

**THE INFLUENCE OF WISHFUL THINKING IN DIPLOMACY,
INTERNAL CORRUPTION AND MILITARY UNPREPAREDNESS
UPON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS¹**

The years 1938-1940 correspond in Romania's history with the final part of the reign of Carol II (1930-1940), ended abruptly by the abdication of the monarch on 6 September 1940, due to popular discontents caused by territorial concessions that have disintegrated Greater Romania (Rom. "România Mare"): Bessarabia and the northern part of Bukovina ceded to the Soviet Union (28 June 1940), north-western Transylvania ceded to Hungary (August 30, 1940) and southern Dobruja taken by Bulgaria (September 6, 1940).

This book, signed by an officer (colonel), highlights the complex causes, both external and internal, of these territorial concessions made without a fight: the lack of practical military viability of interwar Romania's alliances under the pressure of totalitarian regimes (Communist and Nazism) – the alliance with France and Great Britain, the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente; inadequate propaganda for putting forward before the international public opinion the Romanians' historical rights over the ceded regions; poor training and equipment of the Romanian army, neglected by a deeply corrupt political class.

The scientific approach of the author is presented in five chapters with suggestive titles: *Political-diplomatic actions to avoid external isolation of the Romanian state in the 1936-1940 period*; *Coordinates of National Defence in the 1938-1940 period*; *Romania's military policy between 1938-1940*; *Intelligence and counterintelligence services of the Romanian army between 1938-1940*; *Decisions to release parts of the national territory without fighting – between military resistance solution and the argument of "survival of the Romanian state"*. The book is accompanied by substantial personal

¹ Dan Prisăcaru, *În avanpostul luptei pentru supraviețuire. Apărarea națională a României și frontul secret în vâltoarea anilor 1938-1940* [In the outpost of the fight for survival. The national defence of Romania and secret front in the turmoil of the years 1938-1940], Preface by Cătălin Turliuc, Bucharest, Military Publishing House, 2014, 452 p.

conclusions, annexes (photocopies of epoch documents, which supplements and enhances its scientific information) and an useful general Index which facilitates its usage.

Since introduction, perspicacious reader realizes that he has to do with a study in which military elements and analyses are predominant and the correct deciphering of these analyses explains almost entirely the essence of Romania's territorial concessions in 1940. So, the US military attaché in Bucharest, J. P. Ratay, estimated in late September 1939 that although Romanians had 800,000 armed men, the supply with fighting means and ammo was very poor. Also, the US military expert concluded that the German army could reach Bucharest in approximately 4 days, from the Polish-Romanian border, even if the Romanians had resisted (p. 29). General Tenescu, Chief of the Headquarters of the Romanian army, was accusing the members of the Crown Council, on June 27, 1940, that they have neglected alliances and the country's military defence, concluding afterwards: "I will conduct four fights about which Europe will speak and in five days the Russians will be at Turnu Severin... I refuse to lead the country to the disaster" (p. 32).

In the first chapter, the author presents the main international events that have led to political and diplomatic isolation of Romania between 1936-1940: the entering of the German troops into the Rhineland's demilitarized zone (March 7th 1936), the incorporation of Austria to Germany - i.e. *Anschluss* (March 12th 1938), the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia (September 29th 1938) and non-aggressive pact between Germany and the Soviet Union (August 23rd 1939). At the same time, this chapter presents Romania's main actions of preventing its diplomatic isolation and approaching to Germany and Italy, without giving up to France and Britain alliances. Subsequently, the author presents and analyzes the lack of strategic vision of Romanian leaders who relied too much on the alliance with France ended in 1926, regarded by France as "a simple means to maintain influence in south-eastern Europe" (p. 97) and did not take into consideration the new strategic realities that aroused in Europe after 1936. In the final part of the first chapter are presented serious deficiencies, both in quantity and quality, of interwar Romanian foreign propaganda, who did not know how to present efficiently its historical rights over Transylvania, Dobruja, Bukovina and Bessarabia to the international public opinion.

The second chapter firstly analyzes the interwar Romania's geopolitical position, with opening to Central and Eastern parts of the continent, as well

as to the Balkan Peninsula, with large resources (at that time) of oil, untapped by Romanian politicians on the international arena. Forwards, it is highlighted the idea that 3/4 of the extent of interwar Romania's borders were vulnerable: with Hungary in west, with Bulgaria in the south, with the USSR in the north and east and has not concluded agreements with its major military allies, France and Britain. The author further presents minutely the interwar Romania's war potential, with more data on demographic, economic and moral factors thereof. In this presentation, colonel Prisăcaru introduces into scientific circuit a lot of archival data and restores to public attention the excellent writings of interwar Romanian military theoreticians, today unjustly forgotten.

Forwards are presented the key data – most of them unpublished – about the “Line Carol II”, a permanent fortifications system built against Hungary in 1937-1940, on the western border of the country. Never used, these military works have consumed large financial and material resources and a part of military specialists considered even that they are poorly planned and executed, with scarce utility.

Subchapter regarding deficiencies related to the interwar Romanian army's weaponry and equipments is truly impressive, Romanian army having at that time almost the lowest percentage of the national budget assigned to defence in Europe (p. 169). Most amounts for the army were used to pay wages, too little money being put into service of equipping the army. At the beginning of the Second World War, the Romanian army was with great deficiencies of weaponry and ammo, due to the fact that France, England and Czechoslovakia did not entirely honoured Romanian state's requests and also because of insufficiencies of Romania's defence industry.

The chapter concludes with a review of disintegration of Romania's political-military alliances, without struggles, before the outbreak of World War II: the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania), the alliance with Poland, the Balkan Entente (Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey).

The third chapter examines the military policy of Romania in the period 1938-1940, from the legislative framework and military doctrine of “armed nation” to proper organization of the army: infantry, cavalry, artillery, tanks, aviation, marine, transmissions. It is also examined the division of national territory on “fronts” (East, West and South) and highlighted – mainly with archival sources – the main preventive concentration of troops and partial or general mobilization of the Romanian army made under the pressure of

international events during 1938-1940. During the presentation, the author points out several times that, until August 1939 preventive concentrations troops were on west and south borders, against Hungary and Bulgaria, excluding the USSR, the Romanian authorities considering before 1940 that a war against the USSR is unlikely.

The author outlines afterwards, competently and professionally, the main changes of the Romanian strategic device on all boarders in order to counter possible threats. The chapter also shows that the mobilization and troop concentrations have created various material problems to civilians (mainly ascribed to requisitions) and emphasized the inadequate preparation for battle of the Romanian troops. In addition, it is showed that Romanian military doctrine does not provide definitive evacuation of some national territories, which has created great difficulties for Romanian troops' retreat from Northern Bukovina, Bessarabia, Transylvania and southern Dobruja in 1940.

The final part of the chapter deserves all reader's attention, by stating the military and geostrategic negative consequences of territorial concessions made in 1940; because of that, Romania became weaker in demographic, economic and military terms compared to USSR, Hungary and Bulgaria.

The fourth chapter firstly presents the main intelligence and counterintelligence structures of the Internal Affairs and Defence Ministries which functioned during 1938-1940: General Directorate of the Police and State Security, Intelligence Service of the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie, the Gendarmes Legion CFR (i.e. related to Romanian Railways) in the frame of Internal Affairs Ministry and the Military Intelligence (Section II of the Headquarters) and Secret Romanian Army Intelligence Service (or the Special Intelligence Service), in the frame of the Defence Ministry. Later, it is produced a short but a very interesting history related to intelligence and counterintelligence structures of the Romanian army, from the second half of the 19th century until 1940. The subchapter dedicated to the organization and actions of the Secret (Special) military intelligence Service is carefully drafted and developed. The author managed to prove (although presents also some contrary opinions) that it was an efficient structure of intelligence of the Romanian state.

The final part of the chapter emphasizes limits and errors of the Secret Service (Special) Information - including those made by its legendary chief

Mihail Moruzov – in delivering of strategic information to political and military leadership of the Romanian state.

The fifth chapter firstly highlights the options of Romania in 1940: organize military resistance or accept territorial claims formulated by the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria. The conclusion, based on a good military analysis is that a successful military resistance of Romania against the combined efforts of the three countries was impossible.

The author demonstrates that this outcome was predictable because Romania could not count on the support of any foreign power in 1940 and, also, the political class of Greater Romania preferred to follow a policy of rapid personal enrichment in the detriment of training and equipping the army.

This chapter reveals that wishful thinking in diplomacy, internal corruption and lack of adequate training and equipments for the army explains why a country (Romania) lost in 1940 one third of the national territory without fight.

The reviewed paper has two strengths: introduces into scientific circuit many archival documents (from Pitești Romanian Military Archives, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Central Historical Archives in Bucharest); it provides an equidistant interpretation of historical events, strongly emphasizing the Romanians guilt in the catastrophic territorial concessions in 1940. This starkly contrasts with the traditional assessments of Romanian historians, who saw territorial concessions in 1940 solely owed to actions of Nazi and Communist imperialisms, combined with the policy of *appeasement* of the great Western democracies, completely exonerating the Romania's part of guilt: amateurish diplomacy influenced by *wishful thinking*; army's poor training and equipping due to the corruption of Romanian leading factors.

The book elaborated by Dan Prisăcaru lacks one thing to be complete: use of some representative works of national historiographies of the states involved in territorial concessions drama of Romania in the summer of 1940 (Hungary, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union/Russian Federation). We propose the author to take into consideration this suggestion for a possible second edition of the book, which would be meant to provide a broader interpretive framework of the analyzed period.

Overall, however, we have a work of solid history, seeking to provide (and succeeding largely) the truth in classical Rankean spirit – to write and to present “how things actually were” (in German: *wie es eigentlich gewesen*). On

the one hand, the truth makes us free people, and on the other hand it can contribute to improve significantly the field of international relations.

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