

INSTITUTIONAL HERITAGE: THE FOUNDING NARRATIVE OF “STEPHEN THE GREAT” MILITARY HIGH SCHOOL. A TRIBUTE TO THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

Alexandrina Zuza²⁶⁶

ABSTRACT

This article aims to highlight the importance of “Stephen the Great” Military High School in Câmpulung Moldovenesc, the sole military high school in the Northern region of Romania, initially founded in Cernăuți in 1924, a town that belonged to the historical region of Northern Bukovina, that was occupied by the Soviets in 1940 following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. This article is a tribute to this institution, as it approaches its centenary for consistently upholding Romanian traditional values, such as unfaltering faith in God and devotion to the nation and homeland.

Keywords: Romanian Army, military high school, patriotism, bravery, Stephen the Great, Bukovina Câmpulung Moldovenesc, 1924, military education.

INTRODUCTION

The military high schools in Romania play a unique role in the Romanian Army’s education system by providing advanced education and training for future military personnel. At these establishments, they cultivate their abilities to emerge as trustworthy leaders, creative individuals, innovative personalities committed to reaching greatness, creating value, to develop characters, effectively managing their military career. Within these institutions, students are introduced to the military environment and the rich traditions of the Romanian Army, strongly rooted in the past, present, and future of the Romanian nation. The Romanian military high schools should promote ancestral virtues, such as faith in God, love for the country, unconditional discipline and the integration of Christian virtues into everyday life.

The military high school generates elite individuals, who have become an integral part of the nation, contributing to its development in various fields with their hard work and dedication, upholding the country’s honor²⁶⁷.

In times of peace, in times of adversity and in times of conflict, the Romanian Army has faithfully served its nation and its people.

²⁶⁶ PhD, Teacher at “Stephen the Great” Military High School, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, zuza.alexandrina@gmail.com.

²⁶⁷ Marin Gr. Năstase, *Destinul unui militar [The destiny of a soldier]*, Bucharest, Autonomous Regia Official Monitor, 2004, p. 7.

When we refer to the Romanian Army, we refer to all of those who contribute with their acts of bravery and heroism, all those who stand guard at the borders of the country and all those who understand that patriotism means love for the homeland, respect for their ancestors' actions, honoring and defending the cultural values of the Romanian nation. Heroism, inspired by the Christian ideals and patriotism are a valuable virtues, which extend to the supreme sacrifice. Through heroism, human actions are immortalized in eternity, enabling a nation to attain its most valuable assets – cultural heritage, spiritual abundance and the greatness of its past, which thrives on, gaining spiritual nourishment. Having this rich heritage, it allows individuals to enter the great family of nations and into world's history.

Today, more than ever, it is pivotal to come together in order to provide soldiers with spiritual and moral guidance, nurturing their love for their nation, homeland and faith. This will help them stay committed to true values, strengthening their will by emulating the loyalty, courage and patriotism of their ancestors. The Romanian Army is the establishment that has protected the nation's borders, frequently safeguarding it with the price of their lives²⁶⁸.

One of the greatest moral ideals that one can strive for is to have a deep love for their country and its people, while also willing to fight for national freedom²⁶⁹.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT DURING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCHOOL

Significant events occurred in Romanian national history from the inauguration of the first School for the sons of soldiers in Iași in 1872 to the founding of the Military High School in Cernăuți in 1924. The inception of the School for the children of soldiers was founded following the establishment of the Union of the Principalities and the development of the initial military education and training program during the War of Independence. The Military High School in Cernăuți emerges following the Reunification War (1916–1918).

Bukovina, previously separated from Moldova and which was added to the Habsburg crown in 1775, is reverted to its homeland 143 years later, following the General Congress of Bukovina's resolution on November 15/28, 1918. King Ferdinand I joyfully welcomes the Act of Union of Bukovina with Romania, guaranteeing that the region's entire population will receive the kingdom's love, protection and paternal care, as stated in the Decree-law of December 18/31, 1918²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁸ Ștefan Popa, *Bărbăție și credință [Bravery and faith]*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia Publishing House, 1997, p. 59 and p. 283.

²⁶⁹ Teofil Bradea, *Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce Românie-Dacia modernă în perspectivă eminesciană [What I wish for you, sweet modern Romania-Dacia in an Eminescian perspective]*, Oradea, Piatra Seacă Publishing House, 2018, p. 9.

²⁷⁰ „Bucovina, în cuprinsul granițelor sale istorice, este și rămâne de-a pururea unită cu regatul României.”, in Florin Pintescu and Daniel Hrenciuc, *Din istoria polonezilor în Bucovina: 1774–2002 [From the history of the Polish in Bucovina 1774–2002]*, Romania, The Union of Poles from Romania, 2002, p. 101.

The signature on the document belongs to King Ferdinand I and Ion I.C. Brătianu, who was both the President of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. On July 20, 1924, Lieutenant Colonel Grigorescu Traian is appointed as the commander of the high school²⁷¹.

THE HIGH ROYAL DECREE OF HIS MAJESTY FERDINAND I, 9TH OF NOVEMBER 1924

Known as “the Unifier”, King Ferdinand I, ruled as the monarch of Romania from 1914 to 1927. Even though he came from the Hohenzollern family and believed strongly in Germany’s power, Ferdinand chose to support the Entente Powers by aligning Romania with them in World War I. He demonstrated a high level of involvement in Romania’s military matters, especially when he personally led the Romanian Army during the Second Balkan War in 1913. In 1920, he organized a royal overthrow resulting in General Alexandru Averescu (1859–1938) being officially named as prime minister of Romania, starting Averescu’s first of three terms as the head of state²⁷². Ferdinand I was the founder of Stephen the Great Military High School, on the 9th of November 1924.

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“«By the grace of God and the national will, King of Romania, I wish you good health to all present now and in the future. On the report of our Minister, Secretary of State at Department of Defense, no. 4.245 of November 9th, 1924

We decreed and we decree:

Article 1. A military high school will be established at the beginning of the 1924–1925 school year in Cernăuți, Bukovina.

Article 2: This military high school in Cernăuți will be called «Stephen the Great» Military High School and will have Saint Stephen as its patron.

Article 3: Our Minister Secretary of State at Department of Defense is in charge with the execution of the present decree

Issued in Bucharest on November 25th, 1924

(ss) FERDINAND I

The Ministry of Defense, Divisional General, Mărdărescu.»²⁷³.

²⁷¹ George Istrate *et al.*, *Monografie 1994–1999 [Monography 1994–1999]*, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Gutenberg Publishing House, 1999, p. 19.

²⁷² Kenny Peter Francis, *Monarchs*, United Kingdom, Xlibris AU, 2016, p. 64.

²⁷³ Excerpt from The High Royal Decree Of His Majesty Ferdinand I, in George Istrate *et al.*, *quoted work*, p. 5.

**“STEPHEN THE GREAT”, THE ATHELETE OF CHRIST,
CONSECRATED AS THE PATRON SAINT OF THE
MILITARY HIGH SCHOOL**

One of the most important periods in the history of Romanian military warfare was that of Stephen the Great. The great Moldavian ruler laid the foundation for the first permanent peacetime army. The long and glorious rule of Stephen the Great, nephew of the former Moldavian voievode Alexander the Good of the Mușatini dynasty was a skilled strategist. Stephen initiated direct confrontations with enemies that were generally stronger, only on rough terrains that favored the Moldavians (Vaslui, 1475). The ambushes, striking attacks and unexpected fighting techniques were not unfamiliar to Stephen, who defeated the Hungarian army of Matei Corvin in Baia (1467) and the Polish army of Ioan Albert in Codrii Cosminului (1497). The significant battles that earned Stephen the title of

“Athlete of Christ’, given by Pope Sixtus IV and also brought great fame to the Moldavian principality were those fought against the powerful Ottoman Empire, which, under the leadership of the sultan Mehmet II, was in full expansion. In 1992 the Romanian Orthodox Church canonized the Moldavian voievode”^{274 275}.

In 1954 the Military School is named after this great ruler and Stephen the Great becomes the patron saint of the school.

A better patron could not have been selected for this school. As a military leader, Stephen was brilliant. His military art relied more on talent than on training in the weapons profession. He showed two indisputable military qualities from his youth: speed in action and skill in leading a battle. He had been gifted by nature with a formidable intuition on the battlefield, a capacity that was quite rarely encountered in other commanders. This made him be where you least expected, to ensure his superiority in battle and even in front of forces much larger and better equipped than his army. In other words, he always knew how to choose the decisive moment and to strike ruthlessly and above all, he knew how to choose the place, the terrain and to take advantage of the opportunities it offered him. To the best of our ability, we notice that these three virtues – unwavering faith in God, love for humanity and profound humility – were the foundation of his remarkable and illustrious achievements. Stephen’s love for the people was a noteworthy trait that enabled him to receive good speech and grace from God, consequently allowing him to carry out numerous benevolent acts. He was aware of the negative effects of unstable leadership, which is why he made every effort to take up the role of leading the people in God’s work, following God’s guidance. He knew that God does not give a ruler power to become a tyrant. The talent and duty of leadership are bestowed to

²⁷⁴ Călin Hentea, *Brief Romanian Military History*, USA, The Scarecrow Press, 2007, pp. 63–64 and p. 78.

²⁷⁵ Jonathan Eagles, *Stephen the Great and Balkan Nationalism: Moldova and Eastern European History*, United Kingdom, I.B. Tauris, 2013, p. 75.

benefit individuals, allowing righteousness and affection to thrive in their hearts, thanks to the leader's model and compassionate actions²⁷⁶.

THE FIRST SUPERINTENDENT, LIEUTENENT CONEL TRAIAN GRIGORESCU

Traian Grigorescu was born on May 27th, 1887, in Bucharest. His parents were General Eremia Grigorescu and Elena Grigorescu. He was a respected military leader, skilled in warfare, well-educated, morally upright and deeply patriotic. His father, Eremia Grigorescu, became a hero in the Reunification War, specifically at Oituz and Mărășești. Nicolae Iorga called him the Guardian of "Our Land" and "The Trustworthy Defender of Romanian Honor"^{277, 278}. Eremia Grigorescu aroused a strong influence on the upbringing, education and orientation towards a military career of his son Traian Grigorescu through integrity, sharp judgment, steadfastness in learning, calmness, sobriety in daily life, fairness, optimism, sense of duty, traits that accompanied Traian Grigorescu throughout an exceptional military career. Continuing his father's tradition as an artilleryman, young Traian Grigorescu attended the Artillery, Engineer and Navy Military School from September 1st, 1904, to June 30, 1906. On August 15, 1916, Traian Grigorescu is mobilized together with his regiment and participates in the battles at Turtucaia. Severely wounded, he fell prisoner into the hands of the Bulgarians until May 1918 when he returned to his homeland. On July 20, 1924, by the High Decree number 3293/1924, Lieutenant Colonel Traian Grigorescu was appointed as the commander of "Stephen the Great" Military High School in Cernăuți, starting everything from scratch. Through his diligent efforts, professional competence, balance and tact, ability in interpersonal relationships and with various institutions of his time, skill in leading his subordinates, he quickly flourished a prestigious military education institution in Bukovina, brought back to the motherland. The high school superintendent demonstrated a strong commitment to overseeing the cultural and military education institution, effectively leading with diplomacy and fostering a sense of unity and cooperation in the school until 1928^{279, 280}.

²⁷⁶ Putna Monastery, *De veghe în casa Măriei Sale [On watch in His Majesty's house]*, 2nd edition, Metropolitan Iacov Putneanul Publishing House, 2019, pp. 13–16.

²⁷⁷ Traian D. Lazăr and Traian Eremia Grigorescu, *Însemnări din Războiul Întregirii [Notes from the Reunification War]*, Bucharest, Junimea Publishing House, 2019, pp. 3–6.

²⁷⁸ Nicolae Iorga et al., *O viață de om [A man's life]*, Romania, Minerva Publishing House, 1981, p. 274.

²⁷⁹ ***, *Studii: revistă de istorie [Studies: history journal]*, Romania, Publishing House of the Academy of the Romanian People's Republic, 1967, p. 768.

²⁸⁰ Mihai Bejinariu and Doru Gușu, *Monografia Liceului Militar Ștefan cel Mare [Monography of Stephen the Great Military High School]*, Bucharest, Military Publishing House, 1994, pp. 22–32 and pp. 22–23.

**EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN 1924–1940
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CHALLENGES
DURING OCCUPATION AND WAR**

Throughout its existence from its opening in 1924 to its shutdown in 1945, the high school in Cernăuți had a 16-year period of stability. During the years 1924–1940, all military and civilian personnel contributed to the construction and foundation of the school, through military instruction and education of the students, as future career military personnel. The years 1940–1945 were the most challenging for the high school, followed by an 8-year period of shutdown (1945–1953). The events which occurred during the years 1940–1945, marked the existence of the high school, determining its relocation – from Cernăuți to Roman (June 1940), to Târgoviște (July 1940), then to Câmpulung Muscel (October 1940), back to Cernăuți (October 1941), then to Timișoara (January 1944), to Pitești (January 1945) – and finally its shutdown (May 1945). The high school is reestablished under the name of Military Middle School No. 1 Câmpulung Moldovenesc, on September 1st, 1953. It has operated for 3 years at Iași, in the building of Infantry Officers Military School No. 3, until the special designed building in Câmpulung Moldovenesc was completed. On the 450th anniversary of the death of Stephen the Great, on July 2nd, 1954, the institution receives the name of the great voivode and becomes the Military Middle School “Stephen the Great” Câmpulung Moldovenesc.

The high school moves to the newly built premises in Câmpulung Moldovenesc garrison during August 1956. Although it is not mentioned in the school’s monography this event takes place due to general Emil Bodnăraș, who was the Minister of Defense at that time. He was appointed on 24th of December 1947 as Minister of Defense of the Romanian People’s Republic.

Emil Bodnăraș was born in Iaslovăț of Ukrainian and German descent and possessed Soviet citizenship. He attended “Dragoș Vodă” High School in Câmpulung Moldovenesc, graduating in 1924. One of the first actions of Bodnăraș as Minister of Defense was to increase the size of the Romanian Army. The period of military service was lengthened from 18 months to 2 years and military service was made compulsory for all citizens. Although the Romanian peace treaty had stated that the Army’s highest capacity was planned to reach maximum 120.000 soldiers, it was reported to a total of 350.000 soldiers in 1951²⁸¹. The change of the institution’s name from “Stephen the Great” Military Middle School to “Stephen the Great” Military High School, took place on January 1st, 1957.

²⁸¹ ***, *Professional Journal of the United States Army*, USA, Command and General Staff School, 1955, p. 31.

**CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, A CONTINUITY OF HERITAGE.
NOTABLE ALUMI: IN THE MEMORY OF DORU DAVIDOVICI
(1945–1989), PILOT AND WRITER – CLASS OF 1963**

In 1957, the magazine “Tinere Condeie” was released at the high school situated at the foot of Rarău mountain. The magazine included excerpts from the spiritual universe of the teenagers in military uniform: prose, poetry, monograph fragments and translations. Starting with the school year 1966–1967, the magazine appeared under the name “Orizont” (Horizon). Doru Davidovici, an exceptional military pilot, a Saint Exupéry of Romanian literature, also contributed to the magazine. The high school magazine’s publication was halted in 1989, but it reappears in 1992 under the name Alter Ego. The magazine’s name has changed into Mușatinii up to this day.

Among the remarkable alumni of the high school, 57 were advanced to the rank of general from the class of 1947 to the class of 1977 and 22 writers, including Doru Davidovici, class of 1963, stood out.

CONCLUSIONS

This article brings its contribution by marking the episode of “Stephen the Great” Military High School relocation from Cernăuți to Câmpulung Moldovenesc in 1956 by discussing important events and figures in the historical and political background that led to this decision. Equally important is acknowledging the role played by this military school and its initial superintendent Traian Grigorescu, who bravely tackled the challenges of the era during the school’s inception. No other person could have been selected as a more ideal role model and spiritual guide for the students of this school than Stephen the Great, to inspire them with important values like honor, sacrifice and above all, by upholding the Christian faith and protecting the country at all costs. Finally, it is essential that proper merit should be given to the graduates of this Military High School where they have received their education and training and have since become influential leaders, contributing to a more prosperous Romanian society and a better world.

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