

**„BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA
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STUDIES**

Ph.D. Thesis

**The Romanian Army in the two World Wars (1914-1945):
legislation, organization, military operations
–Summary–**

Scientific Advisor

Prof. univ. dr. Simona Nicoară

Ph.D Candidate

Marius-Nicolae Pop

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Table of contents

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTIONS.....5

CHAPTER I: Historiographic study on the Romanian army.....15

CHAPTER II: The attempts to modernize the Romanian army until the Great War.....31

1. Army organization from The Organic Regulation to the Union of 1859.....38
2. The organization and military laws under the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza until the War of 1877-1878.....44
3. Organization and legislation in the Romanian Army, from the Independence War to the Second Balkan War.....58
4. Infantry, cavalry and artillery until the First World War.....69
5. The necessity of the Sanitary Service both in the army and society.....79
6. The Superior School of War.....86
7. Great War precedents.....89
8. Conclusions.....93

CHAPTER III. The Romanian Army in the Great War(1916-1919).....99

1. Organization and military legislation.....102
2. The Romanian Staff and the General Headquarters. Campaign and Operation Plans of the Romanian Armed Forces in the First World War.....116
3. The intervention of the Romanian Army in Bessarabia and Bucovina.....141
4. The Romanian Army in Transylvania. Conductor Council and National Guard.....148
5. The French Mission, general Berthelot and the Romanian Army.....156
6. The Italian Military Mission in Romania.....174
7. Romanian soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian Army in World War 1.....178
8. The Sanitary Service of the Romanian Army in World War1.....209
9. The military consequences of the Great War.....231
10. Conclusions.....236

CHAPTER IV. ROMANIAN ARMY IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD.....240

1. Romanian Army and Romania`s foreign policy (1920-1940).....240
2. Organization and interwar military legislation. Evolution of the Great General Staff between the two wars.....244

3. Uniforms, ranks and decorations of the Romanian Army	274
3.a. Uniforms and ranks in the Romanian Army.....	274
3.b. Romanian war decorations in WW1.....	301
3.c. The Evolution of Romania's Decoration System in the Interwar Period.....	303
3.d. Romanian war decorations in WW2.....	306
4. The Great Armed Forces of the Romanian Army.....	308
4.a. Infantry, artillery, cavalry in the interwar period.....	308
4.b. Military engineering.....	320
4.c. Signal Corps in the Romanian Army.....	328
4.d. Border guard.....	332
4.e. Romania`s internal and foreign intelligence service.....	341
5. The Aviation.....	350
5.a. The beginnings of the Romanian military aviation.....	351
5.b. The Romanian schools of aviation up to World War 1.....	354
5.c. The Romanian aviation during World War1	359
5.d. The interwar aviation policy.....	363
5.e. The Romanian aviation during World War 2.....	368
6. The Navy.....	371
6.a. Navy in World War 1.....	377
6.b. Merchant Navy in World War 1.....	383
6.c. The navy in the interwar period and its organization.....	385
6.d. Navy evolution at institutional level.....	392
6.e. Romanian Navy in World War 2.....	393
6.f. Romanian naval programs.....	397
7. Conclusions.....	399
CHAPTER V. Mentality, education and military training in the Romanian Army	400
1. Military education and its role in the formation of military characters and virtues.....	400
2. Features of military thinking and art	418
3. The social role in the Romanian Army.....	444
4. The priests role in the Romanian Army.....	448
5. The cultural role of the Romanian Army: military music and festivity.....	472

6. Heroes graves and monuments. Societies and associations for the heroes of the Great War.....	498
7. Cultural Institutions of the Romanian Army.....	509
7.a. National Military Circle of the Romanian Army.....	509
7.b. Historical Service of the Romanian Army.....	518
7.c. National Military Museum.....	520
7.d. Geographic Service of the Romanian Army.....	521
8. Conclusions.....	523
CHAPTER VI. The Romanian Army in World War 2 (1941-1945).....	524
1. Organization and Military legislation in World War 2.....	524
2. The General Staff and the General Headquarters. Campaign plans and operations during the Second World War	539
3. The military service of the Army during the interwar period and the Second World War.....	553
4. From the royal army to the popular army.....	561
5. Conclusions.....	567
CHAPTER VII. Romanian Army Pantheon.....	569
CONCLUSIONS	610
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	617
APPENDIX.....	684

ABSTRACT

Key words: Romanian Army, Kings, generals, guns, ideology, synthesis, modernization, cultural history, comparative studies, Great Union, education, organization, legislation, military operations, military campaign plans, the nation`s army, infantry, artillery, cavalry, military engineering, border guard, marines, heroes, military priest, military music, The Romanian General Staff, the Great Headquarters, uniforms, military ranks and decorations.

We are in the year when the Romanian historiography celebrates two important events of the 20th century: the participation of the Romanian Army in the actions of the War for Unification and the Great Union of 1918. This doctoral study aims to be a contribution to the centenary evocations regarding the rhythm of development of the modern Romanian Army, by participating in major events such as the Independence War, World War I and World War II. This research is considering the constants and changes that had taken place within the Army, as well as the link with the entire political, economic, cultural or social context. The modernization of the Romanian Army began in the time of Alexandru Ioan Cuza and continued during the kingdom period, being a complex process that evolved according to the territorial defense needs of the Romanian State.

The studied period, 1914-1945, is one in which the process of modernization of the Romanian Army evolves at a special pace, it is also one of the most difficult challenges for the army and shows its greatest demands in relation to the armed danger represented by the enemy forces, their previous war experience, their military potential, the possibilities of arming and the fragility of the military alliances of the Romanian State. During the Great War, in 1916, the Kingdom of Romania passed from the Triple Alliance to the Entente, and during the Second World War the situation was equally complicated by the transition from the Axis Powers to the Allies. In this context, the Romanian Army underwent several reorganizations, requiring an adaptation to the requirements of each moment, combined with the Romanian political actions. The entry into the Great War was determined by the desire of the Romanian State to integrate the territories inhabited mostly by the Romanian population, which were in the Austro-Hungarian Empire or in the Russian Empire. In this paper, I analyzed this complicated and dramatic political-military context.

The present paper is intended to be a synthesis of cultural history of the Romanian Armed Forces, and the choice of theme is based on the passion for military history and the fact that specialized historiography has not offered so far a synthesis of the Romanian Army

evolution between the two world wars. Without the pretext of being an exhaustive synthesis, the historical excursion refers to the evolution of the Army, legislation, organization, actions and operations between 1914-1945. Historiographic research has focused on the history of the Romanian Armed Forces, as evidenced by the writings of the military historians, academics and university historians, but the approaches were partial, considering the involvement of the Romanian Army in the great events of the 19th and the 20th century. This doctoral study is a more complex approach to the history of the Army, both in legislative and organizational terms, as well as in relation to the other institutions of the Romanian State.

The purpose of the paper is not to resume certain events already exhibited by historiography, largely in a positivist manner, because they are known to both the general public and the historians, but to bring to the foreground issues that have briefly, minimalist or not treated at all. The paper shows aspects related to the major changes, the evolution from the medieval structures to the modern organization, the great military or social operations, the involvement in the Great War and the transformation of the nation into an army, the involvement in annexing new territories, the important role in stopping Bolshevism at the end of the First World War, ensuring peace in a climate of insecurity and revitalization of Revisionism, the way in which were honored and rewarded those who participated and fallen in the war, the influence of ideologies, being often an instrument of the State in solving social conflicts, cultural role of the Romanian Armed Forces and the festivities, or the dramas suffered by most of the generals who fought fiercely in the First and Second World War.

In this study, we used primary and secondary sources, starting with archive documents, instructions, regulations, directives or legislation. Several archive funds and collections were found in the Romanian Military Archives, the Cluj County National Archives Service, or the National Archives of Sibiu County Service. These have been complemented by encyclopedias, albums or dictionaries that contain a wide range of themes and can be a starting point for historiographic research. Thus, we consulted the following: *Romania during the First World War 1916-1919, vol. I and vol. II*, *Encyclopedia of Romania, vol.I (1938)*, *Encyclopedia of the Romanian Armed Forces (2009)*, *Romanian Army Album (Alesandru, Dobre, Florica, Loghin, Leonida, the Romanian Army in the Second World War. Enciclopedic Dictionary (1999)*.

Emotional impact can be noticed from memories, diaries or war correspondence, but their subjectivism must be taken into account when portraits, frontal images or scriptures from the time of the prison are depicted. From these, information about the organization, actions, relationship with subordinates or superiors, uniforms, rest, food, trench warfare can be

obtained, even if the presentations are sometimes incomplete and unreliable. Some of them are: Tăzlăoanu Octavian, *Three months on the field of war*, Mosoiu Traian, *Occupation of Budapest in connection with the operations of Transylvania 1918-1919* (1919); Nicolae Iorga, *Our War in Daily Notes*, vol. I-III (1922); Nemoianu Petre, *The First Alba Iulia. Romanian volunteers in the union war* (1922); Păduraru Ilie, *The Memorial of a Volunteer Corporal 1916-1918* (1937); Octavian Goga, *Marasesti is waiting for us* (1983); Constantin Argetoianu, *For those of tomorrow. Memoirs from the time of yesterday*, vol. II-III (1992; 1993), I. Gh. Duca, *Memoirs*, vol. III (1994); Henri Berthelot, *Journal and Correspondence. 1916-1919* (2000), etc.

An important role in presenting the events was the press, especially newspapers, magazines, newsletters, complemented by the Official Gazette of the State, where all organizational and legislative movements can be observed. It was the media that informed the society of the country's military situation. The press broadcast news from the front, updated the lists of mobilization, the lists of the injured, of the deceased or of the deserters, and published the speeches of the Kings, of the Grand Headquarters leaders or of the generals on various occasions. Among the most important publications are the following: *Official Gazette, Army's Official Gazette, The Romanian, People's Gazette, Voice of the Army*: organ for culture and education, *The Army. Illustrated magazine of Military Propaganda authorized by the General Staff of the Army, Document: Military Archives Bulletin, Border Guard - Monthly publication for the education of the border guards, Union, Romanian, Union War Library, Infantry Magazine*, etc.

The comprehensive bibliography of this study includes many works of general and specific character, which show the military approach of the historians towards the events, no matter whether they were military or civilians. General works and specialized studies are written all the time, from the pre-war to the post-communist period. Between the two categories of historians, military and civilians, the military seems to be in advantage, because access to military documents can be relatively easier, so specialized magazines abound with such works with good documentation in the military archives.

The first chapter of the paper is dedicated to military historiography and historiographic studies, channeled over three periods: those that appeared in the interwar period, those during the communist and post-communist period. There are important, large-scale works that have dealt with lots of aspects, especially encyclopedias or works dedicated to the Great War or the Second World War, there are also the historical writings affected by ideologies, their contribution to the historiographic study and their usefulness in the research.

The second chapter of this paper, *The Modern Evolution of the Romanian Army until the Great War*, is structured on eight subchapters, where are presented some aspects of the Romanian military evolution from the Middle Ages up to the First World War. It is aimed at the transition from medieval organization to modernity, from the military, legislative, institutional point of view, as well as from the point of view of the collective mentality or influence of foreign military ideologies. It is the moment when the basic institutions such as the Ministry of War, the General Staff, The Supreme Council of the Army or the Superior War School are laid. Many of the elements presented in this chapter are used as a comparison factor to demonstrate the subsequent evolution of weapons, institutions, armament, offensive or defensive style, uniforms, personalities, legislation of the Great War, and later in the interwar period. This chapter emphasizes the continuous modernization of the Romanian Army in order to see the constants and changes within each political regime and its preparation for the Great War.

The third chapter of the paper, *The Romanian Army during the Great War (1916-1919)*, structured into ten subchapters, underlines the evolution of the Romanian Army during the Reunification War, including aspects of neutrality by identifying legislation on mobilization, military equipment, health service, as well as referring to the formulation of hypotheses, strategies and action plans by the General Staff and the General Headquarters. The research focuses on the Romanian military staff, the organization of weapons, the officers' personality, especially the behavior of the Commanders-in-Chief, the influence of the politics on the army, the numerous intrigues launched by appointing generals who had no contact with troops, the presence of the French mission of General Berthelot. Along with the French mission, we mentioned a few things about the Italian mission, very little known and researched. There was no lack of important details about the Transylvanian Romanians living one of the paradoxes of the war, namely, fighting against the Romanians, as well as about the Transylvanian and Bucovinian volunteers from Russia or Italy. The Romanian Army contributes to the formation of the Romanian National State by intervening in the Allied provinces, and later in Hungary, where they manage to end the Bolshevik regime imposed by Bela Kun but at the same time takes care of the population of Budapest, which means that the social function of the army can also be seen during the war. We can clearly state that the Romanian Army is the first army in the world to put an end to the communist regime.

The fourth chapter, *The Romanian Armed Forces in the interwar period*, is structured on seven subchapters and presents aspects of organizational and legislative changes under the new laws of organization of the army in the interwar period, as well as evolution of the General

Staff. The Romanian Army, becoming the Army of a war-winning nation, had the role of defending the new frontiers and maintaining the status quo. The situation is presented in an evolutionary and comparative way through the appeal to the Official Gazette, where these laws and royal decrees were promulgated. The military uniforms, the changes made over time to all military ranks, as well as the system of decorations that the Army implements after obtaining State Independence, are presented to reward the front bravery. We paid special attention to the large arms of the Romanian Army, by presenting infantry, artillery, cavalry, military engineering, border guards, signal corps and the intelligence service of the army. One can speak of a vigilance of the Romanian military authorities in the context of a growing need of revenge around the borderline of Great Romania. The aviation and the navy are presented separately as we analyzed their evolution in consistency, so in 1937 they would become separate and independent arms being under the command of their own ministry.

The fifth chapter, *Mentality, Education and Training in the Romanian Army*, is structured on eight subchapters and we consider it to be the original part of this PhD study through the value brought by the researcher within this theme. It is possible to observe the originality and expertise of the author by pertinent analyses of the military virtues, as well as the features of military thinking and art, referring to the interwar period, given the strong traces found in the collective mentality. The military force becomes a national one and military concepts define new notions such as the *nation's army* or the *potential war* to be put into service. The General Staff issues lessons for soldiers, but also for ordinary citizens, so that a new war will not catch them unprepared. At the same time, a great emphasis is placed on the Army's social function, which is used for humanitarian, social or national purposes, both in peacetime and in wartime. There are mentioned aspects of the role of the priest in the Army, who becomes a true psychologist of souls, because he earns a place of honor among the institution staff, after he was reluctantly received, especially by the officers. The army cannot be deprived of military festivals, military music, during war or at peace times, so it becomes an integral part of the military institution. Considering that the Romanian troops had crossed the frame of two world wars, there was no way of missing the hero cult, personal heroism, feminine heroism or the need to have heroes, as well as cultural institutions such as the National Military Circle, the Military History Service or the National Military Museum.

The sixth chapter, *the Romanian Army in the Second World War (1941-1945)*, structured in five subchapters, analyzes the military organization and legislation, the multiple reorganizations of the Romanian Army, the evolution of the General Staff and the General Headquarters, the organization of the plans and the military-military strategy, the relationship

with the German military authorities, and then, under the conditions imposed by the Armistice Convention and military protocols, those with the Allies. Being a war with huge losses, the Army's Sanitary Service was forced to operate at full capacity, because the number of wounded in the Romanian troops was very large. The research would have been incomplete if it had not gone beyond the year 1945, because the end of the war had made the royal army change into the popular army. What follows is the Romanian Army drama, the sufferings of the Romanian generals, the officers, the monarchy, the historical parties or the intellectuals of the time. Legislation changes often, so that military personnel are being cleansed, being sentenced to death, life imprisonment or heavy labor years by popular courts of law.

The seventh chapter, *The Romanian Army Pantheon*, is a tribute to the Romanian Army generals, being commemorated both those who took part in the First World War as well as those who took part in the Second World War. Of course, we chose to present a few of them, with great responsibilities in the Romanian Army, officers, marshals or ministers. These micro biographies try to make brief analyses of their social origin, the cultural background, the schools they attended, career development, family life, attitude to military problems, the front operation involvement, or the strategies designed. Historiography is generally due to this part, because all pages of the best known commanders are allotted, and so little is known about the others.

The purpose of the thesis is to present the evolution of the Romanian Army between 1914-1945, from the point of view of military organization, legislation, operations, training, mentalities, military thinking, relations with other armies, relations with the main institutions of the state, relations between subordinates and officers, as well as the stages of social involvement, given that there is no synthesis of cultural history that particularly describes the above mentioned period.

The objectives set for the achievement of the proposed goal were the following: description of the general framework of evolution of the Romanian Army from the medieval period towards modernity; a description of the political and institutional framework within the Romanian Army evolves; analyzing the organizational and legislative situation in the nineteenth century; assessing how the Army is becoming more prepared in the event of a war, in order to cope with the rigors imposed by it; highlighting the fact that the army helps to liberate the territories that want union with Romania, so it must protect the new frontiers, becoming a national army; the reconstruction of the directions followed or which should have been followed by the nation's army in the interwar period in order to be prepared in the event of a new global conflict; evaluating the plans and strategies proposed during the two world

wars, seen in the context of military organization and reorganization; highlighting the role played by the sanitary service and the priest on the front, by their special contribution, in a fleshly and soulful connection.

The most useful research methods were narration, description, comparative method, statistics, critical approach, chronology and synthesis. Narrative and description are the most used methods to describe the chapters and to present the events. The comparative method has been used to highlight the similarities and differences within the periods we are reporting, the degree of permanent novelty in relation to the past. Also, the comparative method is used to review the differences and similarities between the Romanian Army and other European armies, such as French, German, Austro-Hungarian or Russian. Statistical methods are often used for the relevance of numerical indicators, to present the situation on the front (dead, missing, wounded) or the troops, to show the classification of armies, to point out the number of navy vessels or the typology of planes. The critical approach is used to overcome the limitations imposed by certain sources, written either at a time when little was known about the facts pursued, or in a period in which the historical discourse was unreliable in terms of correct and consistent expression. The synthesis is justified by a need to organize better the information.

All in all, we are offering a very well-documented doctoral study, containing seven chapters and a lot of related subchapters, followed by a fairly comprehensive bibliography and a chapter of annexes which completes the thesis.