantin Christescu being at the same time the assistant of the Chief of the Romanian General Headquarters) included the troops that took part at the military operations in the Plain of Danube and was grouped in: the 1st Army Corps (the 1st, 4th, and 11th Infantry Divisions); the 3rd Army Corps (the 5th, 13th, and 14th Infantry Divisions), and the 5th Army Corps (the 9th, 10th, and 15th Infantry Divisions). The army corps, divisions, and other units were headed by generals and superior officers who had performed well in the last campaign.²⁹

The 1st Romanian Army, whose troops passed through drastic hardness in the last two months, was sent behind the front to zones for the reconstitution of battle-weary units and retraining and relaxing of combat and other soldiers of all the other divisions, with the recruits of contingents 1917 and 1918, the battalions of militia (irregular troops) and workers. The 2nd Romanian Army remained in permanent contact with the enemy's forces. On 22 January 1917, General Averescu reported to the King that: "Our troops ended the occupation of the positions from their new front grouping. Strengthening workings are performed on the entire front."³⁰

The Army's effectives in 5 February 1917 totaled 2,656 officers, 123,228 troops (of which were 73,675 combatants, equipped with 59,963 guns, 10,239 rifles, 180 machine-guns, and 310 cannons). For the purpose of retraining the divisions of the 2nd Romanian Army were taken out from the first lines by turn for one month, but in the immediate vicinity of the front just to could intervene in emergency ca-

²⁸ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 76.

²⁹ Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, pp. 187-189.

³⁰ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 77.

ses. The fighting positions were reinforced, and later they were systematically consolidated by sapping in depth at the front.³¹

The entire army was trained to reinforce soldier morale and unit esprit de corps, and to strengthen the officer-soldier bond of trust and loyalty: "An army in which a whole nation put its hopes for the realization of its endeavors should be animated in any military situation, no matter how critical it would be, by the fulfillment of its duties up to the end," as highlighted in Order nr. 1236 from 9 January 1917 of the General Headquarters.³²

In those months of reorganization, the mission of the 2nd Romanian Army was to fix the enemy's position and conduct an active defense to stop any enemy attempt to breakthrough the Romanian defensive lines. Although reduced and at a length of between 35 and 40 km, the front defended by the 2nd Romanian Army was located in large politically significant gorges that flowed towards Moldova. This buttressed the physical and moral presence of an army of the Romanian independent state.³³

The recruits of the 1917 and 1918 contingents were trained and could be organized into fifteen infantry divisions, two cavalry divisions, four independent cavalry brigades, one border guards brigade, four heavy artillery regiments, two mountain artillery regiments, twelve aviation squadrons, five aerostation companies, etc. The forty complete infantry regiments included three battalions, each of four companies (plus one machine-gun company of each battalion); the active parts of forty under strength were consolidated, thus forming another twenty regiments. To these were added the ten chasseurs regiments (each with two machine-guns companies), as well as a brigade of border guards (two regiments of three battalions plus a battery of 53 mm).³⁴

If in the first part of the campaign the presence of the heavy artillery was reduced, in May 1917 the four regiments of the heavy artillery had fifty heavy batteries plus two marine batteries and fifteen trench mortar batteries. The anti-aircraft artillery was organized during April-July 1917. Part of it was sent to the front and the rest remained in the interior zone. Equipped with modern weapons and equip-

³¹ Ion Giurcă, 1917. *Reorganizarea armatei române*[1917. The reorganization of the Romanian Army] (București: Editura Academiei de Înalte Studii Militare, 1999), pp. 105-106.

³² Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 77.

³³ Giurcă, 1917. *Reorganizarea armatei române*, pp. 125-127.

³⁴ România în anii Primului Război Mondial, p. 108.

ment, it totaled, in the summer of 1917, thirty-four A.A. pots and a "depot" battery, in all, 120 cannons served by 2,000 men.³⁵

The military aviation developed considerably and received a new structure to fit to the complex missions it had to perform in the war. On 14 June 1917, the active part of the Air force was organized into three aeronautic groups (1, 2 and 3) each of them comprising two observation squadrons, one fighting squadron, and one aerostation company. These units, together with the flight schools, reported directly to the Aviation Commandment in the Aeronautics Command subordinated to the General Headquarters.³⁶ Of the twelve existing squadrons, six were observation "Farman," four fighting "Nieuport," one bombardment "Breguet-Michelin," and one "Caudron." They proved their utility and even could obtain, in certain situations, superiority over the enemy's aviation assets.³⁷

The Navy's mission was to defend the maritime Danube, to ensure the safety of the transports between Galati and the Black Sea (which was also restructured with Commander Vasile Scodrea in command) and order its forces to respond flexibly to any new situation.³⁸

Simultaneously, with the large reorganization of the national armed forces, the Romanian High Command was preoccupied by training its General Staff and instructing new soldiers. Elaborate regulations and instructions that applied the new fighting principles were applied to each regiment, which set up "schools" to train soldiers assigned machine-guns, automatic rifles, hand grenades, signal grenades, telephony, scouts, patrols and observers. Each commander of divisions, corps, and armies had its proper training center for the formation of model-series and for the continuous improvement of combat methods. Individual and unit military training was intensified each spring and included practical applications of cooperation on terrain (sometimes at night) up to the division level. Liaison duties were emphasized, and special attention was turned to the training of the officers for the tactical employment of the machine-guns.

Thanks to the acquisition of increased numbers and regularly-delivered weapons and equipment from abroad, mostly from France, as well as due to Romanian war production, the Romanian Army in-

³⁵ Giurcă, 1917. *Reorganizarea armatei române*, pp. 152-164.

³⁶ *Arhivele Militare Naționale Române* [Romanian National Military Archives], fond 485, dosar nr. 14, f 37.

³⁷ Giurcă, 1917. *Reorganizarea armatei române*, p. 219.

³⁸ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, p. 75, and Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 78.

creased considerably its fire force and implicitly its capacity of action reducing the gap with the enemy. This helped ensure a numerical and technical superiority. About 150,000 "Lebel" guns were received, 1,957 machine-guns, 2,736 automatic rifles, 355 cannons, about 100 airplanes, numerous engineering materials, etc.³⁹(By comparison, the German divisions, organized into three regiments of three battalions each, were equipped like this: for each battalion, nine-twelve heavy machine-guns, four light mortars and grenades, and three light machine-guns at the company level.⁴⁰)

The Austro-Hungarian divisions consisted of two infantry brigades of two regiments each, each being organized into three battalions. The battalion was equipped with eight heavy machine-guns, four mine launchers, and four grenade launchers⁴¹.

A comparison of an infantry regiment's strength at the beginning of the war with that of July 1917 reveals qualitative and quantitative growth. The number of machine guns increased to twenty-four; automatic rifles nonexistent in 1916 now numbered ninety-six; many soldiers knew how to use grenades (each platoon had a special group of "grenadiers"); all the Romanian soldiers were equipped with gas masks and helmets. In February 1917, the General Headquarters equipped the infantry regiments of the 1st Romanian Army as well as those of the divisions 1, 3 and 12 with "Lebel" French guns of 8 mm, while the regiments of the divisions 6, 7 and 8 received from the stores "Mannlicher" guns of 6.5 mm, The Frontier Guard Brigade and the pioneers received arms of 8 mm produced in Austria. Each infantry company received 184 engineering tools, including 101 "Linneman" shovels, 51 pickaxes, etc.⁴²

The principal factor in remaking the Romanian Army was the man -- the Romanian soldier. Opposing a strong enemy, courageously surmounting the difficulties of life in the trenches, the epidemics, and missing home and the beloved ones, he emerged in the spring of the national rebirth stronger, and with higher spirits, and animated by the ardent desire to liberate his fore father's land from under the boots of the invaders.

The multilateral efforts made in the free territory of Romania with a view to reorganize the national armed forces were noticed with a peculiar surprise and satisfaction, too, by the Allies. They were

³⁹ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, pp. 77-78.

⁴⁰ Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, p. 33.

⁴¹ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 78.

⁴² Giurcă, *1917. Reorganizarea armatei române*, pp. 115-119.

aware of the hard work of the organizing spirit and the perseverance with which the Romanian High Command followed its objectives. Profoundly impressed by the "tenacious will of the people to defend its right to life," the French Minister Albert Thomas (who was visiting the Romanian Front), declared in an interview published in the daily *L'Entente* in Petrograd that everything that was made in Romania was a true miracle: "What is dominating for the time being in Romania is a huge effort of genuine will. All souls, all endeavors seem to tend to the same aim."⁴³

Members of the French Military Mission -- established in Romania in early October 1916, upon the request of the Romanian government -- led by General Henry Mathias Berthelot, also contributed to the modernization of the Romanian Army. At the beginning it included a limited number of officers, most of them senior and holders of General Staff's certificates. Gradually, the French Mission completed its staff with officers, NCOs, and technicians from all branches and specialties, totaling in February 1917 430 officers (including 74 medical doctors) and 1,150 troops. The French officers were distributed within every command, unit, military school, and training center of the Romanian Army. General Berthelot, with his general staff, directly collaborated with the General Headquarters towards the organization of training, the supply of the Romanian Army, and the development of operational plans. The heavy artillery, aeronautics, the specialized schools (grenadiers, fusilier, machine-gunners, etc.) fully benefited from the competence of the French instructors who possessed rich campaign experience.

France considered the support given to reorganizing the Romanian Army an essential element for the strengthening of the Oriental front. A report of General Berthelot from 21 June 1917 stated that "all the efforts made in favor of the Romanian army . . . is the best support that could be given to the entire Oriental front."

The total Romanian Army numbered in July 1917 almost 700,000 men, of whom more than 512,000 served in the field army. The Romanian Army totaled 207 infantry battalions, 110 cavalry squadrons, and 243 batteries. On the Russian-Romanian line of Siret River and the Lower Danube, the Romanian Army constituted a majority of forces, at the moment when the Romanian units commenced their shifting towards the concentration districts as it was provided in the plan for resuming the offensive.

⁴³ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, p. 80.

The Unification of 1918

The collapse of the Balkan front in September 1918 opened the possibility of Romanian reentry into the war. Major obstacles, however, had to be overcome. Romania continued to remain in complete isolation under German, Austro-Hungarian, and Bulgarian domination. To this was added the lack of equipment of the Romanian Army as well as the lack of means of transportation. After the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 7 May 1918, there were two General Commands -- one German and one Austro-Hungarian -- including four German divisions, one Austro-Hungarian division, and two Austro-Hungarian infantry brigades, totaling 110,000 men, of whom 60,000 were combatants. To these were added the administrative units of the German Army and Bulgarian units -- four infantry, two cavalry regiments, one artillery regiment, several reserve battalions -- all in Dobrodja.⁴⁴

According to the provisions of the 7 May 1919 Peace Treaty of Bucharest, the fighting capacity of the Romanian divisions was considerably reduced (the 9th and the 10th Infantry Divisions had fewer effectives as compared to the 1st-8th Infantry Divisions). The headquarters and units of the 1st-4th Army corps, were located in Moldova up to the Prut River. The 5th Army Corps (the 9th, 10th, and 15th Infantry Divisions) and the two divisions of cavalry were shifted to Bassarabia.⁴⁵

In the last ten days of October and the beginning of November, the political and military connections between the Entente and the Romanian political and military groups intensified. Following these discussions, Romania took the decision to reenter the war. On 9 November, through High Decree nr. 3179, it was decided that the mobilization of the Romanian Army be conducted the following day.⁴⁶ The structures and the mobilizing forces were: The General Headquarters; three commands for the army corps (3rd, 4th, and 5th); seven infantry divisions (6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 13th, and 14th); two chasseurs divisions; two cavalry divisions; two mountain divisions; the A.A. division; the wireless telegraph; the aeronautics groups; the pontoneers; the automobile regiment; the detachment of gendarmes; infantry, and peasants, and the border regiments. The army command and the divisions of heavy artillery, as well as respective services, remained inactive.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, pp. 530-532.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 530-531, and Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, pp. 319-320.

⁴⁶ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, p. 536.

⁴⁷ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, pp. 116-117.

Of all the large units mobilized, the 9th and 10th Infantry, as well as the 1st and 2nd Cavalry, were operating in Bassarabia and could not therefore be of use in Transylvania. Also, the 8th Infantry Division was deployed in Bukovina to ensure order and the defense of the population of this Romanian province which had been torn from Moldova in 1774. Practically, only the 6th, 7th, 13th, and 14th Infantry as well as the 1st and 2nd Chasseurs Divisions were available for immediate deployment in Moldova.⁴⁸

The Romanian Army went into action according to plan, aiming at a link up with the Berthelot Army which was crossing the Danube at Giurgiu, Turnu Magurele, and Zimnicea. To this end, the 3rd Army Corps was ordered to direct its main force towards Focsani and Buzau while a detachment was directed to Galati and Braila.⁴⁹

The second day after the mobilization had begun, the signing of the Armistice in Rethondes was announced and this provided for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The Romanian Army General Headquarters, which had in mind the uncertain situation on the east of the continent, as Soviet Russia had denounced the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and it had directed the Red Army towards the Nistru. The Mackensen Army, which had only just decided to withdraw from the Romanian area it occupied, decided to continue its operations to enter as quickly as possible the peace garrisons, to increase the pace of mobilization and to maintain control and order on the national territory evacuated by the German troops.⁵⁰

Together with the return of the 3rd Army Corps units to Wallachia, the Romanian Army General Headquarters decided, at the repeated request of the Romanian Central National Council of Transylvania, to deploy the first elements of the Romanian Army from Moldova to Transylvania. The actions of the Romanian Army, determined by the operational necessity resulting from the evacuation of the enemy forces and of attaining the required immediate and future objective, were carried out in close coordination with that of the allied army on the Danube. General Berthelot, sensing that the Germans were retreating with significant quantities of materials, requested that the Romanian Army General Headquarters send a large unit to advance on the Oituz-Brasov axis in order to intercept the enemy convoys. Consequently, on 18 November, the Romanian Army General Headquarters ordered that the Romanian troops "cross the mountains and enter as quickly

⁴⁸ Arhivele Militare Naționale Române, *fond 948*, dosar nr. 268, f. 50.

⁴⁹ *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, p. 536.

⁵⁰ Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, pp. 332-333.

as possible into Transylvania. The crossing of the mountains will be done at the request of our brothers and on the orders of His Highness the King. The aim was to preserve order, peace, life and the property of the residents. In order to attain this scope, which was demonstrated above, only the 7 Infantry and the 1 Chasseurs division would cross the mountains.”⁵¹

On the other hand, with the full backing of King Ferdinand to maintain order in the Romanian areas formally occupied by the Central Powers, General Berthelot decided to advance to Bucharest from Giurgiu and later on the petrol rich area of the Prahova Valley with a column formed from a French division and a mixed English division. On 25 November, the situation of the army in the Danube was the following: the 30th French Colonial Division on the right bank of the Danube around the Sîstov locality in preparation for deployment in the area between Ploiesti, Pitesti, and Craiova, and the 26th British Division with the majority of the forces in the Rusciuk area (apart from a brigade which had been sent to Bucharest), all prepared to deployment in Dobrodja, next to the French forces that were already there⁵².

The completion of the national State through the union of all Romanians into one single homeland, free and independent, was an exemplary historic victory of the century-old struggle of the Romanian people for unity and independence. The Great Union of 1918 was, at the same time, an event of utmost importance, decisive for the further development of the Romanian nation and State.

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⁵¹ Prodan and Preda, *The Romanian Army during the First World War*, pp. 118-119.

⁵² *România în anii Primului Război Mondial*, p. 541.

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РУМУНСКА ВОЈСКА 1916–1918

(ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА, ОПРЕМАЊЕ И ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЈА)

(Резиме)

Одлука да се поведе ослободилачки рат за национално уједињење и ослобођење румунских територија под Аустроугарском у оптималним условима, довела је до тога да у годинама неутралности (1914–1916), уз подршку народа који је био спреман да на себе преузме сваку жртву, Румунија усмери све своје економске и војне потенцијале ради остварења овог историјског циља. Године неутралности (1914–1916) искоришћене су за интензивне војне припреме чији је циљ био да се војска у правом тренутку укључи у рат и оствари главни национални задатак – ослобођење и уједињење свих Румуна. Овај процес карактерисала је мобилизација свих људских и материјалних потенцијала читаве нације, као што је то био случај у свим ратовима за ослобођење и национално уједињење. Одлучујући фактор који је довео до успеха у 1917. години била је реорганизација румунске војске, која је у том периоду представљала главни догађај на фронту. Реформа је почела у другој половини децембра 1916. и била углавном завршена почетком

јула 1917. године. Стварање националне државе присаједињењем свих Румуна матици земљи, слободној и независној, пример је историјске победе која је била резултат дугогодишње борбе румунског народа за уједињење и независност. Велико уједињење из 1918. године било је у исто време и кључни историјски догађај за даљи развој румунског народа и државе.

КЉУЧНЕ РЕЧИ: Румунија, Први светски рат, уједињење, 1918, битке 1917, Источни фронт, Румунски фронт.