

## “FERDINAND I” MILITARY HIGH SCHOOL IN CHIŞINĂU – “NATIONAL ENERGY POOL”

Ion Valer XENOFONTOV, PhD

Agency for Military Science and Memory, Faculty of History and Philosophy,  
State University of Moldova  
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*After the Union of Bessarabia with Romania (1918), the necessary premises were created for the connection of the education from the province to the national values. The subjects of study were taught in Romanian. In Chişinău, a military high school was set up to form the military and patriotic elite.*

*Based on archival sources, memoirs, period press and literature, it will be presented the process of establishing this educational institution in the second city, by population, in greater Romania, as well as its evolution. Thus, in the historical context, the human resources (teachers, pupils) and the activity framework of “Ferdinand I” Military High School in Chişinău will be highlighted.*

*Keywords: “Ferdinand I” Military High School; Chişinău; greater Romania; Bessarabia; interwar period;*

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Military secondary education in Romania was organized in 1872. The School of Military Sons of Iasi, founded in 1872, is considered the first military institution of the kind, a “military high school”. The school syllabus included courses similar to the civilian ones, plus those with military specifics (Răpan, Buşe, 2009, p. 990). In the autumn of 1919, the number of military high schools in Romania increased from three, which were up to the world armed scourge, to five, through the establishment of two new school institutions, in Târgu-Mureş and Chişinău. The need to establish a military high school in the second city of Romania, by population, was inherent in the Romanian province unrecognized by the Bolsheviks (Ib., p. 991).

On 25 June 1919, 60 copies of “Conditions for admission to military and officer candidate schools” were transmitted to the prefectures of Bessarabia [Agency, F. 723, inv. 1, on the address of the prefectures of Bessarabia, f. 24 (I), p. 93]. Until 1925, the activity of military high schools was based on the directives coming from the Directorate of military high schools and the provisions of the regulations in force. In 1925, however, the Ministry of War of Romania developed the “Regulation of military high schools” for the six military high schools in Romania. In the '30s, Romanian military high schools, being boarding schools, were called to become “real national energy plants, pouring iron into the blood of the youth”, their desideratum being the training of “bronze characters and healthy bodies, while ensuring a solid intellectual training of the elements necessary for the officer schools” (Nădejde, 1935, pp. 235-237).

The triad after which the designation of military high schools was estimated was “God, Country and King” (Demetrescu, 1935, p. 664). Military high schools had the eight-year education stage, like regular high schools, but with administration and military education subordinated to the Ministry of Armed Forces (Popescu-Spineni, 1939, p. 472). “Atheneum”, which appeared in 1935, was the ideology and science magazine of military high schools in Romania, in which materials were published in Romanian and French.

The Military High School was created together with two other military high schools in Romania, by the High Decree no. 3613 of 21 August 1919, signed by King Ferdinand I. From the point of view of the education system, military high schools

were subordinated to the Military high schools Directorate, and from the administrative point of view – to the army corps within which they were located. In the case of the Military High School in Chişinău, it was subordinated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps. In the mid-'30s, the director of military high schools was General Dumitru Martian, and General S. Ion Demetrescu was a subdirector.

### INAUGURATION AND OFFICIAL VISITS

At the inauguration of the Military High School in Chişinău, on 16 November 1919, have participated Generals Lupescu and Ghinescu, Archbishop Nicodim, the minister of Bessarabia and the authorities of the city of Chişinău (Agency, F. 1862, inv. 3, f. 3, p. 105).



“King Ferdinand I” Military High School  
(National Library of Romania. Archival no. 19039)

Bessarabia, especially Chişinău, pietly honoured the memory of the Royal House by names of high schools, streets, hospitals, orphanages, sports fields. In this context, in 1920, the name of King Ferdinand I was given to Military High School (Grati, 2020, p. 112). The high school was visited by King Ferdinand I and Queen Maria in May 1920 as well as by French Generals Berthelot and Le Rond, Marshals Alexandru Averescu and Ion Antonescu.

The itinerary of the troops that paraded on the occasion of official visits in Chişinău included the Military High School. It happened, for example, on 1 November 1920, when the President of the Council of Ministers, General Alexandru Averescu, arrived in Chişinău by train. On that occasion, the carriage circulation was interrupted for the Alexandru cel Bun Street, between Pushkin and Post Street, only trams having the circulation right (Agency, F. 723, inv. 1, f. 43, p. 380).

### SITE

Initially, the building was located in a space that sheltered other institutions in the city, a space unsuitable for a school with military specific. In 1926, “King Ferdinand I” Military High School in Chişinău claimed the building of the Boys’ High School no. 2 “M. Eminescu”, located on the main artery of the city<sup>1</sup>. Based on the decision of the authorities, the Boys’ High School no. 2 was evacuated from its headquarters in favour of the Military High School. The Administration of the Boys’ High School submitted a protest memo to the President of the Council of Ministers, against that decision, mentioning that it was: “an undeserved blow to a cultural institution with a past worthy of all praise”. Next, it was revealed that the state contributed to the construction of the institution by only one third of its value, and the rest of the expenses were from the private funds of the Lyceum and from donations. The decision of the authorities remained in force (Creţu, 2020, pp. 143-144). The educational institution was located in a monumental building on the central boulevard Carol II, building erected for that purpose and which was destroyed in 1944.

In the building was a painting depicting King Ferdinand standing (later, the Soviets replaced him with the statue of Joseph V. Stalin). Upstairs, there was the bust of King Ferdinand and a watch, in the vicinity of which the students were serving their sentence in an unshakeable position (“right”) for an hour or two (Chişinău, 2018, p. 133). On the ground floor, the building had a bright mosaic. The site was equipped with lecture halls, a library, laboratories, bedrooms, a gym and a model sports field (more than 2,000 spectators could attend the events there). In the courtyard of the educational institution shady trees grew, and access to the school was achieved by an iron staircase.

<sup>1</sup> Currently, the building houses the Intelligence and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova.

The holy place of the high school was the Chapel of *St. Emperors*, located on Alexandru cel Bun Street, corner with Constantin Stamati. Parishes and theology professors were priests Gavriil Zlatov, licensed in theology, Grigore Zaharescu (Județul, 1922, p. 75). There, every Sunday, religious services were held, and the students prayed that they would take a good grade on the thesis, pass an exam, for not *repeating the class* (Gheorghiu, 1993, pp. 75-76).

The Barrack *“Moara Roșie/Red Mill”* was occupied by the bedroom of the Military High School. For this place was to be paid a rent in the amount of 7,091 lei (Agency, F. 1404, inv. 1, f. 1453, pp. 11, 17).

### COMMANDERS

High school commanders were Lieutenant Colonel M. Hristescu (1919-1924), Colonel Vasile Nădejde, PhD (1924-1935), author of a fundamental monograph – *“History of the Romanian Army”*, as well as of a project to reform the military secondary education system in Romania, Colonel Nicolae Ghica (1936-1939), Colonel Vasile Cialac (1939-1940). The last commander of the high school, before its dissolution, was Captain Valeriu Crintea.

### TEACHERS

In total, 119 teachers, including 19 Bessarabians, all with higher education, were active at the Lyceum. Teachers were carefully selected. Eminescologist Augustine Z.N. Pop (real name: Augustin Popescu) was a Romanian teacher. In 1933, as a substitute teacher of Romanian language was hired the writer George Dorul Dumitrescu, the author of some memories about Chișinău (Dumitrescu, 1936; Dumitrescu, 2022). The Latin teacher was Gheorghe Dogaru, who later became a professor. Music teachers Orest Tarasenco and Alexandru Pavlov, from Chișinău, were conducting an orchestra. Another music teacher was the composer Mihail Barca, former director of the Chișinău Conservatory and head of the composition and counterpoint department. In 1921, Elena Alistar, a former member of the Country Council, married Romanescu (from the Kingdom of Romania) (the name with which she would later protect her identity in communist Romania), was also a mathematician, teacher at *“Ferdinand I”* Military High School and *“B.P. Hașdeu”* Boys’ High School no. 1 from Chișinău (Vieru-Ișaeu, 2018, p. 18).

At the High School also worked Vasile Harea, PhD, former deputy of the Country Council. Ștefan Grosu taught natural sciences, Alexandru Vicol and Ioachim Obada – Latin. History professor Ion Ciulcu founded the History Society in Chișinău,

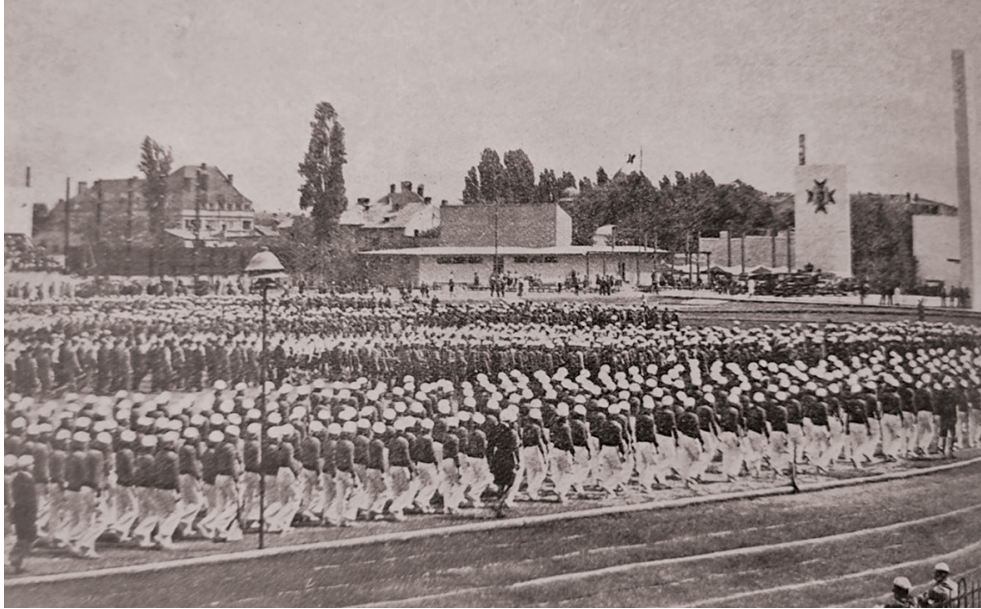
in 1936. Religion was taught by Professor Grigore Zaharescu, a graduate in 1915 of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Bucharest. In the religion class there was an icon. Gheorghe Rașcu, teacher of geography at *“King Ferdinand I”* Military High School, was active through cumulation at the Theological Seminary in Chișinău. Teachers of physical education were the writer Nicolae Dunăreanu and Platon Aparaschivei, the latter a graduate of the Higher Institute of Physical Education in Bucharest and of the University Pedagogical Seminary in Iași. In the Gym, the students were performing sports. Alongside the morning refreshment, physical education classes and various sports were practiced. At one and a half years of activity of the High School, it was already mentioned that the institution was *“a national energy outbreak where sports have reached the highest degree”* (Cronica, 1921, p. 34). Students presented *“a beautiful sports probation”* in front of King Ferdinand (Ib., p. 35). The example of the Military High School was followed by the entire Army. The high school football team was considered one of the strongest in Chișinău. The most common places to play football in the capital of Bessarabia were the Sports Field *“King Ferdinand I”*, the Hay Square (near the Central Penitentiary) and the sports field of the *“Ferdinand I”* Military High School.

### STUDENTS

In order to be admitted to the High School, a series of tests had to be passed. For class I – a written test in arithmetic and Romanian language; an oral examination in the subjects of the primary classes. For the other classes, a written test was held in mathematics, with applications to the physical-chemical sciences, Romanian language with a subject from Romanian literature, history, geography or natural sciences, in French or German; an oral examination of the matter of the preceding classes. Following the tests, the average grade was calculated, which, in class I, was gathered from the three notes obtained at two written and an oral test, divided by three. In the following classes, the average grade was calculated from the sum of the average of the written papers with the average of the oral exam, divided by two.

In the first school year, 1919-1920, 120 students were admitted, including 17 Bessarabians, three from Chișinău (Ion Fortocheanu, Paul Odobescu, Gheorghiu Patrichi). The high school consisted of three classes – two first class (50 students) and one fifth grade class. The fifth grade was completed with 20 pupils from Iași, 4 pupils from Craiova. Each student had his or her order from the first day of study, thus ensuring a focus on studies, physical training and behaviour in society. The lesson schedule included seven hours a day (8:00-13:00 and 15:00-17:00),

and the lesson preparation schedule, which was also held in the classroom, lasted four hours (17:00-20:00 and 07:00-08:00). Each class had an officer in charge of the pupils.



*Military high school students, 8 June 1937*  
(Encyclopaedia of Romania, 1938, vol. I, p. 714)

Because it was considered that in some Romanian provinces there was a preponderance of minority elements in secondary education in 1934, the Military High School Directorate ordered 40 percent of the seats to be reserved for pupils from Bessarabia at the Military High School in Chişinău, for those from Transylvania at the Military High School from Târgu Mureş and for those from Bucovina at the Military High School from Chernivtsi (Nădejde, p. 239).

The celebration of the Eparchial School for Girls in Chişinău, on 21 November, made the city authorities to issue a decision to suspend the classes. There was a general cleaning. Moreover, the auditorium, the festive hall and the holy place were adorned with white chrysanthemums and embroideries. For the students from the upper classes, in the evening, a majestic ball was organized, to which were invited students from the Theological Seminary and the Military High School (Vnorovschi, 1995, pp. 222-223).

## DISCIPLINES

Within the educational institution were taught: religion, Romanian language, French, German, Latin, Greek language, history, geography, mathematics, natural sciences, calligraphy, drawing, philosophy, moral education, chemistry, law, hygiene, vocal music, instrumental music, physical education, manual work, military instruction, psychology, political economy. The studies lasted for eight years. At the end of the studies, an exam was held that included the following tests: written – Romanian, French, mathematics; oral – Romanian, French, history, geography of Romania, philosophy and law, mathematics, physics-chemistry. Based on the baccalaureate diploma, the graduates continued their studies in military schools in Romania.

## DISCIPLINARY VIOLATIONS

Despite the results with major resonance in society, of the Spartan disciplinary regime, however, the high school was not without incidents related to human vices. Thus, to mention a few examples, the fifth-class student, Mărcuş Gheorghe, who was on leave in May 1929, consumed alcoholic beverages in the city, in a pub, and as a result, he began to hit with the chair, being beaten for these deeds by some troublemakers. He informed the high school administration that he was ill. Another student, Ilie Ionescu, was caught several times stealing money from his comrades. In April 1932, the student Damian Nicolae, a refugee from the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova, organized drunkenness inside the institution, all of whom were caught in flagrante by the administration of the Lyceum.

Extra-regulatory relationships (fights) and the use of alcoholic beverages in the school territory were not excluded either. Out of 60 cases of breaches of discipline, recorded by researcher Anatolie Leşcu, 19 were related to the use of spirits (31%), nine – leaving the Lyceum (15%), and, eight – theft (13%), seven – extra-regular relationships between students (12%), six – bad behaviour (10%), four – brutality towards officers, soldiers, teachers (7%), and so on, three – holiday and leave delays (5%), two – unmotivated absences from lessons (3%) and two – no return from leave (3%). The punitive forms applied to students were: the drop in wearing grades; the accommodation of the student at his own expense; the temporary seven-day removal from high school; arrest; disciplinary transfer to another high school; final removal from the institution (Leşcu, 2016, pp. 98-99).