

The Romanian Army from the guardian of constitutional order to a political actor for its change in Romania on December 30th, 1947

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Keywords: army and constitutional order, Romania, coup, Sovietization, political regime, Romanian Communist Party.

Abstract

The study analyzes the role of the Romanian military institution in the process of changing the constitutional regime by removing the Monarchy on December 30, 1947, from two perspectives: its position as guardian of constitutional order, but also that the monarch was the supreme commander of the army. The non-intervention of the army in the events that led to the overthrow of the Monarchy was interpreted in pre-1989 historiography as respecting its status of neutrality to the political struggle in society. It would have been true if there had been a regime of genuine democracy in Romanian society and not a dictatorship in which the army as an institution was subject to transformations that were not in line with traditions or the spirit in which it was formed and educated. All this shaped the military's path from political neutrality to be an instrument in the service of communist leaders.

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Introduction

On December 30, 1947, the leaders of the new political regime established in Romania after the occupation by the Red Army forced King Michael I to sign the act of abdication. Following the instructions from the Soviet leaders,¹ their acolytes from Bucharest proclaimed the Romanian People's Republic, a totalitarian communist state. On January 3, 1948, along with his mother and relatives, the King went into exile. Much has been written about the domestic and international political context in which this event took place in the recent history of Romania, about the impact it had on society and what this fact meant in the future evolution of society.²

We intend to highlight the position of the army and its personnel towards the overthrow of the constitutional order because, according to the Constitution, the army's role was to defend it. If the army had remained outside the process of political transformation imposed by Moscow imperialism, then a reaction to it would have been possible within the limits of its constitutional role; but the process of transition to the Soviet-type dictatorship in Romania began with ensuring the control of the communists over the institutions of force and, first of all, the army.³

¹ See the 10-point instructions on the communization of Romania sent by Moscow through Gheorghe Dimitrov to Bucharest on March 7, 1945. Point 5 states "The King's Abdication and the Exile of the Royal Family". More information, Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea României. Percepții anglo-americeane*, Iconica Press, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 135-139.

² See, among others, Ioan Scurtu, *Monarhia în România, 1866-1947*, Danubius Press, Bucharest, 1991; Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al României*, Editura Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997; Radu Ciuceanu și alții ed., *Misiunile lui Vișinski în România. Documente secrete (1944-1947)*, INST, Bucharest, 1997; Alexandru Muraru, Andrei Muraru (eds.), *Regele, comuniștii și Coroana. Adevărata istorie a abdicării lui Mihai I*, Polirom Press, Iași, 2017.

³ Constantin Hlihor, *Armata Roșie în România. Adversar. Aliat. Ocupant. 1940-1948*, vol. I, A.I.S.M., Bucharest, 1996; Florin Șperlea, *De la armata regală la armata populară*, Ziua Press, Bucharest, 2003;

We are aware of the complexity of the historical event whose outcome took place in the afternoon of December 30, 1947, and the question of why the army as a state institution that did not fulfill its role as guardian of order can be obtained by analyzing the transformations imposed by the new leaders in Bucharest. It was the moment when the Romanian army made a fundamental transition in terms of its status to the political decision factor, from the subordinate to the party involved in the political decision. A review of the developments that have generally marked the relationship between the political factor and military leaders in European history allows a better understanding of the role played by the military in changing the constitutional order in Romania, at the end of 1947.

1. *The relationship between military leaders and political power in modern and contemporary society*

The missions and the role played in society by the military institution bore the imprint of the political regime that existed at one time. We will use the concept from the perspective of the operational definition given by Charles Tilly who considers that a political regime is a set of relations between state and citizens, materialized in the relations established between major political actors acting through and on behalf of the public institutions, and social, cultural, civil, religious organizations, etc.⁴ This type of relationship appears and manifests itself in modern and contemporary society because, in medieval times, there was no permanent army, so the institution participated in political life as an actor only

Christophe Midan, *Crearea unei Armate Populare. O perspectivă franceză asupra evoluției forțelor armate române de la 23 august 1944 până în 1975*, Editura Militară Press, Bucharest, 2015.

⁴ Charles Tilly, *Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007, p. 12.

during external aggression or civil war. With the emergence of modern states, the relationship between the military and civilians in the administration of political power in the state was under the spectrum of the idea that the military institution, as a professional force, performs its functions under the control of the political elite who legally represents the state through a social contract won by free and democratic elections.⁵ In literature, the traditional role of the army is presented as being only related to external security, which involves defending the country from foreign threats and, if necessary, engaging in war against other states.⁶ In this traditional view, because the military is responsible for external security, the police and other internal security forces are responsible for a country's internal security, and the military should not have a role in internal security. Referring to this, Samuel E. Finer stated decades ago that the military "sees itself only as a fighting force, not as a police force."⁷ Exceptions to this rule, existing in all democratic societies, arose when the military elite removed the government and/or the legitimately elected head of state by coup and established a regime of military dictatorship.

Although the degree and reasons for the military's involvement in politics have varied from state to state, there is generally no state in the world in which the military has not been involved in politics in various historical circumstances. In

⁵ See, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1957; Samuel E. Finer, *The Man On Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, Boulder, Westview, 1988; Morris Janowitz, *Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations*, IL: University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977; Richard H. Kohn, „How Democracies Control the Military”, in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1997, pp. 140-153; Constantin Moștofleu, Petre Dușu, *Armata României și garantarea democrației constituționale*, Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, Bucharest, 2005.

⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *op.cit.*, p. 1; Samuel E. Finer, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

⁷ Samuel E. Finer, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

Romania, the army was a decisive factor in resolving some major political crises of Romanian society in the twentieth century, to name only a few of them: the abdication of King Carol II and the establishment of the Ion Antonescu government;⁸ the legionary rebellion of January 1941⁹ and the removal of King Michael I from the throne in December 1947.

In modern and contemporary societies, the military has been, with rare exceptions, under political control, a process that is key to the balance of power in the state and must exist in any democratic society. Political control over the military institution has its historical roots in the very *raison d'être* of the modern state in which there is a balance of power and the rule of law. Political control over the military institution is not a purely legislative matter (a task of the parliament or the legislative bodies of international organizations), nor a purely executive one (attribution of the president or government, or similar bodies in the structure of international organizations), but is a problem of democracy and must be seen as a political mechanism. In such situations "a professional army will meet the requirements of the legitimately elected government, regardless of its political colour, respecting the following conditions: properly defined missions, ensuring

⁸ Arhivele Naționale ale României, *Stenogramele ședințelor Consiliului de Miniștri. Guvernarea Ion Antonescu*, vol. I (septembrie – decembrie 1940), ediție îngrijită de M. Ciucă, A. Teodorescu, B. Popovici, Bucharest, 1997 – 1998; Gheorghe Barbul, *Memorial Antonescu. Al treilea om al Axei*, ediție V. F. Dobrinescu, Institutul European, Iași, 1992; George Magherescu, *Adevărul despre Mareșalul Antonescu*, voi. 1-111, Bucharest, 1991; Aurică Simion, *Regimul politic din România în perioada septembrie 1940 - Ianuarie 1941*, Cluj-Napoca, 1976.

⁹ Ottmar Trașcă, Ana-Maria Stan, *Rebeliunea legionară în documente străine (germane, maghiare, franceze)*, Albatros Press, Bucharest, 2002; Ioan Scurtu (ed), *Pe marginea prăpastiei, 21-23 Ianuarie 1941*, Vol. 1-11, Bucharest, 1992; Francisco Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier 1914-1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului*, Humanitas Press, Bucharest, 1995.

specific military expertise for any military action, clear rules on military responsibilities."¹⁰

If we review the laws and instructions that governed the institution of the army in 1947, we might be tempted to say that the relations between the army and the political leaders who administered power in Romania were within an acceptable framework. A closer look and analysis shows that the society was on the verge of fully establishing a dictatorship regime imposed on society by the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), a political minority in the service of a foreign power¹¹ and systematically controlled by the institution of advisers¹² and, therefore, the relations between the military institution and the communist leaders were completely atypical and cannot be framed in the logic of the relations that existed and manifested themselves in democratic societies.¹³

Referring to this aspect, the researcher and military analyst Zoltan D. Barany observed that "In countries with a communist regime, the relationship

¹⁰ Marybeth Peterson Ulrich, *Democratizing Communist Militaries: The Cases of the Czech and Russian Armed Forces*, University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 1999, pp. 108-112.

¹¹ See, Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, Fundația Academică Civică Press, Bucharest, 1997, p. 67-68; Gheorghe Onișoru, *PCR – Evoluția programului și practica guvernării, 1944-1947*, in „Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A. D. Xenopol”, Iași, tom XXIX/1996, pp. 215-238; Marin Radu Mocanu, *Forme și strategii de comunizare a societății românești, 1940-1950* in „Anii 1949-1953. Mecanismele terorii”, Fundația Academică Civică Press, Bucharest, 1998, p. 30.

¹² Ioan Scurtu, *Consilierii sovietici din România*, in “Magazin istoric”, no. 5/1998, pp. 12-15; T.V. Volokitina, *Cadrele hotărâsc totul*, in “Magazin istoric”, no. 10/2004, pp. 25-29; Albina F. Noskova, *Consilierii sovietici: între cerere și ofertă*, in “Magazin istoric”, no. 4, pp. 33-37, no. 5, pp. 8-11, no. 6/1998, pp. 30-32; Luminița Banu, Florian Banu, *Consilierii sovietici și activitatea organelor represive ale regimului comunist din România (1944-1964)/The Soviet counsellors and the activity of the Romanian political police between 1944-1964*, in “Analele Universității Dunărea de Jos”, Galați, Series 19, Istorie, tom VII, 2008, pp. 197-222.

¹³ Timothy Hazen, *Defect or Defend? Explaining Military Responses During the Arab Uprisings*, A Dissertation Submitted to The Faculty of the Graduate School in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO, DECEMBER, 2016, p. 8
https://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3283&context=luc_diss

between the military and politics is totally different. In democratic societies, the role of the military is to protect the state from threats coming primarily from the external environment, while in those where there is a communist regime the army protects the state from internal threats because this regime was not imposed by elections and does not express a part of the electorate but was imposed from outside, by force. Consequently, these political regimes have no legitimacy. The democratic regime can survive without the support of the army, while the socialist ones cannot."¹⁴ The political system specific to the former socialist states was based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Lenin observed that the political minority can only impose itself through terror and military repression¹⁵ so that communist states proved to be more militaristic than democratic ones because their political culture was "dominated by Marxist-Leninist ideology."¹⁶

The communist leaders did not treat the military in the leadership of the army as partners according to an equal relationship, but only those who came from the nomenclature of the communist party. These were also the main vectors through which the Communist Party controlled the army. Thus the party was always in a superior position in relation to the military institution¹⁷ and exercised political control over the army by introducing party organizations that were led by military personnel from the party nomenclature.¹⁸

¹⁴ Zoltan D. Barany, "Civil-military Relations in Communist Systems: Western models Revisited", in *Soldiers and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945–90: The Case of Hungary*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993, p. 6.

¹⁵ V.I. Lenin, *Tezele din aprilie*, ediția a II-a, Editura pentru Literatură politică Press, 1954, p. 7.

¹⁶ Zoltan D. Barany, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

In the Romanian Army, the process began by incorporating the "Tudor Vladimirescu" and "Avram Iancu" divisions, consisting of Romanian prisoners on Soviet territory, because they had the same organization and structure as Red Army units, including structures and organizations of the Communist Party within them.¹⁹ Based on this model, a process of political indoctrination began in which "military and politico-social education was, for the first time, an integral discipline of general military training in order to obtain from all elements of the army good fighters and conscious citizens, ready to defend the democratic rights won by the people."²⁰ In this way, an ideological foundation typical of military training in the Red Army was imposed, in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist principles, using "new methods of training the troops and future personnel, methods corresponding to the ideology on which the People's Army is built."²¹

The leadership of the Romanian Army became dual. Any order signed by a commander had to be countersigned by the political officer. The military was present in the party's power structures from the local level to the top leadership. The Red Army was an effective tool for transforming the armies of the occupied states.²² In just a few years, not only the structure, organization, and translation of the regulations were copied, but similar equipment was introduced in some states.²³ The Romanian army, like other armies in the countries of the former socialist camp, was to be transformed in accordance with the principles of

¹⁹ *** *Apărarea națională în concepția Partidului Comunist Român*, Editura Militară Press, Bucharest, 1982, pp. 67-68.

²⁰ *** *Armata română în primii ani ai revoluției și construcției socialiste*, Editura Militară Press, Bucharest, 1975, p. 83.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² Constantin Hlihor, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

²³ Zoltan D. Barany, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

organization and functioning of the Red Army. In countries being in the process of communization, "the army and police in socialism do not defend the state as such, since the state is a conservative institution of the past and present. They defend the revolution, the vision of the future, and its supreme visionaries. In a socialist society, these institutions are by definition ideological."²⁴

2. *From Loyalty to the Throne and the Country to obedience to the Romanian Communist Party*

To understand why the army, "the guardian of constitutional legality" did not act in any way, on December 30, 1947, to defend the constitutional order and did not defend its supreme commander who was the King, we must analyze how the communist leaders positioned in relation to the military institution after August 23, 1944, and especially how they acted to transform it into an instrument of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". The relationship between the army and the governments that followed each other until the overthrow of the Monarchy and the establishment of the dictatorship was a complex one.

In the first stage, the armed forces were not directly in the eyes of the communists except to the degree that some personnel from the top leadership of the army were accused and subjected to repression as guilty of collaborating with the Ion Antonescu regime and war crimes. On the other hand, there were measures to reward the military who put themselves in the service of the new governments. What happened in Romania during the years of transition to the dictatorship of

²⁴ Dejan Jović, *Communist Yugoslavia and Its "Others"*, in John Lampe, Mark Mazower, "IDEOLOGIES AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES", <https://books.openedition.org/ceup/2438?lang=en>

the proletariat can be found in the scheme highlighted by analyst Terence Lee²⁵ based on a balance between terror and reward. Within these evolutions, the fundamental problem was the process by which the communists destroyed the feeling of duty and loyalty to the Throne and the Country that the Romanian army had imprinted in its mentality and behavior. In Romania studies from this perspective are almost missing from the military literature and are quite a few in the foreign one.²⁶

On the other hand, the very notion of loyalty in the academic literature does not have a definition that is operational for any type of army and society. In the opinion of some specialists, this is due to the fact that "most definitions are too restrictive in relation to a broad concept".²⁷ In the opinion of sociologist James M. Connor, loyalty is an "emotion that is central to the formation of the group and individual identity. It is crucial for social action and operates at different levels or strata." In the Romanian army, this strong emotional connection was created through a careful process of education and attachment to historical traditions. It is one of the major explanations why on August 23, 1944, the Romanian Army immediately and without any defect adhered to the new political and military orientation of the country set by the King's Proclamation to the Country.²⁸ In an extremely complex military situation, because the Soviet forces did not stop the

²⁵ Terence Lee, *Military Cohesion and Regime Maintenance: Explaining the Role of the Military in 1989 China and 1998 Indonesia*, in "Armed Forces & Society", no 32, issue 1, 2005, p. 82.

²⁶ Simon Keller, *The Limits of Loyalty*,: Cambridge, New York, 2007; Samuel P. Huntington, *op.cit.*; Carl Ceulemans Guy van Damme, *The Soldier and the State: An Analysis of Samuel Huntington's View on Military Obedience Toward Political Authority*, in *Professional Ethics*, No, 10, 2002, p. 722.

²⁷ James M. Connor, *Military Loyalty: A Functional Vice?* in "Criminal Justice Ethics", Vol. 29, No. 3, December 2010, p. 279.

²⁸ Ottmar Trașcă, *23 august 1944. Sfârșitul „camaraderiei de arme” româno-germană*, in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «G. Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca", tom. XLV, 2006, p. 218; Mircea Ioannițiu, *Amintiri și reflecțiuni*, Editura Enciclopedică Press, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 84-85.

offensive, the Romanian army broke away from the German device and began military actions against the Wehrmacht. This loyalty was to be regarded as a unique event in the history of World War II.

Significant in the sense of loyalty to the monarchy and the state was, immediately after August 23, 1944, the attitude of the commanders of the 3rd and 4th Romanian armies on the Moldavian front, Generals Petre Dumitrescu and Ilie Șteflea, who, being asked by General Hans Friessner (commander of the "Southern Ukraine") through the liaison officer Colonel Nicolae Ivanescu, if they would listen to the new government, they replied: "categorically and clearly that they will give all the support to the King, the Country, and his Government."²⁹ The statement from the Wehrmacht High Command's operations log was also definitive in connection with the failure of attempts by German officials to provoke splits in the army's command corps, according to which no means could be found against the King and the new government. Not found any army members or generals for another new counter-government.³⁰

But this state of loyalty, considered natural for an elite institution with great prestige in society, began to be "attacked" by communist leaders with the entry of Soviet troops in Romania. De facto under the occupation regime of the Soviet Union, Romania, although part of the United Nations coalition after August 23, 1944, no longer controlled its destiny. The Red Army and the Soviet secret services, primarily the NKVD, launched a large-scale offensive to destroy the image of state law enforcement institutions for discrediting them in public opinion through the

²⁹ Alesandru Duțu, *Armata română în război (1941-1945)*, Editura Enciclopedică Press, Bucharest, 2016, p. 312.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

so-called process of decommissioning state institutions. The historian Mihai Teodor Nicoară, referring to these aspects, pointed out that in Romanian society "anti-fascism acquired a destructive significance in the period after 1944, becoming a justification for the elimination from public life, from institutions, including universities, of those who served, sympathized or were suspected of sharing fascist ideas."³¹ Thus, "revolutionary" fascism and anti-fascism, two political currents that haunted the society of those years, "divided the Romanian political scene into two camps, one of Good and the other of Evil. The reconstruction of the country could only be done with "new" people, those compromised in past regimes, regardless of the intensity of their guilt, had to be removed from the public scene."³²

This phenomenon also manifested itself intensely among the Romanian army with a devastating effect on the traditional loyalty of the institution. The phenomenon was also potentiated by the political factor of the Soviet occupier, which also introduced the propagandistic theme of the class struggle in which, under an extremely simplistic propaganda slogan, the army was to be an instrument of the class struggle. The statement of Andrei I. Vishinski, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR and the determining factor in the imposition of the government of Petru Groza on March 6, 1945, seems emblematic of the role of the military institution in consolidating the communist totalitarian regime under the broad propaganda cover of Marxism: "dictatorship of the

³¹ Mihai Teodor Nicoară, *Defascizarea Universității „Regele Ferdinand I” din Cluj (1944-1946): Epurările și comprimările corpului didactic*, in "Annals of the University of Bucharest / Political science series", 11, p. 78, https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/37862/ssoar-annunivbuch-2009-nicoara-Defascizarea_Universitatii_Regele_Ferdinand_I.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-annunivbuch-2009-nicoara-Defascizarea_Universitatii_Regele_Ferdinand_I.pdf

³² *Ibidem*.

inevitably exempt exploiters from the benefit of freedom"³³ and, as a result, any means of eliminating them are allowed and organized even by the state: "the state means armed men and material appendages, i.e. institutions, bodies, all the rules of state tactics and strategy."³⁴ Even if sometimes, in certain historical periods, due to internal and external circumstances, the repression is somewhat diminished, said Vishinski, "the constraining side of the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be set aside even in the relatively peaceful period of socialist construction. Coercive bodies, the **army**, and other institutions are just as necessary now, at the time of construction, as in the time of the civil war. Without these bodies, the constructive activity of the dictatorship cannot be ensured."³⁵

These ideas that founded the Soviet dictatorship regime were also exported to Romania as a country occupied by the Red Army and put into practice by Romanian communist leaders aided by advisers sent to the country by the Kremlin. Sovietization, as a process, targeted the entire society and institutions that existed at the time of the Soviet occupation. It was caused by terror and extreme political pressure, and the fraud of the elections in November 1946 had the role of masking, under the guise of legitimacy, a regime that has all the powers of a foreign occupation: the presence of Red Army troops on the territory, a puppet government responsible for any Moscow's demands, even to the detriment of the national interest, the restriction of civil rights and freedoms, the prohibition of the assertion of national identity and the arrest of political opponents.

³³ A.I. Vişinski, *Lenin, marele organizator al statului sovietic*, Bucharest, Editura PCR, 1945, p. 24, *apud* COMISIA PREZIDENŢIALĂ PENTRU ANALIZA DICTATURII COMUNISTE DIN ROMÂNIA. RAPORT FINAL, Bucharest, 2006, p. 167,

https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/RAPORT%20FINAL_%20CADCR.pdf

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

In totalitarian political regimes, the military institution represents, together with the "political police" (intelligence services, internal order apparatus) the "armed arm" of ideology and the instrument through which the Party ensures the stability of the regime and total control over society. Thus, for a political regime to stay in power, it must be able to meet certain conditions.

Analytical models were developed by Hannah Arendt,³⁶ Carl J. Friedrich, and Zbigniew Brzeziński³⁷ to understand and study totalitarian regimes. They identified the main features of totalitarianism, highlighting six basic elements that are found, mandatory (although they may have varying degrees of intensity) in any society where such a type of political regime has operated:³⁸

1. An official ideology consisting of a body of doctrine covering all vital aspects of human existence, to which the whole society is obliged (at least formally) to adhere;
2. A single mass party consisting of a relatively small share of adherents in the total population (up to 10 per cent) organized in a rigid hierarchy and led by a leader with full powers;
3. Absolute monopoly over state law enforcement institutions (army, intelligence services, Ministry of Interior); thus, the army belongs to the regime and must defend the "revolutionary conquests;"
4. A similar monopoly on all means of propaganda and mass information (press, radio, television, etc.); they play a key role in maintaining ideological control over society;

³⁶ See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Penguin Books, London, 2017.

³⁷ See Carl J. Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzeziński, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1956.

³⁸ Carl J. Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzeziński, *op.cit.*, pp. 10-11.

5. A system of police control directed not only against the obvious opponents of the regime but also against arbitrarily chosen social categories;
6. A centralized economy, in which private initiative is an exception and it is accepted only in special situations.

As it can be seen, the third element aimed at an essential transformation of the army through the mission of being the guardian of the "revolutionary conquests" which involved political engagement in the power struggle and not a position of neutrality as history has enshrined in the evolution of western society. Such a vision can also be found in the former Yugoslav communist leader Milovan Djilas. In his work "New Class", he considered that there were two essential methods by which the Party's total control over the state apparatus was ensured. The first would be the basic political organization, as the main method of capturing state structures, and the second involves entrusting government positions only to party members. "These positions, Djilas points out, are essential in any government, but especially in the communist one, and include appointments in the police, especially in the secret police, in the diplomatic and officer corps, especially in special positions in political and intelligence services."³⁹

In the midst of the Sovietization process, the military overcame its status of political neutrality in the November 1946 elections. Up to that point, the army respected, broadly, its political impartiality because according to the personnel in charge, the institution was considered to belong to the country and not one political party or another. Exceptions for violating the status of neutrality also existed in the interwar period. The General Staff through several orders sent to the

³⁹ Florin Șperlea, *De la armata regală la armata populară*, Ziua Press, Bucharest, 2003, p. 74.

subordinate units discouraged officers from taking an interest in politics.⁴⁰ Despite the army as an institution being officially politically neutral, however, some officers disliked the politics of the Military General Staff and, during the election campaigns they were actively involved in politics.⁴¹ According to an informative note addressed to the Ministry of War during the 1928 Romanian Parliamentary Elections, for example, Lieutenant Mărăcineanu took part in an electoral political meeting of the National Peasant Party, which was organized in the city of Timișoara.⁴² Other officers have attended the National Peasant Party election meetings in Dorohoi city.⁴³

In the 1946 elections, the army's intervention in the electoral struggle could no longer be considered an accident because in July 1946 an electoral law was passed that granted to the military the same political rights as other citizens with the right to vote. By this decision, the Communist Party institutionalized the intense propaganda carried out in its favor by the political workers from the Romanian army. "The army must do politics," said War Minister Constantin Vasiliu-Rășcanu himself. The vote of the army had to prove to everyone its new orientation. During the election campaign, politicians from the Bloc of Democratic Parties (BPD), which included the PCR, were accompanied by commanders of military units, organizing talks with the band and artistic demonstrations by which soldiers were "clarified" to vote for the BPD.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *** Arhivele Militare Naționale, fond 950, Cabinetul Ministrului, dosar 116, f. 437, citat în Constantin Hlihor, *Romania. Military and Politics in the Interwar Period*, in Proceedings. The 14th International Scientific Conference „Strategii XXI”, vol. 2, Bucharest, April 2018 pp.159-168.

⁴¹ *** Arhivele Militare Naționale, fond 950, Cabinetul Ministrului, dosar 116, ff. 183; 226, pp. 308-309.

⁴² *Ibidem*, f. 116.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, f. 308.

⁴⁴ Florin Mihai, *Un dezertor în fruntea Ministerului de Război*, in <https://jurnalul.ro/scinteia/istoria-comunismului/un-dezertor-in-fruntea-ministerului-de-razboi-113359.html>

For example, the commander of the 2nd Infantry Division, Constantin Bădescu, eloquently addressed the assembled subordinates in order to communicate to them how to vote:

"Soon we will all go and say our word at the polls. Yes! We will say it bluntly in support of the BPD. I don't want to hear that there is an officer, non-commissioned officer, or troop in my division who feels different from me!"⁴⁵

Through this kind of action, multiplied in a short time, the imposition, in Romania, of the social system of the USSR, which Stalin defined in April 1945 as a political regime dictated by the military reality of the occupation, was achieved. The essence of the Stalinist doctrine of Sovietization was stated by the Kremlin leader at his meeting with Tito in April 1945:

"In this war, it is not the same as in the past, but the one who occupies a territory imposes his social system. Each imposes his system where his army ends up. It can't be otherwise!"⁴⁶

Being the only institution capable of opposing the country's communization with a weapon in its hand, which can considerably complicate this process and create a negative image of Stalin himself in international public opinion, the country's army would be the target of an aggressive campaign to

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁶ Milovan Djilas, *Întâlniri cu Stalin*, Europa Press, Craiova, pp. 74-75.

change its conceptual foundation, starting from the first moments when Romania and the Soviet Union had become allies. This process of liquidating the army together with the values, the mentality, and everything that represents an elite institution was called "democratization".

Underlining the need for the formation of the "new corps" and the principles that should guide this action, the Prime Minister, Dr. Petru Groza, said: "The issue of army personnel concerns us with all seriousness. At the base, we have the principle of a new conception, a new discipline, and a new hierarchy, based on the superiority of skill in military art, springing from the unity of interests between the leadership and the people. **Promoting in leadership positions healthy and democratic elements that are distinguished both by love for the people** (emphasis added) and by knowledge of military art."⁴⁷

Under these principles and on the basis of a covering legislation, a dramatic process took place, of eliminating the old formation, educated in the spirit of the Romanian military traditions, which distinguished themselves in the war of liberation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina and those with opinions anti-Russian, anti-government, anti-communist. Officially, they entered the process of purging the army of "fascist elements", put into practice, starting with March 7, 1945, by order of Marshal Malinovski and General Vinogradov of the Allied Control Commission for Romania.⁴⁸

The process continued at an accelerated pace, General Constantin Sănătescu, former Prime Minister and Chief of Staff, noting on August 8, 1946 (at

⁴⁷ Dănuț Mircea Chiriac, „Democratizarea” armatei regale în procesul trecerii României la regimul totalitar de stânga (1944-1947), in „Polis”, Volume VI, No. 2 (20), Serie noua, March – May 2018, <http://revistapolis.ro/7442/>

⁴⁸ Constantin Hlihor, *op.cit.*, p. 171.

that time he held the position of Inspector General of the Army) that the king signed the decree on the transfer of "1,000 officers considered by the current government to be reactionary, that is, clearly against communism (...) are among the most capable, and despite the King's opposition, they could not be kept in the army, as the Russians intervened at the request of the communists to remove them immediately."⁴⁹

In fact, with the establishment of the Groza government on March 6, 1945, in the following years, officers loyal to the Party would be installed in the position of Minister of Defense: generals Constantin Vasiliu-Rășcanu, Mihail Lascăr, and the "civilian" Emil Bodnăraș.

Political analyst Vladimir Tismăneanu states that the appointment of Bodnăraș as Minister of Defense in November 1947 was a move carefully thought out by Moscow to ensure socio-political peace in the country, considering the final blow to the constitutional monarchy:

"Certainly, the appointment of a deserter, convicted of treason, at the head of the Romanian army was a colossal insult to the tradition of this fundamental institution of the Romanian state. Such a decision could only be made by Stalin himself. So it was not Dej and Ana Pauker who called Bodnăraș, but the imperial power."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Constantin Sănătescu, *Jurnal*, Humanitas Press, Bucharest, 1993, p. 232.

⁵⁰ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Cine a fost Emil Bodnăraș? Spion rus, stalinist național și dinozaur leninist*, May 3, 2014, <http://www.contributors.ro/global-europa/cine-a-fost-emil-bodnaras-spion-rus-stalinist-national-si-dinozaur-leninist/>

Therefore, on December 30, 1947, the Romanian Army had become an institution entirely loyal to the Communist Party and its leadership, a loyalty that would be maintained until December 22, 1989. And yet, for communist leaders to be absolutely sure that the process would proceed quickly and efficiently, the abdication of King Michael I was done under the supervision of "the most loyal of the loyal", the soldiers of the "Tudor Vladimirescu" Division who, along with those of the "Horia, Cloșca and Crișan" Division, that formed the backbone of the Romanian People's Republic army.

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