

THE OCCUPATION OF THE NORTHERN BUKOVINA BY THE USSR (JUNE, 28th –JULY, 3rd 1940). POLITICAL AND MILITARY OBSERVATIONS

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**Rezumat: Ocuparea nordului Bucovinei de către URSS (28 iunie – 3 iulie 1940).
Observații politico-militare**

Articolul trece în revistă și analizează contextul geopolitic și geostrategic internațional care a condus la ocuparea nordului Bucovinei de către URSS în 1940, fără nici un fel de rezistență militară din partea României.

În primul rând, este analizat contextul geopolitic internațional din luna iunie 1940, marcat de desființarea unor alianțe și dispariția sau capitularea unor state pe care se baza sistemul de securitate al României: autodesființarea Micii Înțelegeri (România, Cehoslovacia, Iugoslavia) și a Înțelegerii Balcanice (România, Iugoslavia, Grecia, Turcia) în 1938, dispariția Poloniei ca stat în septembrie 1939 și capitularea Franței la 22 iunie 1940.

În continuare, sunt prezentate acțiunile politico-diplomatice ale URSS de obținere a neutralității Germaniei în ceea ce privește dorința de a ocupa toată Bucovina inițial, sudul Bucovinei ulterior, derulate în intervalul 23 august 1939 – 26 iunie 1940.

Partea a treia a articolului, bazată aproape în întregime pe surse arhivistice, surprinde principalele acțiuni de pregătire militară a URSS în vederea invadării nordului Bucovinei, în cazul în care România nu ar fi cedat acest teritoriu de bunăvoie și ar fi încercat să opună rezistență militară.

În finalul articolului este analizată ipoteza, vehiculată practic până astăzi în istoriografia română, în conformitate cu care ar fi fost mai bine pentru România să opună rezistență militară la ultimatumul sovietic din 26 iunie 1940.

Abstract: The article reviews and analyzes the international geopolitical and geostrategic context, which led to the occupation of Bukovina by the USSR in 1940, without any military resistance from Romania. Firstly, it analyzed the international geopolitical context of June 1940, that was marked by the dissolution of alliances, and the disappearance or surrender of states on which the security system of Romania was based: the self-annulment of the Little Entente (Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia) and of the Balkan Entente (Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey) in 1938, the disappearance of Poland as a state in September 1939, and the fall of France on June 22nd, 1940. Following this, the article presented the political-diplomatic actions of USSR for obtaining the German neutrality, regarding the desire to occupy initially the whole Bukovina, then only the

Southern Bucovina from the 23rd of August 1939 to the 26th of June 1940. The third part of the article, based almost entirely on archival sources, captures the main actions of USSR military training to the invasion of Northern Bukovina if Romania would not have willingly ceded these territories and had tried to resist militarily. At the end, the article analyzes the hypothesis, practically circulated today in Romanian historiography, and according to which it would have been better for Romania to oppose an armed resistance to the Soviet ultimatum of June 26th, 1940.

Résumé: L'occupation du nord de la Bucovine par l'URSS (28 juin - 3 juillet 1940). Observations politico-militaires

L'article ci-joint passe en revue et analyse le contexte géopolitique et géostratégique international qui mena à l'occupation du nord de la Bucovine par l'URSS en 1940, sans aucune résistance militaire de la part de la Roumanie.

Premièrement, on y analysa le contexte géopolitique international du mois de juin 1940, marqué par la destruction des alliances et la disparition ou la capitulation des Etats sur lesquels se basa le système de sécurité de la Roumanie: l'auto annulation de la Petite Entente (Roumanie, Tchécoslovaquie, Yougoslavie) et de la l'Entente Balkanique (Roumanie, Yougoslavie, Grèce, Turquie) en 1938, la disparition de la Pologne comme Etat en septembre 1939 et la capitulation de la France le 22 juin 1940.

Ensuite, on y présenta les actions politico-diplomatiques de l'URSS afin d'obtenir la neutralité de l'Allemagne concernant le désir d'occuper initialement la Bucovine, ultérieurement le sud de la Bucovine, déroulées dans l'intervalle 23 août 1939 - 26 juin 1940.

La troisième partie de l'article, fondée presque entièrement sur des sources des archives, surprit les principales actions de formation militaire de l'URSS en vue d'envahir le nord de la Bucovine, le cas où la Roumanie n'aurait cédé ce territoire volontiers et aurait essayé à résister militairement.

A la fin de l'article, on analysa l'hypothèse véhiculée pratiquement jusqu'au aujourd'hui dans l'historiographie roumaine, conformément à laquelle il aurait été mieux que la Roumanie oppose de résistance militaire à l'ultimatum soviétique de 26 juin 1940.

Keywords: *Romania, Bukovina, USSR, Germany, diplomacy, geopolitics, geostrategy, military preparedness*

Introduction

Romania had fought in the World War I on the Triple Entente's side (England, France, Russia) and SUA's side, managing to annex the former Romanian Old Kingdom's three provinces - Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania. Thus, it was created a medium-sized state (295.641 km²) in south-eastern Europe, the so-called "Great Romania", as it was known in the European diplomatic circles since 1920.

The traditional ally of France and Great Britain, Romania had maintained in the interwar period a pacifist policy, being one of the most fervent supporter of the peace treaty of Versailles (1920), which guaranteed its territorial integrity. At the same time, Romania had respected, like no other, the Article 10 of the Pact of the League of Nations, adopted on April 28, 1919. This article especially provided respecting the territorial integrity of the Member States: „The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled¹.

The foresights of this article, which guaranteed the territorial integrity of the states, were completed with Articles 12, 13, 14 and 15, which mainly provided ways of settling the conflicts between states².

Romania, through the activity of its eminent lawyer and diplomat Nicolae Titulescu, had defended the principles of keeping the territorial integrity and maintaining peace between states, included in the Pact of the League of Nations, because three of its neighbors manifested strong revisionist tendencies, desiring change of the borders established in Peace Treaty of Versailles. Thus, neither the USSR recognized the union of Bessarabia with Romania in 1918, nor Hungary the union of Transylvania with Romania, nor Bulgaria the affiliation of the Durostor/Dorostolon and Caliacra/Kaliakra counties to the Romanian state.

The Great Romania's borders had collapsed without a fight in 1940, due to the combined actions of the borders revision policy established in 1920 by the Peace Treaty of Versailles, implemented after 1920 by Germany, Italy, USSR, Hungary and Bulgaria. The loss of northern Bukovina to the USSR, analyzed in this paper, represents a chapter of this drama.

International geopolitical context in June 1940

Romania had in the interwar period 4 pillars which supported its whole foreign policy of defending its borders: the Little Entente, the Balkan Entente, the alliance with Poland and the traditional alliance, after 1919, with France. Further on, we are going to briefly present to the reader how these four pillars collapsed one by one on June 1940.

In order to counterattack the revisionist policy of Hungary, for maintaining peace and their territorial integrity, Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia

¹ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art10. Accessed in 26.07.2016.

² *Ibid.*

created the Little Entente in 1920 and 1921³. This organization acted in solidarity on the international arena and came to be unofficially considered as the fifth power in Europe, due to the demographic, economic and military potential of the three states. Practically, the Little Entente had ceased to exist after the Agreements from Munich on September 29, 1938, followed by the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. By disappearance of the Little Entente, Romania had lost an important support on the international arena.

Practically, Romania had lost, in the same year, the second fulcrum on the international arena, which was the Balkan Entente, founded on February 9, 1934 at Athens, by Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. In the first chapter of building of this alliance, were specified:

„Yugoslavia, Greece, Romania and Turkey shall mutually guarantee the security of their Balkan borders”⁴. Aimed at maintaining peace in Balkans and stopping the revision tendencies of Bulgaria, this Entente also ceased to exist *de facto* in 1938. *De jure*, this Entente was operating since February 4, 1940, when the Permanent Council of the Balkan Entente had emitted a communiqué from Beograd, Yugoslavia. In this communiqué was stated that, starting with February 9, 1941, the organization will had prolonged its existence for another 7 years⁵. The outbreak of the World War I in south-eastern Europe had made this initiative being inoperative.

In order to defend its borders against revisionist tendencies of the USSR, Romania concluded on March 3, 1921 at Bucharest, a defensive Convention of Alliance with Poland renewed in the Romania’s capital on March 26, 1921. In addition, it was subsequently signed at Geneva, on February 15, 1932, a guarantee treaty between the two states⁶. The division of the Polish state between Germany and the USSR (1939) had made these agreements too as being inoperative.

France’s capitulation on June 22, 1940 represented a real shock to Romania, whose elites were predominantly Francophile since the 19th century. Moreover, France and Great Britain officially guaranteed Romanian’s borders on

³ The most representative book on this topic is that signed by Eliza Campus, Mica Întelegere [Little Entente], 2nd edition, Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997.

⁴ http://www.rastko.org.rs/istorija/diplomatija/pbs_e.html. Accessed in 26.07.2016.

⁵ Dan Vătăman, *România în relațiile internaționale 1939-1947* [Romania in international relations], 1, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, 2009, p. 82.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-80, with the official, authoritative, Romanian translation of those agreements.

April 13, 1939.

In a situation such this, the whole interwar Romania's foreign system of alliances collapsed and Romania's destiny lied at the discretion of the two powerful revisionist states, who then dominated Europe: Germany and the USSR.

Political-diplomatic actions of USSR for obtaining the German neutrality, in order to get Bukovina

August 23, 1939 represents a fundamental date for the Soviet revisionist policy, of redrawing the borders of south-eastern Europe, because then was concluded the famous Nazi-Soviet non-aggression Pact, known as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, accompanied by a secret protocol with four articles⁸. The 3rd Article of this famous secret protocol stipulated the following: "As regards South-Eastern Europe, the Soviet side emphasis its interest for Bessarabia. The German side declares total political disinterest for these regions"⁹.

Politically and military provided by this non-aggression Pact, the Soviet Union decided in 1940 that had to take Bessarabia from Romania, inclusive, if necessary, by force. In this context appeared a novelty: the Soviet Union also wanted to take Bukovina from Romania, the province which, unlike Bessarabia, had never been part of the Russian Empire until 1917. Only Germany's reluctance towards this "novelty" (Bukovina was not included in the secret adjacent protocol of the Pact in 1939) had made USSR claiming only northern Bukovina to Romania. We succinctly present further on, the diplomatic events that lead to the Soviet's ultimatum addressed to Romania in 1940, when the USSR urged Romania to give up Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

⁷ Alesandru Dușu, Constantin Olteanu, *Războiul de 2194 de zile. 1 septembrie 1939-2 septembrie 1945* [War of 2194 days. 1st of September 1939 – 2nd of September 1945], Bucharest, Tritonic Publishing House, 2011, p. 96.

⁸ On this agreement see especially Domas Krivickas, *The Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact of 1939: Legal and Political Consequences*, in „Lituanus. Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences”, volume 34, No. 2, Summer 1989, Vilnius, <http://www.lituanus.org/>. Accessed in 26.07.2017; Ion Șișcanu, Vitalie Văratice, *Pactul Molotov - Ribbentrop. Culegere de documente* [Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact. Collection of documents], Kishinev, Universitas Publishing House, 1991.

⁹ Vitalie Văratice, *Preliminarii la raptul Basarabiei și a Nordului Bucovinei, 1938 – 1940* [Preliminaries at kidnapping of Bessarabia and North of Bukovina, 1938 – 1940], Bucharest, Libra Press Publishing House, 2000, p. 231; Vătăman, Dan, *România în relațiile internaționale (1939-1947)* [Romania in international relations (1939-1947)], vol. 1, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, 2009, p. 59.

On August 23, 1939, Viaceslav M. Molotov, the Soviet foreign policy leader, had convoked the German ambassador to Moscow, Count Friedrich-Werner von Schulenburg, presenting him that the USSR wants to “solve” the Bessarabia’s problem. In addition, he mentioned that “the Soviet’s claim also extends over Bukovina, which has Ukrainian population”¹⁰. At the same time, the Soviet dignitary showed that the USSR expects that “Germany must not impede the Soviets, but to support them”¹¹.

The German ambassador in Moscow sent the USSR’s requirements to the German Government and, at the second meeting with Molotov, on the evening of June 25, 1940, explained the Germany’s position. Germany was basically agree with the Bessarabia’s annexation, promising “to advise the Romanian leadership to peacefully clarify the Bessarabia’s issue, in accordance to Russian wishes”¹².

Regarding Bukovina, the German diplomat revealed that the USSR’s annexation request represents a “novelty”, that this region was a province of the Austrian Crown and that here lived ethnic Germans, of whose fate the Germany is interested¹³.

Influenced – very likely – by the Germany’s reluctance on the annexation of Bukovina to USSR, I.V. Stalin decided to limit the Soviet’s claims only to just to the northern Bukovina, including the Chernivtsi (Rom. Cernăuți) city. As a consequence, Molotov summoned von Schulenburg again, in the afternoon of June 26, 1940, pointing out that decision. Germany agreed, pledging to convince Romania to cede, in order to avoid war¹⁴.

Diplomatic assured of Germany’s neutrality, the USSR presented in the evening of June 26, 1940 an ultimatum to the Romanian government, which specified the following:

„In 1918, Romania, using Russia’s military weakness, had taken from the Soviet Union a part of its territory – Bessarabia, thus violating the secular unity of Bessarabia (mainly populated by Ukrainians) with the Ukrainian Soviet Republic ... The Soviet Government considers that Bessarabia issue is organically connected with the transmission to the U.R.S.S. of that part of Bukovina whose population is linked, in majority, with the soviet Ukraine through common historical fate, language and national composition. Such an act would be more

¹⁰ *Apud* Aurică Simion, *Dictatul de la Viena* [Dictate from Vienna], 2nd edition, Bucharest, Albatros Publishing House, 1996, p. 160.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Ioan Scurtu (coordinator), *Istoria Românilor* [The History of the Romanians], vol. 8, Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 2003, p. 568.

just as the transmission of the northern Bukovina to U.R.S.S. could represent, insignificantly, a means of compensation of that great loss which was caused to U.R.S.S and Bukovina's population by the 22 years long domination of Romania in Bessarabia¹⁵.

Lacking Germany's support (King Charles II had consulted in this regard on June 27, 1940 Wilhelm Fabricius, the Germany's ambassador in Bucharest and Manfred von Killinger, the general director of the Special Intelligence Service of the Third Reich)¹⁶, Romania decided to cede Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to USSR on June 28, 1940.

Soviet military preparedness against Romania

The Soviet Union was not sure that Germany will support the annexation of Bukovina and Bessarabia nor that Romania will not try to military oppose to that claim. As a consequence, the Soviet Union started, in the first decade of the month of June 1940, extensive military preparedness for the occupation of Bessarabia and Romania, operation that was entrusted to the 9 and 12 armies from the South Front, led by the famous Georgy Zhukov¹⁷.

The Soviet military preparations directed against Romania, before the ultimatum from June 26 A.C., are recorded in some reports of General Direction of the Police Office, written in the period of 6th of May – 26th of June 1940, always addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chief of Headquarters and, from case to case, to the Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs. The typed reports, containing between 1-3 pages A4, whose military information will be presented below, are based on information obtained from the Regional Police Inspectorate of Chernivtsi (Rom. Cernăuți)¹⁸ We mention that these reports also contain economic and social information, history of mentalities etc., very important for the researchers who want to study the early period of

¹⁵ Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe [Foreign Ministry Archiv], Bucharest, fund 71, USSR, file 91/1940, pp. 186-188.

¹⁶ Dan Vătăman, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

¹⁷ Ion Șișcanu, Vitalie Văratic, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁸ Consiliul Național de Studiere a Arhivelor Securității. Direcția Cercetare, Expoziții, Publicații [National Council for Studying the Securitate's Archives. Research Department, Exhibitions, Publications], *Fond Documentar referitor la Starea de spirit a populației din Basarabia și Bucovina în condițiile anexării teritoriului dintre Prut și Nistru – mai-iulie 1940* [Documentary Found on the mood of the population of Bessarabia and Bukovina under conditions of annexation of territory between Prut and Dniester May-July 1940], file no. 4018, share D 011605, f. 10.

establishment of communism in Polish Galicia.

From these reports it turns out that, undoubtedly, both Poles and Ukrainians from Galicia were dissatisfied with the communist regime, and Ukrainian population had even reached, in the period May – June 1940, to regret the time when Galicia was ruled by Poland. At the same time, in the reports it is shown that the young Poles and Ukrainians had formed resistance movements in Galicia (it is not clear whether this was separately or together), starting to kill Soviet communists nearby the town Lutsk (Pol. Łuck)¹⁹. Especially the young Ukrainians had adopted an extreme attitude towards the Soviet authorities. So, in the report of May 28, 1940, were specified: “On April 13 A.C. there were many arrests among the Ukrainians and Poles nationalists, transporting them within Russia. During the transportation, the Ukrainians have protested, singing Ukrainian and Polish national songs and shouting that, 55 million of Ukrainians could not be destroyed, but rather they, the Ukrainians, will sooner destroy the Russians”²⁰. Reconsidering the history of the 20th century, it is no wonder that the former Galicia (now divided between Poland and Ukraine), it is still a nucleus of the Ukrainian nationalism.

The report of May 6, 1940 contains information related to military activities in the province of Galicia, Polish Province occupied by the USSR in 1939, which can be undoubtedly linked with the USSR’s intention of occupying Bukovina. So, it is proved that in Przemyśl (city in Poland; misspelled in the document as “Przemiszr”) there were massed many Soviet troops, especially infantry, a smaller number of soldiers of the Red Army being camped in villages nearby the city. At the same time, the report also states that at the Galicia’s border (Pol. Galicja, Ukr. Галичина, *Halyčyna*, region divided today by Poland and Ukraine) with Romania and Hungary there were also massed many Russian troops. In addition, the gauge of railways had widened on the distance Lwów (nowadays Lviv)-Tarnopol, today Ternopil (for making it compatible with the one in the USSR; the Russian Federation still uses the broad gauge railways), which could serve at bringing troops and military material within Russia in a very short time. Moreover, it is stated that the Soviet authorities had prohibited to any person of Galicia to travel within USSR (undoubtedly for keeping the military secret), while the persons from the Soviet Union were allowed to travel to Galicia. In addition, the Soviet authorities had taken other measures of keeping the military secret: Soviet soldiers who had occupied Galicia in the previous year had been sent to Finland and Siberia, being replaced by troops

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 68, 122, 123.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

sent from the USSR²¹. We believe that the Soviet authorities had moved the troops which already knew the Galicia (including the former Polish-Romanian border area) and they had been able to establish, in principle, connections with the local population – reason for the eventual military secrets linked to the mission and the reshuffle of troops could be endangered. The military secret could better be kept with troops who neither know the area nor the population.

In a report on May 28, 1940, it was announced that in the surroundings of Lutsk were stationed 10-12.000 Soviet troops, from various arms (infantry, artillery, tanks), and that in the Mlenov town, located 50 km from Lutsk, it was completed the building of a large airport. The same type of airport was being built on 400 hectares, 50 km from Luck, about 2,000 workers being employed in leveling the land²². Interesting are the information from this report based on the testimonies of a French traveler. He saw standing at the train station in Colomeea (Pol. Kołomyja, Eng. Kolomyia) a train loaded with anti-aircraft guns and tractors. Furthermore, he had remarked that when the USSR occupied Poland in 1939, the Soviet soldiers there were discussing a lot about the future occupation of Bessarabia; however, during the writing of this report (May 1940), they were no longer talking about this matter²³. We believe that, in this case too, the Soviet troops were instructed to keep the military secret before the onset of an operation, which is why they no longer spoke about the occupation of Bessarabia.

An extensive report (3 typed pages) on May 30, 1940 expressed that in the barracks from Lwów were many Soviet troops, including recruits brought from Turkestan, artillery and tanks (including flamethrowers tanks). Also, there were camped many troops in Śnyatin (today in Ukraine) and in the surroundings of this city, in Przemyśl, Drohobici (Eng. Drohobych, Ukr. Drogobytch), Sambor (Ukr. Sambir) and in Stryi (Pol. Stryj). At the Galicia and Hungary border, the entire population had been evacuated, and the residents had been replaced with soldiers²⁴.

A series of passenger entered in Romania through the border point Orășeni had informed the Romanian authorities that they had seen many tanks and motorized troops camped (in Galicia, our note)²⁵. In the report it is also stated that the Soviet workers had been enlarged the railways' gauge in Galicia, from the old border of the USSR to Przemyśl (via Lwów) and, at the same time, that month it has been working on its broadening between Lwów and

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Stanisławów (today Ivano-Frankivsk, in Ukraine)²⁶.

In the report also appears extremely interesting information, according to which **the Soviet soldiers were showing that the Soviet Union would occupy Bessarabia when Romania would enter the war against Hungary**²⁷.

In a report on June 18, 1940 was showed that the Soviet authorities were building an edifice about 100 m length in the point located in front of the Vășcăuți town on Cheremosh (today Vașkivți town, Chernivtsi region, Ukraine). The building in question, supposedly being a future barrack or a hangar for aircrafts, was built near the “Shauer” alcohol factory from “the upper neighborhood” of Vășcăuți town on Cheremosh, works being observed through the binoculars of the city police chief. At the same time, it was specified that the locals of the border hamlet Serafineț were entirely been evacuated by the Soviet authorities, who were building a similar construction, but at a smaller scale, in the Polish locality Załucze²⁸.

The subsequent report narrates about frequent violation of the Romanian air space from Bukovina by Soviet aircrafts, without any kind of response from Romanian aviation. The report on June 22, 1940 shows that the day before, at 7.30 P.M., an unidentified plane passed over the Zastvna city, then headed for the frontier point Orășeni (both located in the Chernivtsi region, Ukraine).

At 8.30 P.M., another Soviet aircraft went into the Romanian air space, coming from the east of Zaleszczyki (today Zalesciki, Ternopil region, Ukraine), then flew over Romanian villages Crisciatic, Zvineache, Prelipce and Ștefănești (today in the Chernivtsi region, Ukraine). After that, it had returned to Galicia, re-entered Galicia, landing after 8 minutes nearby Horodenka city²⁹.

In a report on June 25, 1940 it was specified the fact that in the same day, at 7 A.M., 11 Soviet aircrafts arrived from Zaleszczyki (misspelled ‘Zalestiki’) and flown over the Romanian villages Prelipce, Ștefănești and Babin (today in Ukraine), then headed towards Orășeni. At 9.40 A.M., some of these aircrafts headed to Zaleszczyki, the authors of the report suggesting that at 7 km away from this village would be an aviation base, hidden in the forest. On the same day, two groups of aircrafts (5 and 3 appliances) entered on the Orășeni village’s territory, flying from Snyatin, and a group of 3 aircrafts had flown over the Zastvana city at 12.30 A.M.. also, in the Bukovina’s airline space entered a group of aircrafts that advanced over the Jucica Nouă village. The Soviet aviation “demonstration” (of warning?! intimidation?!) held on June 25, 1940 on the

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Bukovina air territory ended around 2.40 P.M., when a group of Soviet aircrafts flew over the station of Orășeni, then headed to Dubăuți village (today in the Chernivtsi region, Ukraine) and finally re-entered the Galicia's air territory.

The report's authors believed that on this province's territory military exercises were directed, because bangs were heard, but the weapons which produced them could not be identified³⁰.

June 26, 1940 was an unusual day in terms of frequency of the Chernivtsi Police Inspectorate's reports to the General Direction of the Police, being prepared and sent no less than 3 reports.

In the first of these reports, it was mentioned:

"The almost daily incursions of the Soviet aircrafts on the Romanian territory to a depth of 30 kilometers, caused to population great uneasiness, even panic. The most frightened are the Romanian and German population. The Germans addressed to their Consulate where they obtained reassuring answers, but without being able to explain the Soviet's actions purpose³¹.

The second report stated that on June 26, 1940 4 planes entered the airspace of Bukovina: an unidentified one flew over the Zastvana city, two Soviet planes flew over the Ștefănești and Crisciatic regions (nowadays in Ukraine), and a gray three-engine Soviet plane came from Kutu (Galicia) and flew over the Vijnîța city and over the Bahna-Storojineț village³².

The third report on June 26, 1940 offered, with a delay of 10-14 days, some disturbing information about movements of troops and military equipment from Galicia. So, on June 11, in the railway station of Snyatin, had arrived many wagons with cement and ferrous material for building border fortifications. In June 13, all these materials had been sent back to the USSR. Our conclusion: the Soviet authorities knew that the USSR's borders will expand by occupying Bukovina, which is why there was no point in wasting labor and materials for building fortifications in Galicia, which was going to transform from an border area to an inside area of the USSR.

On June 13, 1940, Soviet officials and officers of Sniatyn, with their families had been forced by the authorities to return to the USSR. In retreat, they were forced to sell their furniture at ridiculously low prices³³. Again, we believe that work the same principle of the military secret: USSR was not sure that Romania will not choose the path of military resistance. Therefore, was no need for officials and troops who perhaps established friendships relations with local people or

³⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 138 and 139.

³¹ *Ibid.*, f. 143.

³² *Ibid.*, f. 144.

³³ *Ibid.*, f. 145.

foreigners passing through this region. All these could jeopardize military secret. On 13 to 14 June Soviet authorities banned civilians from the district traffic roads in Sniatyn since those days were brought artillery, tanks and machine guns and infantry transport, which had been placed in villages near the city³⁴.

Finally, in the days of June 14 to 15 Soviet soldiers were quartered in the villages around the town Sniatyn, which caused panic among the civilian population. The Soviet authorities tried to reassure the population, showing that the soldiers in question had to take part in military maneuvers, but citizens believed that “these troops were brought into other purpose”³⁵.

Also, the report stated that on June 16, had been seen in the railway station in Stanisławów three trains with 50 wagons, one with infantrymen, the second with artillery and the third with parts of airplanes, packed. Travelers, who had reported this situation to Romanian authorities, believed that these trains would move towards the Hungarian border³⁶. We believe that rumor reported by passengers was another typical disinformation launched by the Soviets in order to keep the military secret. We mention that the distance from Stanisławów to border with Bukovina (Romania) was much smaller than the distance between this town and the border with Hungary.

Despite of all Soviet provocation, fortunately, in 1940 Romania did not enter in the war against USSR. One year later, Romania starts to fight USSR in alliance with Germany. This war, „an useless epic”, according to the authorized opinion of Mihail E. Ionescu³⁷ (a historian and a Romanian general!), was disastrous both for the Romanian army and society.

Instead of conclusions: defense or unconditioned surrender?

In Romanian historiography presently persists the opinion, stated by prominent historian George Buzatu³⁸ that it would have been better for Romania to military resist to the Soviet ultimatum on June 26, 1940, thus preserving its

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 146

³⁷ Mihail E. Ionescu, *Campania din Est (1941-1944): O epopee inutilă* [Campaign from East (1941-1944): an useless epic], in Idem, *Romania orientală 160 de ani (1848-2009)* [Eastern Romania 160 years (1848-2009)], Bucharest, Military Publishing House, 2009, pp. 130-175, with explanations.

³⁸ In this respect, the most important book on this topic is Gheorghe Buzatu, *Din istoria secretă a celui de-al doilea război mondial* [From the secret history of the WW2], vol. 2, Bucharest, 1995, especially pp. 247-248.

military honor and fighting to the end of the war alongside its traditional allies, France and England.

We believe that this opinion cannot be, neither politically nor military, supported.

In terms of foreign policy, Romania did not have in 1940 any allies, who could help her diplomatically, situation which was presented at the beginning of this paper.

In terms of internal policy, the country's population (like today) no longer had confidence in the political class, which was absolutely objectively accused of corruption and dishonesty. The history has shown that a population that no longer trusts its own political class will hesitate to unconditionally sacrifice its life and goods in a war.

From the military point of view, Romania did not have any real chance to resistance to the USSR, since its forces were by far inferior in quality and quantity due to the lack of serious concern of the Romania's political leadership towards providing the Romanian army with equipment and armament.

Colonel Dan Prisăcaru highlighted all these shortcomings, in a very well documented book, based on the Romanian military archives. Thus, he proved the following:

“With an army in which the existing ammunition for infantry weapons and artillery, calculated in units of fire, did not ensure, at some important categories, even the consumption for ten days of fights, without motorized troops, antitank artillery and anti-aircraft artillery, with an quantitatively and qualitatively less than mediocre aviation, with no possibilities of production and repair for destroyed/damaged weapons or combat equipment, the resistance could be hold, but the final result, at least in the East was clearly unfavorable to Romanian troops ... Now came the term of 20 years of huge discrepancies between the King's, Presidents of the Council of Ministers, parliamentarians etc speeches, who promised during election campaign that they would support the army and its equipping, but in the subsequent inaction, when being on control, they invoked the lack of funding and other priorities”³⁹.

The author quotes the opinion of General Florea Țenescu, the chief of the Romanian Army's Headquarters, who recommended the acceptance of the Soviet ultimatum at the Crown Council on June 27, 1940:

³⁹ Dan Prisăcaru, *În avanpostul luptei pentru supraviețuire: apărarea națională a României și frontul secret în vâltoarea anilor 1938-1940* [In the outpost for survival: the national defense in Romania and secret front in the turmoil of the years 1938/1940], Bucharest, Military Publishing House, 2014, p. 359. Undoubtedly, the most documented book on this topic.

“1. The army will do its duty, but the disproportion of forces is overwhelming, in favor of the Soviets; 2. Our army could resist for a while, retreating on the Siret (a river in Moldavia, i.e. the eastern part of Romania, our note), only if it could count on a subsequent major support of a great allied army, set in motion by the creation of a political front that would create a military front’; 3. Without this support, I believe that we should accept the ultimatum, in order to not being force to yield more tomorrow than we are asked today”⁴⁰.

In circumstances such these, we believe that Romania could not but to accept the Soviet ultimatum in June 1940 in expectation of better times for the future, than to destroy the army and the country in a completely unequal battle. We consider that the deadlock Romania was put in June 1940 is overwhelmingly due to its own political leadership’s greed, corruption and incompetence.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 358.