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# Political, diplomatic and military aspects of Romania's participation in the first world war

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**Abstract:** Although linked to the Austro-Hungarian Empire by a secret alliance treaty in 1883, Romania chose to declare itself neutral at the outbreak of hostilities in July 1914, relying on the interpretation of the "casus foederis" clauses. The army was in 1914 -1915 completely unprepared for such a war, public opinion, although pro-Entente in most of it, was not ready for this kind of war, and Ion I. C. Bratianu was convinced that he had to obtain a written assurance from the Russian Empire in view of his father's unpleasant experience from 1877-1878.

This article analyze the political and military decisions after Romania entry in Great War.

Although linked to the Austro-Hungarian Empire by a secret alliance treaty in 1883, Romania chose to declare itself neutral at the outbreak of hostilities in July 1914, relying on the interpretation of the "casus foederis" clauses.

In the south, Romania has three major strategic interests in this region:

- defense of the long Danubian border and the land border between the Danube and the Black Sea;
- the keep open of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, through which 90% of the Romanian trade were made;
- avoiding the isolation or political encirclement of Romania by keeping open the Thessaloniki-Nis-Danube communication, preventing its blocking as a result of local conflicts or taking over under strict control by one of the great powers in the region[1].

In the north and west: "Romanians fate over the mountains, the national ideal of Romanianism, are issues that no Romanian government can despise. [2] "

In the East, Romania's main interests were:

- preservation and defense of the Romanian ethnic and cultural identity in Bessarabia;
- preventing and discouraging a Russian invasion in Romania and avoiding the loss of new Romanian territories in favor of the Russian Empire.

## The period of neutrality

Immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, both camps urged Romania to enter the war on its side. Thus, Germany, through Emperor Wilhelm II and Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, asked King Carol I to implement the alliance treaty and to make his duty of ally.

In his turn, Entente advanced to Romania through Russian's plenipotentiary minister, Stanislas Poklewski-Koziel, a proposal to take action on his side, in exchange for the recognition of the rights to the territories inhabited by the Romanians in the Habsburg Empire.

The Crown Council decided that Romania should take all steps to keep all its frontiers safe, which mean to keep its army in alert[3].

On October 1, 1914, a Russian-Romanian secret agreement - the Sazonov-Diamandy Convention was signed in St. Petersburg. By doing so, Russia guaranteed the territorial integrity of Romania and recognized its rights over the Austro-Hungarian provinces inhabited by Romanians, and Romania would take them when it considered it appropriate[4]. Regarding Bucovina, the principle of nationalities was to serve as a basis for the delimitation of the territories between the two states[5].

In his turn, on 29 June 1915, the Austro-Hungarian Minister in Bucharest, Count Ottokar Czernin, presented his government's offer, which provided for the recognition of Romania's rights over Bessarabia, the full restitution of Bucovina, and a series of concessions on the regime of the Romanian population in Transylvania. For two years - between 1914 and 1916 - Bratianu negotiated with the Powers of the Entente, with Russia, in order to get the most of his claim. Negotiations have come under great pressure. The press in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and Moscow was fighting for the fate of Romania if it did not opt once, and diplomats of the Entente and Central Powers were making daily diligence to the Prime Minister and important cabinet members.

Ion G. Duca noted, "if the negotiations did not go faster, it was due to the fact that we had the interest to delay them. Bratianu insisted on his conditions, the Allies refused to consent, and things were in place[6]." By detailing the moment of neutrality, we can say that its followers were right when it was decided. Entry too early in the war does not guarantee a favorable result, with the risk of exhaustion before the end. Neither the arguments that one or the other in the moments of the war would have guaranteed the end of the conflagration earlier do not stand. The army was completely unprepared for such a war in 1914 -1915, the public opinion, although pro-Entente in its majority, was not ready for the war, and Ion IC Bratianu was convinced that he had to obtain a written assurance from the Russian Empire in view of his father's unpleasant experience from 1877-1878.

Neither the length of the front was in line with the number and strength of the army. The Romanian army was thrown into battle on a 1,200-kilometer-long front, much longer than the Western front (770 km). To that added about 1,000 km in the south front. Let us not forget that only France has 3,840,000 troops in front of Germany in the summer of 1916. It was impossible for an operational army of no more than 650,000 to cope with an experienced adversary with two years of fighting. Even if all the masculine population could be recruited, the Romanian generals would not have enough resources to ensure effective defense. If the enemy concentrated on experienced forces, endowed with enough heavy armament, the fate of a scattered army was sealed. The Romanian forces were able to provide only a troop curtain, and if troop concentrations were made in some sectors, others were still completely uncovered [7].

### **Army Training Level**

The training and endowment of the army was one of the areas that had incurred the most significant budget cuts during this period. Although some palliative efforts were attempted in the years 1912-1913, structural dysfunctions could not be remedied during the southern Danube campaign of 1913.

Amalgamation of permanent and non-permanent units, insufficient weapons, munitions and equipment, poor organization of services, including health care, modest training of a part of the officers' body, etc. are just a few of the features of military action in the south of the Danube in 1913[8].

On January 1, 1914, the army was in the greatest absence of everything it was necessary to enter the campaign[9]. "Also, the mobilizable resources did not reach 500 000 people, the reserves were not organized, and there were large deficits in arms, munitions and equipment.

There were no equipment, ammunition, weapons, heavy artillery, back services, drugs. "The Great General Staff elaborated four military reform plans with the overall aim of increasing its combat capability: 1)" Arms Completion, Transformation and Repair Plan, ammunition and war material "; 2) "The plan for completing the equipment of all categories and for the determination of the subsistence of humans and animals at all the battle echelons and studying the establishment of large centers for the

supply of nutrition and equipment"; 3) "Sanitary Plan of the Army"; 4) "Plan of staff required by the army of operations and its services"[10]

The budget of the Ministry of War increased from 73,000,000 lei in 1913 to 115,000,000 lei (18% of the state budget) in 1916. At the same time, until the autumn of 1916, the amount of credits for the army reached 700,000,000 lei, and until Romania's entry into war to 838,841,215 lei[11].

According to the mobilization plan, Romania could mobilize five army units (15 divisions, including ten assets and five reserve units), two cavalry divisions and five brigades; in total, a force of 301 battalions (with 260 machine guns); 99 squadrons (22 machine guns) and 227 batteries (of which two heavy shell and nine siege), with a total of 630,000 people, of whom 488,000 formed the army of operations[12].

The lack of qualified personnel and means for domestic war production and the restriction of external supply sources, the two coalitions being reluctant when it comes to honoring the orders of the Romanian state, was a characteristic of the situation in the summer of 1916. Also, the variety of weapon calibration types had a negative impact on troop training, not allowing for uniformity in instruction, and brought difficulties to the supply of ammunition during World War I.

There were two great limitations: an inferiority of technical endowment - as a result of the difficulties in providing weapons and ammunition as a result of the outbreak of the war - and a lack of training and instruction on new methods, tactics, and combat procedures used on the fronts of war.

Prior to World War I, the infantry armament of the Romanian Army endowed: 474,036 rifles, 39,231 carbines, 413 machine guns and 61,189 pistols and revolvers, of a great variety of types and sizes, which would negatively influence both the quality of troop training and the supply with ammunition during the war.

Of these, 142906 were Henry-Martini, Md. 1879, cal. 11.43 mm, so old weapons were below those of the enemy[13].

At the beginning of the war, the field artillery was endowed with German Krupp steel canons, model 1880, 75 mm and 87 mm guns (slow-blowing canons). Starting 1905 the fast pulling canon, 1904 Krupp. A 190 mm caliber, with ammunition using smoke-free powder, was fitted. In addition to the canons, the field artillery was also equipped with a large caliber "Krupp" model 1901, caliber 120 and model 112 caliber 105 and "Schneider Creusot" model 1912 caliber 150 (imported from France). The artillery was equipped with bronze canons Armstrong, model 1883, caliber 63 mm. Prior to the war, a small number of French Cannons, 1912, caliber 75, came from the import. The city artillery was equipped with German Krupp cannons and French Hotchkiss at the Saint Chamond plants (France) and Gruson (Germany) [14]. The aeronautics had two sections in 1913, the first of which had five Bristol Coanda machines at the Cotroceni Pilot Military School, and the second nine Bristol-Coanda aircraft, Bleriot, Farman, Vlaicu. Until the outbreak of the war, the number of planes reached 29[15].

Bulgaria had a more modern artillery than Romania, although it also had older material. Most of them came from Germany such as the Krupp 10 cm Kanone 04 field gun, the Rheinmetall 77mm Model 1916 Tunnel[16], the Krupp 105mm Model 1914, the Krupp 150 mm heavy cannon 1913 Model 1913[17].

Austro-Hungary also had powerful artillery with cannons such as Skoda 75 mm Model 15, 15 cm, Schwere Feldhaubitze M 14, Skoda 30.5 cm Mörser M.11[18]. And the aviation material owned by the Austro-Hungarian army was composed of modern airplanes such as Fokker Eindecker fighters, Aviatik (Berg) D.I, Albatross D.III[19].

Germany had the world's most powerful land army in 1916 and the artillery had many cannons performed like 10.5 cm Feldhaubitze 98/09, 15 cm Schwere Feldhaubitze 1902, 21 cm Mörser 16[20]. Also, German aviation was probably the strongest in the world at that time.

### **Moment of action**

The quasi-governmental mistrust of the Romanian political and military leaders in Russia prompted Prime Minister Ionel Bratianu to postpone Romania's accession to the powers of the Entente until Russia agreed to acknowledge Romania's claims in writing. Two precious months have been lost in this way, so that

Romania entered the war when the Brusilov Offensive and the Battle of the Somme had practically ceased.

The signing of the treaty was a great diplomatic victory for Romania, because *it succeeded in concluding through an international act bearing the agreement of the greatest powers in Europe, the secular rights of the Romanian people over all the lands inhabited by the Romanians in the Habsburg Monarchy*[21]. The moment of intervention occurred when the adverse group had clearly military superiority; the failure of the 1916 campaign is explained both by internal failures and mistakes, and by the way the Allies (and especially Russia) understood, to honor their commitments in August 1916[22]. In military terms, the moment of Romania's entry into the war was unfavorable, as the Brusilov offensive had ended, the Germans had renounced the Verdun front offensive and had succeeded in rejecting the Franco-British offensive of the Somme and therefore had the strength to create a new Army, the 9th Army, commanded by Eric von Falkenhayn, the former Chief of the German General Staff.

The military action of Romania occupied only one sector in the great Eastern front and had to be supported on the two flanks by the effective collaboration of the allies as envisaged (in precise terms) in the military convention signed on August 4/17, 1916. Essentially, in the south the offensive from Thessaloniki would have been triggered, and the defense of our border between the Danube and the Black Sea would be done by the Russian troops; to the north, a condition had been Russian offensive in Bukovina and Galicia. The Romanian army advanced but was not supported in either of the two flanks. The Army of the East, consisting of the French, English, Serbian, and Italian divisions, was incapable of acting offensive. Following the misunderstandings between the two Western Commands (the English refused to send the reinforcements promised to Sarrail's help), the Thessaloniki army did not set off the offensive 10 days before the start of the Romanian offensive, but only activated on September 10, making slow progress, when the German-Bulgarian-Turkish troops were already heavily engaged in the offensive in Dobrogea. Romania's intervention facilitated the occupation of the Monastery in October instead of the Thessaloniki offensive to support it. The Army of the East, consisting of the French, English, Serbian, and Italian divisions, was incapable of acting offensive.

There is another reason why the moment of Romania's entry into war is considered at least inappropriate by some specialists. It is about the crisis in Russia that was profoundly clear. As early as December 1915, in the letter sent to Kaiser Wilhelm II, Eric von Falkenhayn highlighted this by proposing to change the eastern war effort, as it had been in the West in 1915, which led to the Battle of Verdun. An indication of this crisis was the change of Sergei Sazonov from Foreign Affairs Minister, the new minister being Stürmer. He saw in this [event] a great diplomatic success. It was, on the contrary, a very great mistake made by the Russian General Staff. We were not able to help the Romanian troops and make them escape from the confrontation. Two years of terrible struggle had touched our army without ammunition, already insufficient since the beginning of the war: now they were almost entirely exhausted[23]. Boris Stürmer, was an adept of the deal with Germany. In fact, from the summer of 1916, discrete bargaining between the two empires began to conclude a separate peace. Serghei Sazonov's thesis is that Romania was forced by Russia to enter the war, as the pro German party in Russia needed an unfavorable military event to justify separate peace with Germany. Romania's predictable defeat could be very plausible. In his memoirs he wrote: "Pressed by our allies, influenced by the public opinion, who was nervous, the head of the Russian General Staff, General Alekseev, was forced to demand at the end of August the advance of Romania [of the Romanian army - nn] in Austria [Austro-Hungary -nn] under the sanction that, in case of refusal, to deprive it of the advantages granted

While Joffre felt that the troops of Dobrogea should be strengthened, Alexeev was late to send out the promised forces in this area, and the tsar asked Joffre to urge Sarrail to do a more energetic action. Instead of 200,000 soldiers, the Russians sent here about a quarter, and this was too late. Russia did not want a direct front with Bulgaria and, in the new situation, did not want to give too much weight to this front so that in the future the Russian-Bulgarian relations will not have much to suffer. The Russian troops began to penetrate only after the enemy had entered Bucharest and started to approach Moldova. The Eastern Carpathians, Moldova and the Lower Siret line of the Danube were, according to the Russian General

Staff the objective to be defended. In fact, the Tsarist Command did not intend to help the Romanian army before, saying that "Romania defends on the Siret," as General Alexeev Chief of General Staff, said. To the north, Brusilov's offensive ceased in the first half of September, which favored the Central Powers. The English and French warfare came through northern Russia with great delay; some of this material had been directed to other fronts, and some pieces of war were broken during transit.

As early as the summer of 1916, in the wake of the military situation of the Entente, the human losses in the war and the inward difficulties, some Russian circles were heading towards a peace with Germany. On October 16, 1916, Paléologue noted that the rumor was circulated in Petrograd, after which Prime Minister Stiirmer had demonstrated to the Tsar the necessity of ending the war and conclude the separate peace. Tsarina, Rasputin, Stiirmer, Protopopov (Minister of the Interior) and a few others constituted a suspect group from this point of view, both to Paléologue and to the Minister of England in Russia, Sir George Buchanan noticed this. On the order of the Tsar, an official note was published, which categorically denied "rumors spread by certain newspapers about the possibility of a separate peace between Russia and Germany"[2]. Unfortunately, our representative in Russia, Diamandy did not inform Bratianu Government about the unstable internal situation of the Russian Empire.

Responding to King Ferdinand's request for closer cooperation with the Russian army. Nicholas II wrote on October 2, 1916, and assured him that he would do all what it depends on him to support the Romanian army. But, the Tsar continues, "my General Staff appreciates that the situation in Transylvania is not so worrying. The contest my troops are called upon to give to your army can not, however, be felt as fast as I want it to be," as their journey takes time[25].

Romania seems to have accepted from the start that it will fight on two fronts, just like Germany and Austro-Hungary (until Italy declared itself belligerent and there were three fronts), but having a huge front to defend the Danube at the entry into the country to the Black Sea) and the Carpathian arch. The army was not equipped with modern weapons, and ammunition was not enough, and Western allies were sending us arms and ammunition through Russia. It is estimated that the Romanian Army had only 430 senior officers in the summer of 1916, including generals with advanced training (out of a total of 20,000 officers), thus few public officers, and not all were distributed in operative units, totally insufficient for the number of orders made for mobilization. Also, the Upper School of War interrupted its courses between 1914 and 1919, and reserve officers were often not adequately trained[26].

There are studies showing that if Romania joined the allied war effort earlier that year, before the offensive of Brusilov, it was quite possible that the Russians managed to win a big victory[27]. The arguments presented above show us why we entered the war in August 1916, and the way in which war would have ended in such a situation is difficult to anticipate.

The 1916 Campaign Plan, "Hypothesis Z" defined the major political objective of the war as "the realization of our national ideal, that is to say, the completion of the nation by the liberation of the territories inhabited by the Romanians, which are today embedded in the Hungarian Austrian monarchy[28].

The plan provides for the deployment of military operations by the Romanian Army on two fronts as follows: a strategic offensive in Transylvania, on the north and northwest front and a strategic defensive on the south front.

On the Transylvanian front the offensive military actions were to take place in three stages and were scheduled to last 30 days from the beginning of the mobilization, at which time the Romanian forces had to reach the Ciucea-Caransebes alignment in order to engage a general battle with the enemy. The general direction of the offensive was Tisa and Budapest[29].

According to the plan, four armies were set up at the moment of mobilization: Army 1, Army 2, Army 3 and North Army, by transforming the existing army bodies.

The committed forces were the following: 576,408 troops in combat units, of which 420,324 on the Transylvanian front (Army 1,2 and North), 145,430 soldiers on the southern front (Army 3) and 51,165 military (Corps 5 Army and heavy artillery) reserve at the disposal of the General HQ. To them were added 257,193 soldiers in the sedentary part.

One element that strongly impelled the implementation of this plan was that the formation of the four army headquarters was made after the mobilization was triggered and not before it, as it would have been normal. Therefore, the newly created Commands were unable to manage this difficult operation by taking command of the subordinate forces and controlling operations in progress simultaneously with their own constitution. From a military point of view, the 1916 Campaign included four strategic military operations, each of them included a number of major battles:

- Offensive operation in Transylvania;
- Defense on the southern front (including the operative-strategic level operation at Flămânda);
- Defense of Carpathian Mountain Passers;
- Operation of Muntenia (including operative-strategic level of defense of Bucharest) [30].

The General Force Report was a good one for an offensive operation of 10.3 per cent against the Central Powers. In front of the over 420,000 Romanian soldiers, organized in 235 battalions, there were about 40,000 enemy soldiers, organized in 50 battalions. The ratio of firewood was also favorable to the Romanian side, being 8.6 to 1[31]. The operations were suspended temporarily on September 10, 1916, following the decision to execute the operation at Flămânda. Following its failure and the arrival of four German divisions on Transylvania, on September 26, 1916, the decision to stop the offensive and the transition to the strategic defense on the Carpathian Mountains was made.

The reality has shown that stopping the offensive was a strategic error that has fueled the fate of the campaign. General Erich Ludendorff admitted in his memoirs that a rapid advance of the Romanians within Transylvania would have led not only to the encirclement of the Central Powers grouping "but the road would have become free to go to the heart of Hungary and against communications with the Balkan Peninsula [ ...] We would have been defeated. [32]."

In turn, American General Vincento Esposito considered that the Romanian military leaders committed a series of strategic mistakes in the application of the principles of the armed struggle:

From a military point of view, the Romanian strategy could not have been worse. By choosing Transylvania as a priority objective, the Romanian army ignored the Bulgarian army behind it. When the offensive in the mountains failed, the Romanian high command did not take into account the principle of the economy of forces by creating a mobile reserve, with which they could reject Falkenhayn's advancement. The Romanians did not respect the principle of concentration of the forces, and in no way did a proper concentration of forces lead to the proper concentration of the fighting power[33].

We consider that the thesis of offensive operation in the south is not justified because we would not be able to get a ratio of forces, more than 3-3.5 / 1 in our favor. In Transylvania we had 10/1 and the offensive was a failure. On the other hand, the land in the Balkans is as rugged as the one in Transylvania, and the Bulgarian population was much more hostile than in Transylvania where we had Romanians. The general force ratio in Balkans was a good one for a defensive operation of 1.2 to 1 against the Central Powers (the optimal ratio between defense and offensive is considered 1 to 3). In front of the over 140,000 Romanian troops, organized in 104 battalions, there were 120,000 enemy soldiers, organized in 86 battalions. The ratio of fire holes was also favorable to the Romanian side, being 1.7 to 1.

The Battle of Turtucaia took place between September 1-6, 1916. "The reinforcement of Turtucaia was strategically an obvious and unacceptable mistake"

Turtucaia had two disastrous consequences: one moral and another material. The moral: We had just started so well, and Romanians had passed without difficulty the Carpathians, we saw ourselves moving to the heart of Transylvania, and suddenly we were beaten in south by the Bulgarians, and threatened with their invasion in Dobrogea. The defeat was so resounding that it not only canceled all the untold successes from the north, but from the outset it throws a sort of wave of discreditation over our entire entry into action. The shortcomings had to be felt quickly in the army, in the civilian population and outside[34].

The stop of Romanian operation in Transylvania gave general Erich von Falkenhayn enough time to organize his counteroffensive in this area. With the help of Austria-Hungary army and the newly created Army of the Danube under the command of general August von Mackensen, Falkenhayn led the 9<sup>th</sup> German Army in an brilliant campaign against Romanian Army which is considered a masterpiece of a military Art by some historians[35].

On November 11, the German forces triggered the attack, succeeding after five days of struggle to conquer the Jiu gorge and get out into the plain area of Oltenia, which led to the collapse of the defensive system of the Romanian Army. This was due, in addition to the superiority of the German forces, to a planning error of the Romanian General Headquarters which, after the success of the October 28th battle, considered that the enemy would no longer attack at this point, leaving for the defense of the Jiu defile totally insufficient forces. "With the formidable mass of four infantry divisions, Falkenhayn managed to break the line of the Romanian front in a place where the guard was held by the troops of a poor brigade[36]." In his turn, the chief of staff of the French Military Mission, Colonel Victor Petin showed that "The shot was tough and unexpected. The Romanian Command did not think that only ten days after a resounding failure Germans would re-try the same maneuver. The strategic surprise was complete[37].

As a result, after a failed attempt to defeat the capital, on December 6, 1916, German troops entered Bucharest and occupied it. The Romanian government, as well as the units of the Romanian army, were forced to withdraw in Moldova. Although the Battle for Bucharest was lost, it was only a tactical defeat because the Central Powers did not reach the strategic goal of removing Romania from the war

The victorious campaign has greatly strengthened the morale of the German troops and their generals: Falkenhayn and Mackensen. In most cases, the victories had been obtained by the German divisions with a Bulgarian aid to the south. The Germans proved to be superior in all chapters: supply, equipment, combat training, and leadership capability. Among the young officers of the elite troops of the Alpen Korps, there is also the future Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.

The resistance in July-August 1917, which ensured the maintenance of the Romanian state, was placed on the backdrop of negotiations between diplomatic circles of the great powers, with more or less secret proposals for leaving the war through various territorial compromises, including that on behalf of Romania. The "Russian defeat" and the conclusion of peace between the Soviet Russia and the Central Powers led to the total isolation of Romania, which had to negotiate with the signing of the Peace Treaty with the Central Powers on 24 April / 7 May 1918. The French military mission was forced to leave Romania; the diplomatic representatives of France and England remained in Iasi, a proof of maintaining links with these states[38].

The fighting continued in 1917, with Moldova remaining unoccupied due to the 4th Army's defense triangle strategy (with minor losses after the above-mentioned withdrawal), which remained unwavering in defending the Eastern Carpathians, protecting the Iasi against repeated German attacks. In May 1917, the Romanian army attacked with the Russian allies to support the Kerensky Offensive. After they managed to break the Austro-Hungarian front in Marasti, the advance of the Russian-Romanian troops had to be stopped due to the disastrous failure of the Kerenski Offensive. Mackensen's forces counterattacked, but were defeated at Marasesti[39]. The victories in the summer of 1917 demonstrated that when the army is well-equipped, well-trained and well-run, it can win even against the most redoubtable opponent.

On November 13/26, 1917, Soviet Russia proposed to the Central Powers a ceasefire, which was signed shortly in Brest-Litovsk on 22 November / 5 December 1917. General Scerbacev, who did not recognize the power at Petrograd, surprised by the situation created in its army in Moldova, communicated to the Romanian government that it had to conclude the armistice; in this regard, he had asked Mackensen (on December 3) to begin the talks. It was impossible for the Romanian army, acting on the same great front with the Russian troops, to continue the fight, while they, for the most part, refused to act. The "Russian defeat," the ceasefire, and then the peace in Brest-Litovsk, led to the complete isolation of Romania, because the only link with the Western allies had been accomplished, as far as possible, through the territory of Russia. France's Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau relied on resistance by Romania in collaboration with the Ukrainian Rada and the Russian anti-Bolshevik generals, as part of a plan drafted by Berthelot.

Between the Romanian government, the allied missions and the governments they represented, the matter has been the subject of very tense talks. The Russian armistice intervened, which put Romanians and Allies in front of a situation with no other exit[40]. Take Ionescu claimed that the central authorities would withdraw in southern Russia and the Romanian army would continue to fight against the Central



Powers. He supported the proposal of the Chief of the French Mission, led by General Berthelot. Resuming the Mission's proposal, on December 23, 1917, Clemenceau and Lord Milner signed a convention in Paris where France was committed to organizing Romania's resistance in southern Russia. "The only bases of discussion - the Berthelot note on January 5, 1918 - must be to maintain the front." Contrary to reality, he appreciated that the resistance of the Romanian army "can, without difficulty, retain the territory that is still there, because the Germans will not be able to take it." The French government tried to maintain the Romanian front at any cost in order to weaken the German offensive on the western front[41].

We appreciate that the thesis of withdrawal in southern Ukraine and the continuing resistance in southern Ukraine is unattainable in terms of the revisionist ambitions of the Kiev governments, the rupture of relations with the Bolshevik government and the collaboration with the Central Powers of the government of the hetman Simion Petliura. On January 27 / February 9, the Central Powers concluded the Peace Treaty with the Ukrainian Council; amongst other things, their troops went to the occupation of the Ukrainian territory, primarily with the preoccupation to obtain the agriculture-food products they needed so much. Following the break-up of the Brest-Litovsk talks, the German-Austrian troops penetrated deeply in Soviet territory. On February 18 / March 3, 1918, the Soviet government ended peace with the Central Powers: Soviet Russia ceded Finland, Poland, the Baltic countries and recognized Ukraine's "independence" but with the presence of German and Austro-Hungarian armies on its territory. This allowed the Central to control the back of the Romanian front. Romania was surrounded without the possibility of receiving any outside help and withdrawing in case of defeat[42].

The Marghiloman government had to accept the peace treaty, which was in fact a dictate, on 24 April / 7 May 1918. C. Kirițescu will write a few years later: "It was the continuation and regulation of the military occupation regime of the country, with its despotic and humiliating oppression, with the squeeze of the last resource of the soil and of the Romanian labor, supplemented and aggravated and with the mutilation of its territory [...]. While Romania was disarmed, and by the abduction of the mountains and Dobrogea was thrown away without any defense at the enemy's discretion, Germany retained in our country the entire military apparatus of occupation and squeeze, maintaining until the ratification of peace the treaty of war. After the ratification of the treaty, the state of war became the state of occupation, by maintaining six divisions, as well as the "necessary economic formations", and this without any time for withdrawal, but as long as the occupier thinks necessary "!

The Romanian army - for the most part - had to be demobilized and disarmed. Austro-Hungary received approximately the entire chain of the Carpathian Mountains (a territory of 5 600 km<sup>2</sup>), with significant soil and underground riches and of great strategic importance. Bulgaria received Cadrilater and a strip from southern Constanta County; the rest of Dobrogea was passing in the condominium of the four states, leaving Romania a way to Constanța. All the riches of the country, primarily oil, grains, forests, came under the control of the Central Powers, Germany in particular, for a virtually limitless period. Romania also had to pay important amounts of money to Germany and Austria-Hungary, to give up any damages due to the damages caused on their territory by them, etc[43].

During Mackensen-Marghiloman talks, the first brought the issue of Dobrogea and Bukovina and Transylvania (to be favorable for Romania), provided that Romania would ratify the peace treaty and not intervene again in the war. An eventual Romanian intervention from Moldova, coordinated with the French offensive on the Danube, would have caught the army of occupation between two fronts. The army of d'Espérey constituted the Danube Army, whose command was entrusted to General Berthelot, called from the Champagne front[44].

On September 16, Clemenceau and Pichon had a meeting with Victor Antonescu, who, on their empowerment, went to Iași via Thessaloniki to set up the Romanian Army's entry into action. The mission is fulfilled with delay, due to the difficulties of passing over the enemy lines. After talks with d'Espérey and Berthelot, on November 3, Victor Antonescu arrived in Iași, where he immediately got in touch with Saint-Aulaire. The Romanian army had to unite with that headed by Berthelot, constituting the right wing of the front run by d'Espérey.

The next day, the King handed to Saint-Aulaire two letters, one for Poincaré, another for Clemenceau, which made known the preoccupation of resuming the weapons with the Allies. In this context, on November 6, 1918, Lansing wrote to Take Ionescu in Paris: "The Government of the United States deeply sympathizes with you and will not be neglected - as soon as the time comes - to use its influence as the right political and territorial rights of the Romanian people to be obtained and insured against any foreign aggression[45]. " A few days later, Pichon, on behalf of the French government, assured Take Ionescu that "when the victories of the Allied armies announce the appropriate triumph of the justice principles that will secure the release and recognition of Romania, those who do not despair never and those who are ever more and more coming to join us to fight with us [...] will prepare with us, in a faithful collaboration, a future from which our two countries will come out more closely united and by common attempts[46]. Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Minister, also assured that Romania would enjoy the peace support of his government in the direction of unification, in recognition and appreciation of his contribution to the common cause.

On October 27 / November 9, the Romanian army was mobilized. Minister of War, General Eremia Grigorescu, handed General Mackensen a note of ultimatum and war declaration. In order to prevent Romania from being turned into a battlefield, "it is absolutely necessary for the German troops to leave Romanian territory within 24 hours", after which they will have to lodge their weapons; "Otherwise we will be forced to use force to achieve this result[47]." On November 10th, the French army begins to cross the Danube to Giurgiu, Zimnicea, Turnu-Magurele. The German army is withdrawing, causing further damage. On November 12, the last German units leave Bucharest, and on December 1. the Carpathians pass.

The signing of the Compiègne truce on November 11 found Romania alongside the Allies. Article 15 of the ceasefire provided for the renunciation of the peace treaties of Bucharest and Brest-Litovsk and their complementary treaties. In a matter of great importance to us, the Allies will not be consistent during the Peace Conference. After the Peace of Bucharest - Buftea - April 1918, the robberies continued. Dobrogea was in the possession of the Bulgarian-Germans troops, the ratio was 500 grams of polenta per day by man, forced labor[48].

After the successful offensive in Thessaloniki which resulted in the withdrawal of Bulgaria, Romania re-entered the war on November 10, 1918, just one day before the war ended in the West, while in Belgrade it was negotiated an annex to Hungary, of the Villa Giusti Armistice.

## **Conclusions**

Analyzing with detachment the moment of neutrality, we can say that its followers were right when they took this decision. If Romania would entry too early in the war it does not guarantee a favorable result, with the risk of exhaustion of the Romanian Army before the end of the war. Neither the arguments that one or the other in the moments of the entry the war would have guaranteed the end of the conflagration earlier do not stand. The army was in 1914 -1915 completely unprepared for such a war, public opinion, although pro-Entente in most of it, was not ready for this kind of war, and Ion I. C. Bratianu was convinced that he had to obtain a written assurance from the Russian Empire in view of his father's unpleasant experience from 1877-1878.

The length of the front was not in line with the number and strength of the army. The Romanian army was thrown into battle on a 1,200-kilometer-long front, much longer than the West (770 km). To that added about 1,000 km in the south. Let us not forget that only France has 3,840,000 troops in front of Germany in the summer of 1916. It was impossible for an operational army of no more than 650,000 to cope with an experienced enemy, after two years of fighting. Even if all the masculine population of the country would be mobilized, the Romanian generals would not have enough resources to ensure effective defense. If the enemy concentrated on experienced forces endowed with enough heavy armament, the fate of a scattered army was sealed. The Romanian forces were able to provide only a troop curtain, and if troop concentrations were made in some sectors, others were still fully discovered.

The lack of qualified personnel and means for domestic war production and the restriction of external supply sources, the two military coalition being reluctant when it comes to honoring the orders of the Romanian state, was another cause of defeat. Also, the variety of weapon calibration types had a negative impact on troop training, not permitting uniformity in instruction, and brought burdens to the supply of ammunition during World War I. Another two great limitations were: an inferiority of technical endowment - as a result of the difficulties in providing weapons and ammunition as a result of the outbreak of the war - and a lack of training and instruction on new methods, tactics, and combat procedures used on the fronts of this war.

In military terms, the moment of Romania's entry into the war was unfavorable, as the Brusilov offensive had ended, the Germans had renounced the Verdun front offensive and had succeeded in rejecting the Franco-British offensive of the Somme and therefore had the strength to create a new Army, the 9th Army, commanded by Eric von Falkenhayn, the former Chief of the German General Staff. From a military point of view, the 1916 Campaign included four strategic military operations, each of which included a number of major battles:

- Offensive operation in Transylvania;
- Defense on the southern front (including the operative-strategic level operation at Flămânda);
- Defense of Carpathian Mountain Passes;
- Operation of Muntenia (including operative-strategic level of defense of Bucharest).

The victorious campaign of 1916 has greatly strengthened the morale of the German troops and their generals: Falkenhayn and Mackensen. In most cases, the victories had been obtained by the German divisions with a Bulgarian aid to the south front. The Germans proved to be superior in all chapters: supply, equipment, combat training, and leadership capability.

The victories of the Romanian army in the summer of 1917 showed that when the army is well-equipped, well-trained and well-run, it can win even against the most redoubtable adversary.

In the autumn of 1917, it was impossible for the Romanian army, acting on the same front line with the Russian troops, to continue the fight, while Russians, for the most part, refused to act. The "Russian defeat," the ceasefire, and then the peace in Brest-Litovsk, led to the complete isolation of Romania, because the only link with the Western allies had been accomplished, as far as possible, through the territory of Russia. After the successful offensive in Thessaloniki that resulted in the withdrawal of Bulgaria, Romania re-entered the war on November 10, 1918, just one day before the war ended in the West.

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