

THE ALLIES' COOPERATION IN THE RE-ENTRY OF ROMANIA INTO THE WAR ON 28 OCTOBER/10 NOVEMBER 1918

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When he drew up the operations project for the Allied armies in the East, in order to exploit success, after the capitulation of Bulgaria (16/29 September 1918), General Franchet d'Esperey certainly relied on Romania's support, establishing the Danube Army strength to only three divisions. Indeed, it was the mission of this army to secure both the right flank of the main operation carried out in Belgrade's direction and the left flank of the secondary operation carried out in the direction of Constantinople, against a possible intervention by the Austro-German armies in Romania. Henri Mathias Berthelot, former head of the French Military Mission in Romania, who had lived both the days of repression and the glory of the Romanian Army, was also a certain proof of the intention of the Allies to cooperate with Romania.

The article presents aspects of the cooperation of the Allies with the forces of the Romanian Army that resulted in liberating the Romanian territory from the occupation of the Central Powers and in creating the necessary circumstances for the achievement of Greater Romania.

Keywords: Allies; First World War; cooperation; capitulation; Danube;

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 1918, Romania was in a desperate situation, a result of the political events in Tzarist Russia in the autumn of 1917. The new strategic reality on the Romanian front after the Soviet government promulgated, on 25 October/7 November 1917, the decree on peace, the premise for launching the talks to sign the ceasefire agreement, which were initiated at the request of Soviet Russia on 13/26 November 1917, was disastrous for the Romanian Army. Signed in Brest-Litovsk on 20 November/3 December 1917, the ceasefire agreement stipulated Russia's individual exit from the war, leaving Romania alone to continue its own fight against the Central Powers, a situation which was difficult to manage by political and military decision-makers. Consequently, the projection of the occupation of the entire country by the troops of the Central Powers made the Romanian government, led by Ion I.C. Brătianu, sign the ceasefire agreement on 26 November/9 December in Focșani.

At the top of the Romanian army, essential changes were made, according to the extraordinary situation in which the country was. Its command was given to General Constantin Prezan, who was, on the one hand, to implement the measure adopted by the Council of Ministers meeting on the night of 22/23 December 1917 regarding the removal of all the largely Bolshevik Russian troops present on the national territory, and, on the other hand, to face the new threat from the east. In response to Romania's firm action to eliminate any Russian presence on its territory, the Bolshevik revolutionary government, viewing an offensive move, decided to break diplomatic ties between the two countries on 13/25 January 1918. Shortly before this measure, on 31 December/13 January 1918, at the order of V.I. Lenin, there were arrested all Romanian diplomatic representatives in Petrograd, led by Minister Constantin Diamandy, diplomatic and consular staff, as well as representatives of the military mission. The Bolshevik protest was completed by the seizure of the Romanian treasure, a move that could be considered a silent war statement.

Under those circumstances, caught between the Western and Eastern military powers, Romania had to accept the separate peace conditions imposed by the ultimatum on the beginning of peace negotiations, sent by the representatives of the Central Powers on 23 January/5 February 1918. The political decision to be taken in this regard was discussed in the Council of Ministers on 25 January/7 February. During the debates of the representatives of the political parties, General Alexandru Averescu suggested signing a separate peace as a compromise solution. The Ion I.C. Brătianu government resigned on 26 January/8 February 1918.

After Ion I.C. Brătianu resigned, the King assigned General Averescu to form the new government (29 January/11 February 1918), with the mission to contact the representatives of the Central Powers in București. During the talks held in Buftea, Alexandru Averescu protested, on 11/24 February 1918, against the extremely difficult conditions imposed on Romania. Hungarian Foreign Minister Czernin threatened that if Romanians had resumed hostilities, the army would have been crushed and Romania would *“disappear from the map of Europe”*. In the same day's discussion between Austrian General Hranilovici and Romanian Colonel C. Ressel, following the latter statement that Romania still had an army that could oppose, the Austrian General responded: *“We know it, too, but what will you be able to do about finding yourself completely surrounded by our troops coming through Ukraine and Bessarabia behind you? [...] We will bring our divisions that have been freed from the Russian front and we will carry out a crushing operation, benefitting from superior troops, to proceed as quickly as possible. But then, I can tell you, then there will be no more concessions from us and you will disappear as a country”*. (Agrigoroaiei, 2015-2016, p. 26).

The mission of the Averescu government was extremely difficult, as there were serious problems for the Romanian state: giving up Dobruja, changing the border along the Carpathians, making big economic concessions, changing the dynasty and demobilising the army. The issue of Romania's attitude was the subject of three Crown Councils, held on 17-18 February/2-4 March 1918. It was agreed that the text of the peace treaty should be approached in the aggregate, without having to negotiate on articles, in order to reveal its character as an award. Alexandru Averescu stated that the only possible solution was to accept the conditions. Thus, the dynasty was saved and the unification with Bessarabia was facilitated, as the Central Powers (Germany in particular) promised diplomatic support in that

respect. On 20 February/5 March, the protocol to extend the truce between Romania and the Central Powers by another 14-day period and the preliminary terms of the peace treaty were signed in Buftea. At the beginning of peace talks, the Ukrainian government, which had already concluded separate peace with the Central Powers, sent a note, stating that: *“Bessarabia forms an indivisible unity, in ethnographic, economic and political terms, with Ukraine's territory”* (Niculae, 2018, p. 45) and asked to participate in the București talks. Kiev officials claimed the right to include Bessarabian delegates in the Ukrainian delegation, but they did not accept the possibility of a special delegation of independent Bessarabia. In the new military and diplomatic situation in the early 1918, Romania had to reach a *“deal”* with the Central Powers, *“deal”* that was a favourable factor in the Bessarabian question. In keeping with the old promise and seeking Romania to accept the imposed economic conditions, Germany (and, less so, Austria-Hungary, which wanted to attach an area in Northern Bessarabia) opposed Ukrainian claims on Bessarabia and implicitly agreed with the Romanian solution to the problem. The German Foreign Minister, Kühlmann, whom Averescu assured, for tactical reasons, that Romania wanted to see the Moldovan Republic as an independent state, considered Ukraine's claims unfounded. Because, as underlined by Paul Cernovodeanu, Romania refused to discuss the issue of Bessarabia during the peace talks with the Central Powers, and they did not express particular interest in this respect, the issue of participation, both of the Ukrainian delegation and of the Bessarabian delegation, in negotiations was not taken into account. Germany also opposed Bulgaria's claim to get Dobruja in its entirety following the stipulations in the peace treaty (Ib., p. 27).

On 5/18 March 1918, Romania had another government led by Prime Minister Alexandru Marghiloman, whose main task was to complete the negotiations started and to conclude the peace treaty with the Central Powers. A decision taken with dignity by the politician Alexandru Marghiloman, aware that the only way to maintain the Romanian state was that of diplomacy, to compensate for the sacrifices the Romanian people had to make.

The Marghiloman government had to accept, on 24 April/7 May 1918, the peace treaty, which was in fact an award (diktat). Constantin Kirițescu wrote about it a few years later: *“It was the continuation and regulation of the country's military occupation regime, with its despotic and humiliating pressure, squeezing the remained resources of the Romanian soil and labour, complemented*

and aggravated by the mutilation of its territory [...]. While Romania being disarmed, and by kidnapping its mountains and Dobruja, it was thrown without any defence power at the discretion of the enemies, Germany kept its entire military apparatus of occupation and extraction in the country, maintaining a state of war until the ratification of peace. After the Treaty was ratified, the state of war became the state of occupation by maintaining six divisions and the <formations necessary for economic exploitation>, all this without any deadline, but as long as the occupant believes it is necessary”! (Ib., p. 26). The Romanian army – for the most part – had to be demobilised and disarmed. Austria-Hungary was receiving almost the entire Carpathian Mountains chain (a territory of 5.600 km²), having important soil and subsoil resources and a great strategic importance. Bulgaria was receiving the Quadrilateral and a strip from the south of Constanța County; the rest of Dobruja was passing in condominium to the four states, leaving Romania a way of access to Constanța. All the wealth of the country and, above all, oil, cereals and forests were under the control of the Central Powers, Germany in particular, for a virtually unlimited period. Romania was also required to pay Germany and Austria considerable sums of money and to waive any compensation for the damage caused to its territory by them (Ib., p. 28).

Four years after the First World War unleashed, Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria-Hungary and Germany, one by one, were forced to capitulate. During 1918, while Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey were at the end of all military efforts, Germany, although tired of the extraordinary hardships of a long war, decided that during that year it should take a final step to end the war, in conditions that should be as advantageous as possible to the Central Powers.

The advantages gained in early 1918 by the abolition of the Eastern Front following the separate peace treaties signed in Brest-Litovsk (9 February with the Republic of Ukraine and 3 March with the Soviet Russia respectively) and then, simultaneously with the occupation of Ukraine, Crimea and the south of European Russia, in Buftea-București (March-May), allowed the German High Command to concentrate the vast majority of its units on the Western Front and to launch, in spring and summer of 1918, four major offensive actions (Preda, Alexandrescu, Prodan, 1994, p. 27).

Planning and executing those battles¹ did not lead to the long-awaited decision, but on the contrary, they permanently removed any hope of victory. The failure of that last and supreme German attempt, in which the entire bloc of the Central Powers had placed hope, was the prelude to the German military collapse and left no doubt of the negative outcome of the war, both for the allies of Germany and for Germany itself (AMNR, f. 26).

At the same time, the failure in the last Austrian offensive on the Italian front in June 1918 (the Piave Battle), which ended with a total defeat, resulting in the Austrian army's weakening by 16 divisions, further confirmed the decline in Austrian-German military power (Ib., f. 25).

Parallel to the complete weakening of the Austro-German military power, the Entente was completing all preparations for the decisive coup on the Western Front. To that end, it had an overwhelming superiority, so that the counteroffensive to Marshal Ferdinand Foch, which began on 5/18 July 1918, was increasingly successful, with every prospect of final victory, while the German army became incapable of coping with the Allied armies. Under those circumstances, the Central Powers defeat was inevitable, Germany and Austria being convinced that peace had to be concluded before the operations on the Western Front could be decisive. During that time, the Central Powers disaster in the East was occurring, through the capitulation of Bulgaria and Turkey. The offensive of the Allied armies in the Orient, under the command of General Franchet d'Esperey, which began on 2/15 September 1918, resulted in the disbandment of the German-Austro-Hungarian-Balkan front.

When drawing up the project of operations for the Allied armies of the Orient, in order to exploit the success, after the capitulation of Bulgaria following the Thessaloniki ceasefire (16/29 September 1918), General Franchet d'Esperey certainly relied on Romania's support when he decided the Danube Army strength to be only three divisions. Indeed, that army, with a triple mission – to secure both the right flank of the main operation carried out in the direction of Belgrade

¹ The Battle of Amiens was conducted between 21 March and 15 April 1918 in the Quentin area, on a 80-km front, between the Oise and Sensee rivers; the Battle of Lys was conducted between 9-18 April in Flandra, between Ypres and Le Basse Canal, against the British; the Battle of Marne was conducted between 27 May-6 June 1918, between the Aisne and Marne rivers, the German troops reaching about 80 km near Paris, while a secondary operation was conducted on the Montdidier-Oise front, between 9-12 June 1918; The Battles of Champagne and Marne were interrupted by the French counteroffensive (the second Battle of Marne was conducted between 25 July and 7 August 1918).

and the left flank of the secondary operation carried out in the direction of Constantinople against a possible intervention by the Austro-German armies in Romania, as well as to unite with Romania – was too weak compared to the strength of the Austrian-German forces on the occupied Romanian territory. Another proof of the intention of cooperation with Romania was the appointment of General Henri Mathias Berthelot, former head of the French Military Mission in Romania, who witnessed both the raise and the fall of the Romanian army, as Commander of the Danube Army (Ib., f. 61).

As early as 2/15 October 1918, the command of that army managed to establish contact with the ruling circles of Romania, namely those who had participated in the war and who, while maintaining their firm belief in the final victory, waited for the appropriate moment of re-entry into action. By the established connections, it was decided that Romania would wait for the signal in order to re-enter the fight against the common enemy, a signal that had to be given when the Allied army was ready to pass the Danube in Muntenia.

Although the concentration of that army on the Danube could not be achieved before 7/20 November 1918, the events precipitated on the Western Front, aggravating the situation of the Mackensen army, by concluding the Austro-Italian ceasefire and advancing the French-Serbian armies in Banat, which threatened the flank and the back of that army, General Berthelot, relying on the action of the Romanian forces in Moldavia, behind the Mackensen army, as well as on the mass rising of the Romanians from the occupied territory, decided to cross the Danube with available forces on the night of 26/27 October -8/9 November 1918 (Ib., f. 62).

The decision was communicated by telegraph on 26 October/8 November 1918 from Târnova, where the Danube Army Headquarters was established, to Iași, which led to the decree on the mobilisation of the Romanian army and to the ultimatum sent to Field Marshal August von Mackensen. Indeed, on the day the Danube Army crossed the Danube in Giurgiu (28 October/10 November 1918), General Constantin Prezan, who had once again been appointed Chief of the Romanian Great General Staff, informed General Berthelot, through General Pierre Henry Lafont, French military attaché to Iași, that King Ferdinand I decreed the mobilisation of the Romanian army, that he ordered him to get in touch with the Allied Command, and that the Romanian troops had already been ordered to enter the occupied territory. On the same day, General Berthelot requested the Romanian Command

to mobilise all the movable elements, to organise only those that could be equipped with artillery in divisions, to group the infantry in brigades of six battalions each, ready to support the French and English divisions of the Danube Army.

Following General Berthelot request, the Romanian Command replied that Romania was mobilising the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 13th, 14th Infantry Divisions, the 1st and 2nd Hunter Divisions, and 2 Cavalry divisions, all equipped with the required artillery. The Danube Allied Army and the Romanian Army had to coordinate their action so that they would meet in Ploiești (Ib., f. 63).

THE SITUATION OF THE DANUBE ARMY

On 25 October/7 November 1918, on the eve of the day decided for crossing the river, the Danube Army was not yet concentrated. It was deployed as follows: The French 30th Infantry Division (one battalion from the 58th Infantry Regiment and the 40th Infantry Regiment in Șiștov, 2 battalions from the 58th Infantry Regiment in Plevna, 2 battalions from the 40th Infantry Regiment in Țaribrod – 200 km south-west of Nicopole, the 61st Infantry Regiment in Byela – 50 km south-west of the Rusciuk); the French 16th Colonial Division in Radomir – southwest of Sofia (the African 4th Hunter Regiment in Țaribrod, 2.155 mm artillery groups in Sofia, 1 detachment from the 76th Infantry Division, under the command of Colonel Boblet, composed of the 210th Infantry Regiment and a 75 mm artillery division). The British 26th Division was still in Serbia.

The Danube Army had no specialists, but the Bulgarians had pontoon material that was in the Benene Canal west of Șiștov. There was also a Bulgarian Pontoon Company in Șiștov, but the Bulgarians refused to give their material, saying they were not at war with the Germans. That was the reason why the Danube could not be crossed on the night of 26/27 October-8/9 November, as it was decided by the Parliament.

On 27 October/9 November, General Berthelot arrived in Rusciuk, where he ordered energetic measures to execute the crossing of the Danube on the night of 27/28 October-9/10 November, ordering the Bulgarian Generals to make the necessary material available immediately. The Berthelot Command therefore decided the crossing to be executed using improvised means on towed barges through the following points: Rusciuk-Giurgiu, Șiștov-Zimnicea, Nicopole-Turnu-Măgurele. After the crossing, the heights 7-8 km from Giurgiu, Zimnicea

and Turnu-Măgurele were to be occupied, forming bridgeheads on the left river shore (Ib., f. 64).

The Rusciuk crossing was the most important one, being the shortest way to București. In Rusciuk the detachment of Colonel Boblet had to cross the Danube. It consisted of the 210th Regiment (3 battalions), the 61st Infantry Regiment (2 battalions), which had to come from Beyla, on 28 October/10 November and the next night, part by the railway and part marching, 1 group of 75 mm artillery, a few French Navy troops (18 Navy personnel and Major Lambert), and the Bulgarian technical personnel.

It was only at 06.00 o'clock that two battalions were completed; the convoy with the two barges set in motion along the right shores to avoid attracting the attention of the enemy. The 37 mm rallies and guns on the barges were ready for shooting. The place of landing, decided and kept secret, was in the village of Slobozia. At the height of Rusciuk, the convoy turned 140 degrees, being exposed until the left shore was reached (about 10 minutes), where the dead shore angle was entered. Early in the morning the landing began, which ended relatively quickly at 07:00, without the enemy noticing it. The first cannon shots were fired by the enemy late, as the disembarkation had ended and the people in the field had been sheltered. The two battalions that managed to land were from the 210th Infantry Regiment. Their objectives were for a battalion to reach the village of Florica (west of Giurgiu) and the other battalion to the northeast of Giurgiu. The latter, being met with German machine gun shots and finding that the enemy destroyed the bridge over the Ramadan, regrouped and headed toward Slobozia to get to Giurgiu, to the west.

After landing, the convoy returned at maximum speed to the place of embarkation, where it arrived at 08.30, for the embarkation of two other battalions (the 3rd Battalion of the 210th Infantry Regiment and a battalion of the 61st Infantry Regiment). Following the information provided by the Bulgarian pilots another landing point was chosen, much closer to the embarkation site, the first landing point being noticed by the enemy artillery. The crossing of the Danube was thus easily accomplished without a gun shot, the German prisoners saying that after the first landing they were ordered to retreat to Giurgiu. Those two battalions were also directed toward Slobozia, from where the battalion from the 210th Infantry Regiment went to Giurgiu to strengthen that regiment, which had entered the city

during the day, following the withdrawal and evacuation of the city by the Germans. The battalion of the 61st Infantry Regiment remained on the evening of 28/10 October in Slobozia where, together with the other battalion from the same regiment, covered the French troops in Giurgiu (Ib., f. 66).

At 16.30, the tug-boat "Varna" took a third ride, taking on the last battalion of the 61st Infantry Regiment and its logistics. As the landed troops had gained ground on the northern shore of the Danube and the German artillery had stopped firing, the convoy was also directed to the first landing point in Giurgiu. During the trip, enemy planes attacked the convoy with gunfire, which were responded by machine guns and guns placed on the vessels, as well as by the Bulgarian anti-aircraft artillery installed at Rusciuk. The fourth ride was carried out in the evening, so that by the evening of 28 October/10 November, 5 French battalions with horses and material were disembarked on the left shore of the Danube in Giurgiu. In this operation, the French lost 3 people and 12 were injured, including an officer.

The German units withdrew on 28 October/10 November from Giurgiu, and the French units occupied the Daia – Frățesti – Gizdar line on 29 October/11 November. The rest of the Allied troops moved from Rusciuk to Giurgiu with the help of towed boats.

Then the Allied troops crossed the Danube at the other decided point in Nicopole. On the dawn of 29 October/11 November, two battalions of the 58th Infantry Regiment, embarked in Nicopole, crossed the Danube in Turnu-Măgurele, which they occupied at 05.30, and then organised a bridgehead on the heights north of the city, forcing the enemy to retreat hastily.

For the organisation of the crossing of the Danube in Șiștov, on 28 October/ 10 November 1918, the first crossing preparations were made and about 30 Bulgarian boats were called up. With a capacity of about 10-12 people, they were gathered in the shelter of the sight, a little higher than the crossing point in Șiștov. On 29 October/11 November in the morning, the first elements of the 3rd Battalion of the 58th Infantry Regiment were embarked. The boats were rowed by Bulgarians, watched by three French pioneers in each boat to prevent any damage. Thus, a battalion from the 58th Regiment and parts of the 40th Infantry Regiment took over Zimnicea and organised a bridgehead on the Bujoru – Tânțăreni – Șoimu – Suhaia line. The Germans, who had a battalion and a battery in Zimnicea town, withdrew in disorder, without receiving the attack. A Romanian torpedo boat

was fired. The Romanian population welcomed the French troops with cheers and flags (Ib., f. 67).

From Giurgiu, General Berthelot addressed the following proclamations to the people of Muntenia and Oltenia and to the troops: *“To arms, Romanians! To arms, Romanians! The French troops are today crossing the Danube to help you get rid of the yoke under which the enemy thought to be kneeling you. For eight months, you have been able to judge the brutality of the enemy, who would count you under its power. You, in particular, the men of Oltenia and Muntenia, who have suffered the occupation for two years, have been able to see the insolence and barbarism of the enemy that calls itself civilised. The Germans have devastated your plains and emptied your stables, have robbed your houses, have laid their bondage and hunger on your veins, firmly determined, they have said it themselves, to leave only your eyes to cry. The time of revenge or, rather, the time of justice has come. Wherever it is crushed, the enemy is set to run. The time has come to burn the paper rag that was brought to us in Bucureşti.*

Soldiers! Your battalions should unite with ours!

Peasants, rise and take the weapons against the oppressor! This is the appeal of the Romanian nation, for which you have suffered. This is the appeal of your government that has sacrificed everything for the Greater Romania. This is the appeal of the ancestors, of Stephan the Great, Mihai Viteazul, Mircea the Elder. This is the shout of your young fellows and brothers who fell in glory on the battlefields in Oituz, Mărăşti and Mărăşeşti and everywhere you needed to defend your land. And tomorrow you will be able to see the English and the French flags flying together with your flag to mark the victory and freedom.

Rise up, brother Romanians, and defeat the enemy” (...) *“The enemy does not renounce the injustices. After the enemy troops killed your women, starved your children, dropped bombs on the peaceful inhabitants, shot those working the fields using machine guns, spread cholera and typhus using candies, came to get you sick of poverty.*

After that, in order to be able to offend you better, they prevented the achievement of the land ownership and of the right to vote promised by your King and Government.

They are now seeking to bring the Bolshevism into your homeland, which they have ruined. To deceive you, they seek to show you that those who have suffered

for your salvation, the King and the army, are like their murderous Kaiser and their greedy army; it is a lie. Thus, by sowing the rebellion and the evil that is the second nature, they hope they will weaken the winners.

The attempt is plotted by Bulgarian Racowski, faithful to the Germans and now housed in Berlin. Romanians, you are among the winners who triumph today, you are a smart people who understand well that your usual achievement will bring you the fulfilment of your wishes and that unlawfulness cannot benefit you. Be worthy of yourself, be worthy of the people in Jiu, Olt, Oituz, Argeş, Mărăşti and Mărăşeşti, do not let yourselves deceived by the villains who hide in the light of day!

Your King’s promise of land is fulfilled. Keep quiet, your faithful allies ask for it!” (Ib, f. 68).

The collapse of the Balkan front opened up secure prospects for Romania’s return to war. But Romania’s immediate intervention was prevented by the fact that it was still isolated at that time, mostly occupied and completely surrounded by enemy forces. Under such circumstances, besides Romania being able to accomplish only a partial mobilisation, it could not have been done either because of the enemy forces that surrounded it. To that were added large material shortages, especially equipment and food, as well as transport-related difficulties (Ib., f. 42).

In order for Romania to get back into action to have an efficient and useful outcome, both for it and for its allies, the causes that prevented this action had to be removed. First of all, Romania’s isolation could only end when the Danube allied Army had reached the Danube and engaged the occupying army in Romania, which would have made Romania more secure. Romania entered into action on 28 October/10 November 1918, a day before the end of the Armistice at Compiègne, which caused the end of the First World War, when the first units of the Danube allied Army had reached the Danube, i.e. without waiting for the concentration of the whole army, in order to cross the Danube.

CONTINUING OPERATIONS IN MUNTENIA AND DOBRUJA

On the very day of the crossing of the Danube, after the occupation of Giurgiu, General Berthelot, seeing the hasty withdrawal of the Germans, intervened at the Romanian General Headquarters, asking for the Romanian troops *“to renounce the Ploieşti goal and operate on the Oituz-Braşov axis, with the aim of preventing the German withdrawal”*, receiving the reply that *“the 7th and 14th Divisions will enter*

Transylvania, on the Oituz and Bistrița valleys, as soon as they are organised, i.e. in 3-4 days” (Ib., f. 69).

Meanwhile, the Germans were hurrying to see all the supplies, materials, coal and equipment they had collected in large quantities in Muntenia, Oltenia and on the Danube. The German troops, in their withdrawal from the Siret line, barbarically destroyed all works of art, railway and road, railway stations, water castles, telegraphic stations and storages of food and coal on the Brăila-Buzău and Mărășești-Buzău directions, and at the same time, they withdrew all the rolling stock to Ploiești, organising trains consisting of cars and food wagons, mobile cars, engines, mechanical installations, which they led to Transylvania, thus aggravating the serious state the Romanian army and people were in. Also, after the withdrawal of the German armies, the city of București remained isolated, with no telegraphic or telephone connection, neither with the French command nor with the city of Iași.

That is why, in order to ensure order in the regions evacuated by the Germans, General Berthelot decided to send to București a joint British-French column (a French division and a joint English brigade), despite the prescriptions of Marshal Foch’s order to stand on the positions where the troops were at the time of the ceasefire. At the same time, General Berthelot prepared the occupying disposition of the oil region immediately after the enemy withdrawal (Ib., f. 70).

The French moved to București to follow the Germans, who withdrew in a haste. At Copăceni, on the Argeș, the French troops stopped because at this point the Giurgiu-București road bridge had been blown up by the Germans and the river was deep. After the crossings of the Argeș were restored, the French troops continued their advance to București and stopped in the Jilava area where they stationed. In the capital city, French and English officers gradually appeared, being enthusiastically greeted by the population.

Following the execution of those movements and of those carried out by the rest of the allied forces south of the Danube, the situation of the Danube Army on 12/25 November 1918 was as follows: The French 30th Infantry Division, split between Bragadiru and Giurgiu, was ready to enter București. The 16th Colonial Infantry Division, in the Șiștov region, was on the point of being directed towards the area of Craiova-Pitești-Ploiești, and the British 26th Division was gathered near Rusciuk, having a brigade very close to București, where it was ready to enter with the French 30th Division.

Until the Romanian Government resumed the administrative leadership of the evacuated territory, General Berthelot, *“on the basis of the King’s mandate, took all measures to ensure order and the continuation of a normal life”*, restoring peace in the territory now occupied by the Allied troops and in București (Ib., f. 71).

At the same time, in order for the different Romanian territorial issues to be solved in full agreement with the Allies, on the one hand, and the conditions for Romania’s cooperation with the Allies in Ukraine to be established, on the other hand, on 13/26 November 1918, a conference took place in Giurgiu, between General Constantin Prezan and General Berthelot, appointed Commander of all Allied forces that were to conduct military operations in Russia. At the conference, some measures were discussed and decided on the issues of Bessarabia and Dobruja. With regard to the latter, following the interventions of General Berthelot and General Franchet d’Esperey, the French government considered that the annulment of the Bucharest Treaty, based on the Spa ceasefire, *“involves the evacuation of Dobruja by the Bulgarians and the withdrawal of their troops south of the 1913 border”* (Ib., f. 72), General Berthelot imposed on Bulgarians the complete evacuation of Dobruja and their withdrawal south of the border, established by the Bucharest Peace Treaty, the deadline for the evacuation being established on 22 November/5 December 1918 (Ib.).

As for the issue of Transylvania, through the truce concluded in Villa Giusti on 21 October/3 November 1918, which established the line behind which the Hungarian troops were to withdraw, no account was taken of the full rights recognised by the treaty of alliance with the Entente. At the same time, the delegate of the Romanian National Committee in Transylvania described the terror exercised by the Hungarian authorities in the Romanian lands and showed the claims of the National Committee, the conference establishing that our troops should occupy Transylvania up to the Mureș – the Diaz line – , and the line stipulated by the alliance treaty, with the help of some French detachments.

As for the Banat issue, General Berthelot requested the French government that, on the one hand, all the Serb troops occupying the whole territory up to Arad included should be sent west of the Tisa and, on the other hand, that the region should be occupied by French troops until the general Peace Treaty was to be signed, in order to thus avoid tensions between the Romanians and the Serbs.

Based on what was established at the Giurgiu conference on the above-mentioned date, the Romanian General Headquarters took all the necessary measures to make available to the Allies 15 regiments (one by each division) to cooperate in the peacebuilding and reconstruction of Russia. However, subsequent events resulted in renouncing the collaboration planned at the Giurgiu conference.

On 2/15 December 1918, the Danube Army was deployed as follows: the General Headquarters of the Army, the Command Point of the 30th Division, the African 4th Hunter Regiment, the Artillery, the 40th Infantry Regiment were in București, the 61st Infantry Regiment with two battalions and an engineer company were in Constanța and a battalion at Cernavodă-Medgidia-Tulcea, the 58th Infantry Regiment with two battalions in Iași and a battalion in Galați and Brăila. The Command Point of the Colonial 16th Infantry Division was in Zimnicea, and the troops of this division, disposed from Zimnicea to Alexandria, with the heavy artillery deployed, a group in Șiștov, a group in Rusciuk. The 156th Infantry Division was in the process of transportation to Odessa, and the 26th British Infantry Division, in Southern Dobruja and in Varna (Ib., f. 73).

Therefore, the cooperation of the Allies with Romania continued after the conclusion of the general ceasefire, because while the Romanian troops were in Transylvania and Bukovina, as well as on the Dniester River, to defend Bessarabia against any action on the part of Soviet Russia, the Allied forces that had been in Romania were directed towards Russia, where peace and reconstruction were sought by the Allies, after the withdrawal of the Austrian-German forces from Ukraine. This cooperation also continued on the Western Front, where the French troops in Banat covered the left flank of the Romanian troops in Transylvania, which were operating against the Hungarian Bolshevik troops.

CONCLUSIONS

The historical events of 1918, the Unification of Bessarabia with Romania on 27 March 1918, the Unification of Bukovina with Romania on 27 November 1918, and the Unification of Transylvania with Romania on 1 December 1918 were prepared in advance and adapted to the political-military circumstances that allowed them to be achieved. They were based on the Romanian people desire to affirm internationally as an independent nation, and their will to live and develop freely within their natural borders, recognised by the international community.

The achievement of Greater Romania, the Great Unification, was a historic fact, an event of paramount importance to the Romanian people, which marked the conclusion of a century-long process whose elements were dominated by the Romanians unitary national character.

Romania's re-entry into the war along with the Entente was a powerful moment of emotional experience. All of a sudden, all the experienced shortcomings caused by material misery, the tragedy of the grieving families and the drama of a people who had to retire on a patch of land were thrown aside to support, with any sacrifice, the national ideal of uniting all Romanians within the borders of a unitary state: GREATER ROMANIA.

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