

LESSONS LEARNED BY THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES AFTER THE 1916 MILITARY CAMPAIGN

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The military actions of the Romanian Armed Forces in 1916 gave rise to valuable lessons learned, some still applicable today. Of course, the proportions regarding the evolution of weapon systems, the diversification of military specialties, the emergence of hybrid actions, the accession to international alliances must be preserved. Nevertheless, the actions remained the same. On today's battlefield there is various equipment, technological and intelligent, that existed in rudimentary forms even 100 years ago. Although the equipment has evolved and diversified unimaginably, the goals and actions have essentially remained the same. A good example is the recent conflict in Ukraine, where, although we are talking about intelligent systems of detection, selection and hitting of targets, everything has been reduced to a ground confrontation, conquest of territories, employment of forces in the open field and localities, use of different techniques, tactics and actions like those of the First World War. Therefore, the analysis of past battles, such as the campaign of 1916, is not a pointless activity, but an exercise in analysis and thought, whereby old, not obsolete, tactics are superimposed on current conflicts.

Keywords: First World War; Romanian Armed Forces; military campaign; goals; lessons learned;

INTRODUCTION

The result of the military campaign in 1916 had disastrous effects to Romania: the territory and population, under occupation, were exploited to the maximum by the Central Powers, Dobrogea was conquered by Bulgaria, the Carpathian passes were controlled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a considerable amount of military equipment had been lost, the national infrastructure suffered major destruction, and the morale of the troops dropped considerably. However, our country resisted the offensive of the Central Powers, withdrawing to Moldova in order to restore and reorganize the armed forces, for the resumption of military actions. Among the reasons that prevented the total defeat of Romania can be listed the exhaustion of the enemy, the precarious condition of the roads, as well as the military aid of the Russian Empire to stabilize the front in Moldova. In the situation of the outbreak of the Russian revolution a year earlier, most likely the situation of our country would have been critical, the front in the Moldavian area becoming much weaker and more *accessible* to the enemy.

There were many opponents in relation to the moment chosen for our country's entry into the war, who cited some favourable situations for the Entente, when it was in advantage on the European fronts. Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu was accused of over-negotiating the terms of entry into the war, while the Central Powers were under pressure at Verdun, the Isonzo and in Galicia. However, the Romanian Government sought to put in place all the details for entering the war: well-equipped and prepared armed forces, support actions from the Allies, as well as guaranteeing the fulfilment of the national ideal of unifying the Romanian territories, in the subsequent peace negotiations.

An often-cited reason for the military failure in 1916 was the insufficient equipment of the Romanian troops. During the two years of neutrality, measures were taken to adequately equip the armed forces, especially in terms of providing them with armaments, ammunition and other equipment. It was possible both by allocating significant amounts of money and by improving domestic production. Therefore, if upon entering the war, the Romanian armed forces were considered insufficiently prepared, most likely, 1-2 years before, it would have been at an even lower level.

The term *lesson learned* is used in a broad sense to describe people, things and activities with the aim of learning from experiences and gaining advantages for the future. Using lessons learned helps individuals and/or the organization reduce the risk of facing the same problems and increases the chances for success (The NATO Lessons Learned Handbook, 2022, p. 9). The goal is to effectively learn from past experiences and provide validated justifications for performance improvement. Specifically, lessons learned are absorbed and practiced in the training process so that troops are properly prepared for the current, changing challenges of the battlefield [Joint Publication (AJP)-3(C)2019, p. 149]. In order to issue lessons learned, conclusions or teachings, answers to the following questions should be provided:

- *What was supposed to happen?*
- *What actually happened?*
- *What was well and why?*
- *What did not go well and why?*
- *What lessons and conclusions can be drawn?*

The papers that analyse the military campaign of the Romanian armed forces in 1916 are varied and influenced by the authors, especially those directly participating in the conflict. Among them are distinguished those who were on the battlefield and those who planned military operations within the General Staff Headquarters. Although they represent valuable sources, they are marked by a very high degree of subjectivity, given personal affinities. Memoirs are subjective works that present the facts through the author's perspective, based on personal experiences at the time. In addition, the military leaders, through their own writings, apologize, look for culprits or, on the contrary, amplify their own decisions and actions, depending on the result obtained. Many papers have inserted, in their content or in specially intended chapters, a series of important conclusions for the subject under analysis.

MILITARY OPERATIONS OF THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES FROM AUGUST TO DECEMBER 1916

Between 1914-1916, Romania remained neutral, carrying out negotiations with both the Entente and the Triple Alliance, for entering the war. On 4/15 August 1916, our country allied with the Triple Entente, political-military bloc, and undertook to start military actions until 17/28 August.

Following the analyses of the options for action, taking into account the aspirations of the Romanian people for the achievement of the unitary state, the General Staff adopted Hypothesis Z, which provided for an offensive operation

in Transylvania and a defensive one on the front with Bulgaria. The campaign plan, officially called the *Plan of Operation for a War against the Central Powers and Bulgaria. Romania allied with the Quadruple Entente* (Toma, Boaru, 2018, p. 74), also defined the political objective of the war: *“the achievement of our national ideal, i.e., the unification of the nation, by liberating the territories inhabited by Romanians, which today are embedded in the Austrian-Hungary monarchy”* (Ministry of National Defence, 1934, p. 97).

The strategic goal of the war was to defeat the enemy in Transylvania, and thus to control the Hungarian Plain, the Tisza and Danube Valleys. For the four armies, offensive actions were planned in Transylvania, Banat and Hungary (Northern Army, 1st and 2nd Armies) and defence in the south (3rd Army), followed by a Romanian-Russian offensive after 10 days (Cupşa, 1967, p. 34).

Some military leaders, including General Alexandru Averescu, Russian General Mihail Alekseev, head of the Russian General Headquarters and French General Joseph Joffre, commander of the French Army, considered the execution of the defence to the north and northwest, while most of the forces went on the offensive in the south, against Bulgaria (Stănescu, 2004, p. 18). That course of action would most likely have resulted in the following:

- a detailed planning, in cooperation with the Allies, for the execution of a concentric attack by the Franco-British troops from Thessaloniki – the Eastern Army, led by the French General Maurice Sarrail;
- the Bulgarian Army, with a combative capacity equal to the Romanian Army, would have been defeated in a short time, communications between Germany and the Ottoman Empire being interrupted, which would have meant the capitulation of the latter;
- Romania would have continued its supply through Thessaloniki, the long route that crossed the Russian Empire being shortened;
- The Central Powers would have executed the concentration in Transylvania, without the pressure of the Romanian troops, but they would have collided with a well-organized defence in the mountains;
- the Romanian front, with Russian help and the coming of winter, would have represented a difficult obstacle to overcome.

For that course of action, the purpose of the military campaign would no longer have been the reconquest of Romanian land, which constituted, moreover, the justification of the actions against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. All the steps initiated during the years of neutrality, by politicians, were to guarantee the inclusion of all Romanian territories, which also represented the motivation for entering the war.

The offensive action in Transylvania was based on several considerations, among which:

- motivating citizens to fight in a national war;
- establishing the political goal of the war – the liberation of the Romanian territories;
- the condition imposed by the Russians for the acceptance of our country's conditions to enter the war – the Romanian army on the left wing of the Russian armies in Transylvania (Kirițescu, 1989, p. 569).

The aim of the 1916 military campaign, carried out between August 15/27, 1916-28 December 1916/10 January 1917, was to liberate Transylvania as quickly as possible, before the Central Powers concentrated in the area. The final objectives for the Romanian Army were, in the west, the city of Budapest and in the south, the Balkan Mountains. Although the initial planning emphasized two offensives – one in Transylvania and one in Bulgaria, in cooperation with Russian troops, in reality one offensive and three defensive operations were executed, as follows:

- offensive in Transylvania;
- defence on the southern front;
- defence of passers-by in the Carpathian Mountains;
- defence of the territory of Muntenia.

The mobilization of the Army was ensured by 17 cover groups, made up of 119 battalions and 77 batteries, with an effective number of approximately 135,000 men, deployed in the pass area of the Carpathian Mountains, starting from September 1915 (Romanescu, Tudor, Cucu, Popescu, 1985, p. 77). The action of the cover groups represented a new tactic used by the Romanian Army. According to the existing rules, also adopted by other foreign armies, the cover troops executed the defence, on intermediate alignments, until a final alignment, which was maintained at all costs. The chosen solution, through the campaign plan, created surprise and allowed the main forces to cross the mountains without encountering strong resistance from the enemy (Cupșa, p. 44).

The offensive action in Transylvania was carried out by surprise and led to the advance in the depth of the enemy device:

- Northern Army: between 50-100 km in the first stage, 50 km in the second stage and 40 km in the last stage, releasing 12,000 km²;
- 2nd Army: 120 km on the right flank, 70 km in the centre, 90 km on the left flank, releasing 8,000 km²;
- 1st Army: approximately 80 km, with three groups of forces along the rivers Olt, Jiu and Cerna (Pavel, Ciobanu, 1993, p. 120).

The defeat following the battle of Turtucaia from August 20-24/ 2-6 September 1916 strongly affected the Romanian Armed Forces, but especially public opinion, which demanded urgent measures to rectify the situation. In the War Council on 2/15 September 1916, two contradictory concepts were stated. General Constantin Prezan demanded the continuation of the initial plan and the liberation of Transylvania, and then the concentration on the southern front. On the other hand, General Alexandru Averescu supported the offensive in the south, a variant that was accepted, being concretized in the Flămânda Manoeuvre.

The change in the conception of the operation, before the troops reached the alignment of the Mureș River, established for the first stage, had dire consequences for the entire front. Achieving this alignment would have shortened the front line, from 800 km to 250 km, which would have allowed the organization of a robust defence, able to withstand a strong enemy (Otu, 2006, pp. 6-20).

At the end of September 1916, the Romanian troops were withdrawn to the Carpathian Mountains, deployed on large fronts, with no possibility of mutual support. The enemy, superior in terms of military equipment and war experience, also benefited from the advantage of the developed communication routes in Transylvania. On the Dobrogea front, the Romanian 3rd Army was disbanded, and the Danube Defence Group was formed in its place (Ib., p. 117).

The stoppage of the German 9th Army in the Carpathian bend, foiled the enemy's plan to separate the Romanian troops and the territory of the country, as well as to conquer, in a short time, the capital. After numerous resistances by the Romanian troops, the enemy managed to break the defence, developing the offensive towards Bucharest, simultaneously with forcing the Danube to the south (Ib., p. 102).

The Romanian General Headquarters decided to neutralize the enemy groups heading towards Bucharest, forming the Prezan Army Group, which, on 17/30 November 1916, attacked the enemy, in the direction of Alexandria-Zimnicea. The attack was not successful because of the action of the German troops in the flank and rear of the Romanian troops, as well as the capture by the enemy of an operation order of General Prezan to the 1st Army (Ib., p. 103). After the unfortunate outcome of the battle for Bucharest, from Argeș-Neajlov, which ended on 20 November/3 December 1916, the Romanian Army began its retreat to the east, up to the alignment delimited by Șușiței, Putna and Siretului Valleys, where the front stabilized, starting from 28 December 1916/10 January 1917. In Moldova, the only unoccupied Romanian territory, withdrew the Royal Family, the Parliament, the Government, the political class and the central administrative institutions.

The halting of the advance of the Central Powers' troops, in the winter of 1916, led German general Erich Ludendorff, the head of the German General Headquarters, to state that: *"we beat the Romanian army but we could not destroy it. We achieved the results that were possible to achieve, but we also had to leave in Dobrogea and Wallachia forces that before Romania's entry into the war we used on the eastern and western fronts or even in Macedonia. Despite the victory obtained against the Romanian army, we were weaker in terms of the general development of the war"* (Muşat, Ardeleanu, 1983, p. 508).

The result of the 1916 campaign is highlighted by the future Marshal Ion Antonescu, then an officer in the Operations Bureau of the General Headquarters, as follows: *"in four months we had lost: morale and momentum, three quarters of the country; the capital, most of our national wealth – oil, cattle and grain stores – and 400,000 people – 100,000 prisoners, 150,000 dead and wounded left in enemy hands and 150,000 wounded evacuated to Moldavia – from the 650,000 who formed the operations armies"* (Antonescu, 1991, p. 24).

In the winter of 1916, the countries of the Balkans, affiliated to the Entente, whose action could create decisive effects on the Eastern Front, were unable to achieve them. Romania and Serbia were taken out of the fight, and Greece neutralized. In addition, the Central Powers benefited from two important resources for the continuation of the war, oil and wheat, both provided by the Romanian territory, because, as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Lloyd George, stated, in Romania were located *"the richest oil wells from Europe"* (Preda, Pâslaru, Georgescu, Stănescu, 1996, p. 260).

LESSONS LEARNED AFTER THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN OF 1916

After the military actions of our country in the Great War, the answers to the questions: *What went well and why?, What did not go well and why?, What needs to be done differently?*, will provide solutions for developing lessons learned.

Analysing the main causes of the defeat in 1916, as presented by different historians and military analysts, but also by those directly involved in the conflict, the following can be listed:

- the unfavourable moment chosen for entering the war;
- strategic and tactical errors (offensive actions on two fronts, stopping the offensive in Transylvania, inconsistency in the pursuit of goals, frequent reorganizations of structures, lack of coordination at the central level);
- inadequate preparation of the armed forces and the country for the war (poor provision of equipment, inadequate training, insufficient staffing

of units, low experience of commanders and troops, rivalries between high-ranking commanders);

- non-fulfilment, by the Allies, of some conditions established by the Military Convention (the inaction of the Salonika Army, the low involvement of the Russian Army, the lack of provision of armaments and ammunition).

The unfavourable moment chosen for entering the war.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Romania was caught in a *visé*: to the west in a possible war with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from which it wanted the annexation of Transylvania, and to the east in a possible conflict with Russia, for the annexation of Bessarabia. Neutrality was a temporary solution, for diplomatic and military preparations, in order to join one of the two military blocs – the Triple Entente/Entente or the Triple Alliance/Central Powers.

Starting from June 1916, with the launch of the Entente offensive on the Western Front, Romania became the target of pressure from the European powers, for its rapid involvement in the war. General Mihail Alekseev, the head of the Russian Army's General Staff, and General Joseph Joffre, the commander-in-chief of the French Armies, asked Romania to enter the war *"now or never"* (Pavel, Ciobanu, 1993, p. 107). This ultimatum is supported by a revelation by Constantin I. Diamandy, minister plenipotentiary at the Romanian embassy in Petrograd, from a secret document between France and Russia, which shows that, after the battles of the Somme and Verdun, the French armed forces *"no longer had breath"* and made a *"warm appeal"* to Russia to *"give in to Romania's demands"* (Preda et al., p. 170). As Constantin Kirişescu appreciated, Romania entered the war *"not at the favourable moment, freely chosen by us, but at the one imposed by the Allies, to ease the general situation on the European fronts"*. Perhaps even more relevant is the statement of the French General Joffre regarding the involvement of our country in the war: *"it is essential that Romania enters the war, what will happen later, we will see"* (Kirişescu, 1989, p. 565).

In Europe, the year 1916 was marked by four major events: the Allied offensive on the Somme, the Brusilov offensive, the Italian offensive and the Romanian offensive. French General Joseph Joffre believed that if those four actions had been coordinated, would have had significant effects on the Central Powers. Most likely, a joint action plan would have made Romania's entry into the war a valuable strategic moment. At the same time, the fears of Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu regarding Russia's opposition to Romania's demands and actions had the effect of delaying the signing of the Convention with the Entente. Now that we know exactly the reality of the facts and especially how Russia was carrying out its tasks, we can give

credit to the Prime Minister in his actions for ensuring the requirements for entry into the war.

Sir Winston Churchill stated that the most favourable moment, for Romania's entry into the war, was when the Brusilov offensive was advancing in Galicia and *"if the mobilization of the Romanian Army had occurred towards 10 June, a significant number of units could have entered the campaign before the end of the month (...). This event (...) might have decided the fate of the campaign"* (Preda et al., pp. 66-67). Basically, six weeks were lost, during which the Russian offensive decreased in intensity. Compared to the promised offensive of the Thessaloniki Army, for the support of the entry of the Romanian Armed Forces into the war, the Brusilov offensive would have represented a more credible condition, for the Entente to have tried to attract Romania to its side. Even under those conditions, Romania would probably have hesitated, because it had not yet received the requested war materials, in sufficient quantities, nor did it have definite assurances regarding the support of Russian troops in Dobrogea.

At the time of Romania's entry into the war, the Allies' offensives on the other fronts had stopped, and there were no longer the resources needed to carry out large-scale actions. The Germans had previously moved their troops from Verdun to stop the Allied offensives on the Somme and the Eastern Front. After Romania's entry into the war, the reorganization and merger of powerful troops of the Central Powers took place on the Transylvanian front, gradually forming the Archduke Carol Army Group, from the German 9th Army (General Erik von Falkenhayn, former head of the German General Headquarters) and the 1st Austro-Hungarian Army, as well as some structures within the 7th Austro-Hungarian Army.

Strategic and tactical errors

At the strategic level, the war was fought in two directions, without benefiting from conclusive support from the Allies. The Romanian armed forces had to fight on a front of 1,400 km, representing over 75% of the total length of the borders. The campaign plan of the Romanian Armed Forces was *"in accordance with the political-military goals proposed, it allowed the solution of some particularly complex strategic situations and was in agreement with the situation in which Romania and the Romanian Armed Forces were at that time, as well as with the provisions of the Treaty of Alliance of August 1916 concluded with the Entente countries"*. The division of forces for the offensive was judiciously planned, considering the fact that the enemy did not have important troops on the Carpathian border in August 1916 (Toma, Boaru, 2018, p. 78).

The lack of reserve in the first stage, created difficulties for covering some breaches, replacing some forces or strengthening some intensively attacked areas. On 1/14 October 1916, the reserves of the 2nd and Northern Armies were formed, and on 9/22 October 1916, after the Dobrogea front was pushed back, the French General Henry Mathias Berthelot insisted on the creation of reserves (Ib., p. 138).

There was not a very good coordination of the large units, by the General Headquarters. An example in this regard was the withdrawal of the Northern Army, although it had accomplished its mission. Most likely a variant attack on the flank and rear of the German 9th Army would have been preferable to retreat. The action of the 2nd Army was also not coordinated with the manoeuvres of the 1st Army, because the overall picture regarding the disposition of the troops was not known (Ib., p. 157). The General Headquarters planned the manoeuvre on the right flank with the Northern Army, while the 1st Army did not constitute a solid pivot and did not act decisively, for the occupation of the Mureş Valley, which would have led to the return of the devices of the German 9th Army and the Austro-Hungarian 1st Army. In the battle for Sibiu, decision and action were lacking, and the city was not occupied by Romanian troops (Pavel, Ciobanu, pp. 126-127). The front line, in the form of a circular arc, favoured the Romanian troops on the offensive, because the Austro-Hungarian units were advanced, with the tip in the Bârsei Plain. The necessary conditions existed, with the help of the relief of the area, for a double enveloping manoeuvre, executed with the Northern Army and the 1st Army, which would have caught the enemy in a pincer. In addition, the links between the commands, even after three months of war, functioned with difficulty, and the subordinates did not report to the higher commands the situation on the ground, with *"all the prescriptions of the regulations"* (Rosetti, 1997, p. 153).

On the southern front, instead of defending the bridgeheads in the Dobrogea area, General Gheorghe Dabija, participating in the Great War as commander of the 6th Infantry Regiment *"Mihai Viteazul"* and chief of staff of the 3rd Army, proposed *"the withdrawal of the 17th Division from Turtucaia and even the 9th Division from Silistra and the concentration of the three divisions and the Russian Group north of Silistra, which would have constituted a compact mass with the possibilities of manoeuvre and an undeniable increase in combat power"* (Moise, 2000, p. 273). A variant of action was proposed by the Russian General Mihail Alekseev, the redeployment of four divisions on the western front, for the creation of a manoeuvre group of eight divisions in the Bazargic-Silistra area and the continuation of the offensive in Transylvania, with the Army of the North and the Romanian 2nd Army, because the enemy had not finished mobilizing. This option had some weak points,

because a division was to defend a front of 15-20 km, in a plain area, with great shortages in artillery and automatic weapons (Protopopescu, 1970, p. 385).

In order to fulfil the major goals of the 1916 plan of operations, one of the most viable options would have been the withdrawal of the defence from Dobrogea along an alignment to the north, to protect the Cernavodă-Constanța road, the evacuation of the troops from Turtucaia and Silistra, at the same time with the execution of the offensive in Transylvania, up to the alignment of the Apuseni Mountains or Mureș-Târnava Mare (Ib.). Thus, the forces were concentrated on the main direction of action to the west, and in the southern area, a strong defence, on an alignment well prepared in time, would have supported the offensive operation and would have prohibited the penetration of the enemy to the north.

Regarding the offensive in Transylvania, the French Marshal Joseph Joffre considered that the results achieved should be preserved, the defence organized and, only then, the troops deployed to the southern border, which, together with the Russian ones, should attack the Bulgarians, in order to achieve the junction with the Army of the East. He stated that *“as a result of the fact that it had not been executed in time and with sufficient energy, the advance of the Romanian armed forces in Transylvania fell into the void and the decisive manoeuvre against the Austrian armed forces seemed lost”* (Preda et al., p. 238).

Stopping the offensive in Transylvania, a controversial decision, was taken after the failure at Turtucaia, under the pressure of the whole society. It later turned out to be a wrong decision that caused chain reactions, radically changing the course of action, which was proceeding according to the originally established plan. Basically, two successive offensives were planned, which were intended to be strong and decisive, for which the Romanian Armed Forces did not have the necessary resources and depended on two external factors: Russian support on the Dobrogea front and the action of the Thessaloniki Army (Cupșa, p. 181).

At the operational level, in defence, the combat units were formed as a single echelon, with a division-level reserve, being grouped on the main directions of denial, but separated by large intervals, due to the length of the front. Romanian troops executed manoeuvres and counterattacks, and when the defence benefited from natural obstacles, the enemy was successfully repulsed. Offensive countermeasures to restore the previous limit of the defence or to destroy the enemy penetrated inside the defence, attacking one or both of its flanks, were executed with the troops in reserve, regrouped or received as reinforcement. As part of the offensive countermeasures, envelopments and returns were executed, the offensive return being often adopted, in which all the forces of the large unit took part (Ib., p. 196).

At the tactical level, the 1916 campaign was dominated by the execution of defensive operations by the large units and units of the Romanian Armed Forces, although initially, the planning was based on the offensive.

An optimal defence device for a division, it had a front of 10-15 km. In reality, the combat actions of the divisions were executed on wide fronts, 20 km in defence, 10-15 km in offensive. Thus, the combat units did not ensure the concentration of troops on the main directions to be prohibited, a larger number of subunits being required to cover the entire area of operations, which led to the impossibility of creating strong reserves. The infantry division had in reserve one, at most two infantry battalions, out of the total of 20 battalions. The reserves were located in areas close to the defence limit, being made up of units with elderly people, equipped with old weapons (Ib., pp. 184-188). They were easily engaged by the enemy and brought into battle earlier, unable to be used in the decisive moments.

In the defensive, the advance limit was usually chosen on the military ridge of the mountain peaks, to ensure the conditions of observation and firing. The next line of defence was set up on the counter-slope, where the reserves were also disposed, being very difficult to hit by the enemy. The artillery occupied firing positions to the side, for flank firings (Ib., p. 193). In some situations, defence was also adopted at the foot of the mountains or at the exit of the mountain massif.

In offensive were several detachments, with a different structure, which executed independent missions. Within the large unit, the detachments were decentralized, being supported by the action of the reserve, consisting of 1-3 infantry battalions and an artillery battery. Each detachment had a vanguard, made up of a third of the total forces, as well as interspersed artillery (Ib., p. 190).

Inadequate preparation of the armed forces and the country for the war

The deficiencies in the field of equipping and training the troops could not be covered during the years of neutrality, related to the scale of the military actions carried out on the two fronts and the experience of the two years of war of the enemy (Prisăcaru, 2016, pp. 238-260).

The participation of the Romanian armed forces in the Second Balkan War in 1913 demonstrated the major shortcomings and raised an alarm signal to the Liberal Government installed at the beginning of 1914. Prime Minister Ion. I. C. Brătianu, who also ensured the portfolio of the Ministry of War, in cooperation with the General Staff, developed a series of plans, aimed at easing the shortages of goods and providing the Romanian Armed Forces with the appropriate equipment. Important sums of money had been allocated, both from the state budget and from external credits.

Romania's situation at the beginning of the war was not very good, in terms of industry and economy. Heavy and machine-producing industries were almost non-existent, and food industry was not developed. Therefore, defence industry did not offer the required products, most of the armaments and ammunition being imported from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In August 1916, the national defence industry produced "two projectiles for each cannon and one cartridge for each infantry weapon per day" (Cupşa, p. 22). If a machine gun had an average rate of fire of 500 shots/minute, it is easy to see the degree of ammo insurance.

The outbreak of the war determined the blocking of some orders and military equipment contracts, by the belligerent states, as a result of the Romanian Government's lack of decision regarding the choice of an alliance, as well of means to meet own needs. To cover some deficiencies, compromise solutions were adopted, by using new ammunition for old artillery pieces, transforming fortification artillery into field artillery and reprofiling some civilian factories (Paşcu, 1988, p. 123). The Romanian infantry had modern but insufficient weapons and the reserve units were equipped with old weapons. While a Romanian battalion had 1-2 automatic weapons, a German or Austrian battalion had 5-6 heavy machine guns and 9 light machine guns (Cupşa, p. 28).

Both the lack of a national defence industry and the decrease in the import of military equipment could be mitigated by a long-term plan of arms and ammunition purchases, so as to achieve the appropriate equipment for the units. The lack of such a plan led to the diversified acquisition of military equipment, as a last resort. It should also be taken into account that the signing of the defensive convention with the Central Powers in 1883 put our country at risk from the east, but also created a dependence on imports of military equipment.

Numerous units were created to meet the quantitative criteria, but without being properly equipped and trained. From 15 divisions in 1914, 23 divisions were mobilized, through the use of poorly staffed and prepared units, which decreased the combative capacity as a whole (Kirişescu, p. 578). The staff of the Romanian Armed Forces was insufficient, because not enough military officers were trained during peacetime. Thus, in a division with an actual strength of 27,000 soldiers, instead of 2,000 officers, were assigned 640 officers. In addition, many structures were made up of reservists, with poor military training (Cupşa, ib.).

When Romania entered the war, there was a lack of homogeneity of the units because "new units were created by diluting the existing ones; and on the other

hand, confusing the coverage of the mobilization and the concentration with the actual operations, the units were amalgamated" (Averescu, 1935, p. 18). An example in this regard was the disorganization at the command of the 1st Army, reported on 28 October/10 November 1916, as a result of forced changes of army, corps and division commanders (Rosetti, p. 146).

Terrain works for defence followed the provisions of the operations plans, which were permanently modified, depending on the evolution of international events. At the beginning of the 20th century, works were carried out on the fortified areas of Turtucaia, Silistra and Bazargic, three successive defence alignments were prepared in Dobrogea, resistance centres, firing ditches, shelters, command points, firing positions for artillery were built, wire nets, a dam of approximately 90 Hertz type mines was placed for the defence of Constanţa port and sapper dams were created in the main passes of the Carpathian Mountains (Croitoru, 2015, pp. 35-45).

However, the measures for the preparation of the territory were not sufficient to ensure a strong defence. As stated by General Traian Moşoiu, the commander of the 23rd Infantry Division, the Romanian Army stayed "for almost a month in the greatest passivity, waiting for the enemy to impose its actions on us". Strengthening the defence positions "with all the fighting means of a modern army" would have created major advantages and would have strengthened the defence of the Carpathians (Moşoiu, 1987, p. 97). Russian General Aleksei Alexeevici Brusilov, the commander of the Russian 8th Army, in a dialogue with General Ion Raşcu, the commander of the Group of 9th and 19th Divisions in Dobrogea, considered that the Romanian armed forces were defeated in 1916, because they had not prepared "in advance positions reinforced in all directions of attack, because of which we lost so much territory in such a short time" (Dumitrescu, 2008, p. 181).

Non-fulfilment, by the Allies, of some conditions established by the Military Convention

The mobilization and concentration of the Romanian Armed Forces were to be supported by the offensive actions of the Russian Empire in Bucovina and of the Army of the East against the Bulgarian troops. Russia undertook to send two infantry and one cavalry divisions to the Dobrogea front against the Bulgarian armed forces and to act with the Black Sea Fleet to prevent any attempt of the enemy to land on Romanian territory (Cupşa, p. 21). The Allies recognized the "organizational and command independence of the Romanian Armed Forces" and obliged themselves to deliver, against cost, munitions and war material, within the limit of 300 tons per day (Milea, 1987, pp. 149-151).

There have been some theories about the real intention of the Entente to draw our country into the war, to polarize some of the enemy's forces, in order to depressurize their own forces on other fronts, especially on the western front. Glenn E. Torrey claims in his work, regarding our country's participation in the war, that *"Romania's defeat was a predictable fact for those who knew the strategically vulnerable geographical position of the country, the poorly trained and poorly equipped army, the incompetence of the high command and the dubious promises of support made by its allies. There is no doubt that the British military attaché was thinking of these factors when he confessed, with a heavy conscience, to his French colleague shortly after they signed the military convention: <I feel like a hired assassin>"* (Torrey, 2014, p. 349).

Unfortunately, the commitments made by the Allies regarding Romania were not respected in their entirety, but in essential parts. The offensive of the Russian Army in Bucovina was not executed, nor that of the Thessaloniki Army, in support of the action of the Romanian Army. The Brusilov Offensive, executed on 22 May / 4 June 1916, had an initial success that led the Central Powers to deploy 26 German, 7 Austrian, and 2 Turkish divisions in Galicia and Bucovina. The troops brought in to support it stopped the Russian offensive, counterbalancing the balance of forces (Moise, 2000, p. 270). Therefore, a subsequent action in the same area could hardly be expected to have the same effect as the initial one, given the fact that the defences had been reinforced with additional troops.

Regarding the support of the Russian Empire, there were inconsistencies between the measures assumed by the Military Convention and those executed. Mainly, the Russian military leaders believed that Romania should defend itself on the Siret, therefore they delayed sending troops and cited the lack of adequate railway infrastructure to ensure the transport of units and supplies to Romanian territory. The Russian General Mihail Alekseev declared, in January 1916, that he could support Romania with an army consisting of 10 divisions and would launch an offensive in the northwest, to allow the action of the Romanian forces in Transylvania (Atanasiu, Iordache, Iosa, Oprea, Oprea, 1979, p. 121). On the other hand, the Russians did not support Romania, considering that it had time *"during a period of two years of neutrality, to organize itself from a military point of view"* (Preda et al., p. 376).

Russian troops were sometimes lacking in energetic action, arriving late in the action areas, not achieving a concentration of forces, acting in directions other than those indicated, or invoking various reasons for not participating in the battle.

Armament deliveries to Romania were obstructed by the Russian Empire, so that the Romanian Armed Forces would not become too strong. Russia's support was granted when its own territory was threatened, and the alliance with Romania had as its main objective the elimination of a regional adversary – the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Russian historians considered that a neutral Romania, which would guarantee the left flank of the Tsarist Army, would have been more beneficial than an allied Romania which would badly guard an extended front (Kirițescu, p. 575).

There were about 400,000 forces in Thessaloniki – French, British, Serbian, Italian and Russian ones. The numbers regarding the composition of the Army of the East, as this grouping was also called, have undergone numerous changes, depending on the cited sources – the report of a French official presents a number of 127,000 combatants, instead of 307,000 as presented by the French General Headquarters (Ib., p. 568). Romania's request was that this army launch the offensive, as far as possible, 15 days before its entry into the war. The French General Maurice-Paul-Emanuel Sarrail, the commander of the Army of Thessaloniki, also called the Army of the East, received orders from General Joseph Joffre, to carry out the attack, with all forces, on the Greek border and to pursue the enemy in the general direction of Sofia. The British Government, however, did not trust the actions of General Sarrail, due to some difficulties that did not guarantee success: the lack of the necessary forces to attack such an extended front, the difficult establishment of links between the component nations, the lack of heavy artillery and the weakening of the left flank through the presence of Serbian soldiers (Preda et al., p. 68).

The actions of the Army of the East, as originally planned, had some objectives: striking the Bulgarian forces in southern Macedonia to cover the mobilization and concentration of the Romanian Army, continuing the offensive and destroying the enemy from deep, simultaneously with the attack of the Romanian troops south of the Danube. Although it was planned 8 days before our country's entry into the war, General Sarrail offensive was not possible due to the attack of the Bulgarian Army on both flanks of the Thessaloniki front and the non-involvement of the British Army, which conditioned the action on Romania's declaration of war against Bulgaria. After Muntenia was conquered and the withdrawal to Moldova took place, the Thessaloniki Army offensive to support Romania ended, and General Sarrail was ordered to execute a defensive operation to defend the reconquered territory (Moise, p. 344).

CONCLUSIONS

The two years of neutrality, although they improved, quantitatively and qualitatively, the country's readiness for war, represented a period when the enemy strengthened and gained experience on the battlefield too. These attributes, along with the use of all categories of weaponry and the application of tactics practiced in battle, represented assets successfully used by the Central Powers on the Romanian front. The initial success of the Romanian troops, from August 1916, created the conditions for the continuation of the offensive, but the lack of organization and the shortages of armaments and ammunition, as well as the non-fulfilment by the Allies of the obligations assumed by the Military Convention, stopped the actions and gave Germany and Austria-Hungary the possibility to organize their troops.

Although approximately 3/4 of the country's territory was conquered, the Central Powers failed to achieve their initial goal – eliminating Romania from the war. The withdrawal to Moldova led to saving the existence of the Romanian state, but also to preserving the governing authorities that made decisions for an independent and sovereign state. Strategically, the Romanian Armed Forces saved themselves, managing to resist in the face of a superior enemy. Within the Alliance, Romania managed to polarize an important number of units and large units of the Central Powers, releasing the pressure from other areas of the European front.

Participation of the entire nation in the war effort

Until the execution of the actual military action, measures were in place to prepare and support the armed forces, the political class and the entire society. Mobilization involves the participation of both active and reserve personnel who have undergone various forms of military training and are fit to be combatants. The preparation of the territory and the economy for defence, as well as the transition from peace production to war production, involves the activity of an important part of society, which operates in certain fields – industry, agriculture, construction, transport etc. In the event of a conflict, the armed forces represent the spearhead, having the support of the entire society behind, for the joint effort to defend sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. It is also necessary to develop a national defence industry and stockpiles of essential raw materials.

Coordination between the politico-military objective of the war and the resources available

As we well known, the military implements political decisions, therefore there must be unity of effort and thought between the political and the military leadership.

The campaign plan was based on the political objective – the achievement of the unitary state, objective for which military actions were planned. Therefore, the right character of participation in the war was represented by the liberation of the territories inhabited by the Romanian population from Transylvania, this being also a moral element, motivating the population, which wanted the unification with the brothers over the mountains. The allocation of forces, following mobilization, should be appropriate and take into account the terrain conditions and the enemy's capabilities. The Romanian armed forces, instead, created numerous units, which could not be adequately equipped.

Achieving surprise

The essence of the initial action of the Romanian troops was not to achieve surprise, but rather to sustain it, until the time or place that allowed the conditions for a strong resistance against the enemy. The defeat at Turtucaia put an end to the momentum of the attack, before the troops occupied a strong alignment in the field – the Mureş River or the Apuseni Mountains. The resumption of the offensive in Transylvania, after the failure of the Flămânda Manoeuvre, offered the enemy the opportunity to gain time, to organize the forces. The defeat at Turtucaia should not have affected the offensive in the west, which was being carried out successfully. In addition, 3 armies separated by mountains operated in Transylvania, with limited possibilities for coordination, and the shortening of the front line would have provided the necessary conditions for a robust defence.

The superiority of a force lies in good organization, training and leadership

With painful consequences, the military campaign of 1916 brought to the Romanian armed forces a rich experience of war, materialized through adaptations of techniques, tactics and procedures of fighting and the use of the armament. If in August 1916, we were talking about the war experience of the enemy, in December we can discuss about a war experience of the Romanian troops. At the beginning of the war, the organization of the Romanian armed forces was similar to the European armed forces – army, corps and division echelons, and the infantry was used in a greater proportion, to the detriment of the artillery. The Army Group was used to carry out large-scale actions, but strong reserves were not established from the beginning to deal with unexpected situations.

Development of national defence industry

From the equipment point of view, the Romanian Armed Forces had numerous shortages, given the lack of domestic production, but also the failure of the Allies to supply military equipment in the agreed quantities. The development of the national defence industry is important for two reasons: ensuring the necessary equipment and independence from imports. The military campaign of 1916 highlighted, through the shortages recorded by the Romanian troops, the need for a good supply of aircraft, anti-aircraft artillery, communications and engineering equipment.

Behaviour in extreme situations

The task of finding guilty persons for the failure of the 1916 military campaign is difficult. There is no doubt that certain behaviours of some soldiers – lack of initiative, preparation, failure to follow orders, leaving the battlefield, desertion – are to be condemned and, in some moments, they decided the outcome of the battle. On the other hand, the actions of some commanders who executed frontal strikes, envelopments, infiltrations and actions by surprise with the aim of defeating the enemy must also be taken into account. Without these actions, a resistance of the Romanian troops would not have been possible until December 1916, nor would the numerous actions that led to the enemy's halt.

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