

## THE PATRIOTIC SPIRIT OF THE BULGARIAN ARMY IN THE FIRST BALKAN WAR PRESENTED IN THE REPORTS OF MAJOR GHEORGHE A. DABIJA\*

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**Abstract:** The companion of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries found the Balkan nations in the fullness of the generative process for the legitimation of identity and international recognition. The destiny of becoming a nation has destined those peoples to be truly grumpy and warlike, with territorial claims beyond the limits of the violence allowed by public sensibilities in a prosperous and emancipated Europe. Territorial conquests, followed by expulsions and purifications, of forced cultural assimilation, made the Balkans the “gunpowder barrel” of Europe, detonated by the great European powers in the competition for the Ottoman heritage.

Geographically positioned at the periphery of the Balkan world, Romania's national project was focused more on Central and Eastern Europe, where several million Romanians lived under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. However, the threatening Russian expansion into the Straits led Carol I to opt for an alliance with the Central Powers. Therefore, during this period the official nationalist rhetoric was focused on the issue of the Balkan Romanians.

Context in which the army, together with the other institutions of the Romanian state, was mobilized in the effort to define and affirm the historical right of the Romanian nation in the Balkans, receiving the mission to identify and inform on realities and political-military, economic-social and cultural activities south of the Danube, facts that we bring to attention from the perspective of military documents.

**Keywords:** Romania, Balkans, nation, Romanian army, Romanian officers.

After the new European order established following the peace congress held in Berlin, Romania became an important state in the Balkans, given the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire that could no longer rein in the nationalist tendencies of the subjugated states. Thus, Romania is a guarantor of maintaining the status quo in this region called the “powder keg of Europe”, having the advantage of being the strongest country amongst the small ones.

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, the process began by the Christian peoples to free themselves from the long Ottoman rule had commenced, but it was not finished. The Ottoman Empire had been weakened as a result of the Italo-Turkish War of 1911, while the governments of the Christian countries in the Balkans were constantly strengthening: Bulgaria became a kingdom in 1908, after the union with Rumelia, and Serbia would turn its attention back to its countrymen in the Ottoman-occupied territories, being constrained by the international climate to accept the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary<sup>1</sup>. The most complicated issue remained that of Macedonia, a territory disputed by Serbia and Bulgaria, which could not be divided ethnically because of its heterogeneity. The year 1911 becomes a critical one for the Balkans: the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war gives courage to the Bulgarians and Serbs to conclude an alliance against the Ottoman Empire, and the Bulgarians were trying to obtain promises of non-intervention from the Romanians – declaring themselves in favor of granting a natural border in Dobrogea, in exchange for freedom of action against the Turks, their main objective being Macedonia. Those informed about this proposal were Take Ionescu, Titu Maiorescu and Ion I. C. Brătianu – the three heavyweights of the Romanian foreign policy<sup>2</sup>. A Romanian-Bulgarian agreement was no longer possible after the appearance in the Bulgarian press of vehement articles claiming Dobrogea as Bulgarian territory<sup>3</sup>. Although it was not a Balkan state, Romania understood that it could not remain indifferent to regional political developments, but neither ought to have it intervened to avoid the spread of war and the widening of the conflict area. In the context of the forthcoming Serbian-Bulgarian alliance, a revival of the Romanian-Russian relations was also beginning, the Russians being aware that Romania represented an important milestone in south-eastern Europe. The treaty of alliance concluded on March 13, 1912 between Bulgaria and Serbia, and supplemented by a secret military convention, was directed not only against the Ottoman Empire, but also against its northern neighbour – Romania – its position being of great significance in the context of good understanding with the Central Powers and with Turkey. The support of the Ottoman Empire and an eventual intervention on the Balkan states on behalf of Romania could constitute an act of treason, as noted by the Serbian newspaper “Mali journal” of March 10, 1911. This secret military convention emerged in addition to the Russian-Bulgarian one of December 1909, which stipulated the support to be given to Bulgaria for the recovery of the territories inhabited by ethnic Bulgarians in the region located between the Black Sea and the right bank of the Lower Danube,

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<sup>1</sup> L. Boicu, V. Cristian, *România în relațiile internaționale (1699–1939)*, Iași, Junimea Publishing, 1980, p. 364; Mihaela Bărbieru, *Relații militare româno-iugoslave în perioada interbelică (1919–1939)*, Craiova, Aius Publishing, 2011, pp. 28–29.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandru Marghiloman, *Note politice 1897–1924*, vol. I, Bucharest, Eminescu Institute of Graphic Arts Publishing, 1927, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Anastasia Iordache, *Criza politică din România și războaiele balcanice (1911–1913)*, Bucharest, Paideia Publishing, 1998, p. 173.

of course, everything being conditioned by a victory over the Central Powers, but also over Romania<sup>4</sup>. It is also worth mentioning that, in parallel with the attempts of Romanian-Bulgarian negotiations, our neighbours to the south did not stand idly by and managed to conclude a treaty of alliance with another Balkan country that sought to expand its territory at the expense of the Ottoman Empire – Greece.

Bulgaria was the third state to which Romania decided to send a military attaché, after Germany and Austria-Hungary. The first military attaché accredited in Sofia was Captain Nicolae Petal, in 1904, followed by Captain Gheorghe Dabija, at that time, the chief of staff of the Minister of War. Through the quality of his reports, based on the analysis of open-source information, the military attaché in Sofia had the opportunity to directly influence the policy of the Romanian authorities. Not by chance, his activity was strictly monitored by the Bulgarian intelligence service. Sensitive to any information that could have prejudiced his status as a military attaché, Gheorghe Dabija categorically rejected any kind of espionage accusations against him<sup>5</sup>. Regardless of the nature of his sources, Gheorghe Dabija was the only Romanian military diplomat who managed to find out, through his own efforts, about the negotiations held between the Balkan states for the formation of the Balkan League. On 14 April 1912, he presented king Carol I with the text of the Bulgarian-Serbian alliance treaty and its secret annex, both signed at the end of February. Major Gheorghe Dabija worked as a military attaché in Sofia from May 10, 1910 until 1913, when he was sent to Belgrade as well as a military attaché, where he served in this position until 1914. About the mission of military diplomat, Gheorghe Dabija recorded the following:

“I loved my country and, everything I did in my capacity as a military attaché, I did only in its best interest, according to the instructions I had from the Ministry of War, the General Staff and especially from H. M. King Carol I, who honoured me with His trust. My conscience was then present and still remains today, 35 years after (1910-1945), completely quiet and at peace”<sup>6</sup>.

This was the political and military context of the period that preceded the First Balkan War, when major Gheorghe A. Dabija, the future general<sup>7</sup>, completed his mission of military attaché to the Romanian Delegation from Sofia<sup>8</sup>, where he

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> Delia Bălăican, *Generalul G.A. Dabija – un reprezentant de marcă al generației sale*, in “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Scientific Annals from Iași. New series. History, Iași, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Publishing from Iași, Tom LXI, 2015, p. 395.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 401.

<sup>7</sup> Delia Bălăican, *Generalul G. A. Dabija – Ordin de zi: viața în demnitate. Autoreferențialitatea evocată în “Amintiri din cariera militară (1893–1920) – Oameni, tipuri, obiceiuri, năravuri și Sisteme de altădată”*, in Olimpiu Manuel Glodarencu (coord.), *Tradiție, Istorie, Armată*, vol. I, Bucharest, “Regele Ferdinand I” National Military Museum Publishing, 2015, pp. 300–310.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Cain, *A military attache in Bulgaria: major Gh. A. Dabija*, in Cătălin Vătășescu, Constantin Jordan (coord.), *Identitate, cultură și politică în sud-estul Europei. Două colocvii româno-bulgare*, Brăila, Istros Publishing of the Museum of Brăila “Carol I”, 2014, pp. 237–248.

arrived on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1910<sup>9</sup>, being greeted by His Majesty, King Carol I himself, who, during their last meeting provided him with the final instructions: “You shall be the Romanian Royal Army at Sofia, thus become acquainted to the Bulgarian people and army”<sup>10</sup>.

The order was executed thoroughly and devotedly, therefore Major Dabija managed to know the Bulgarian people and its leaders, the Bulgarian army and its commanders closely. A proof of this were the insightful and exhaustive report-documents handed to Bucharest. Through them, Dabija detailed the efforts made for the organisation and the endowment of the Bulgarian army, equally drafting subtle analyses on the relations between the army commanders, between them and the Bulgarian political class, revealing the belligerent attitude that was thriving inside the Bulgarian army<sup>11</sup>.

Further on, there are to be presented few of the attitudes and actions that, more often than not, were increasingly and intensively directed against Romania. They were gathered by major Dabija from the press that he was studying meticulously, as he would later confess<sup>12</sup>, giving it a precise indexation in relation to the attitude towards Romania<sup>13</sup>. He presented few examples from the perspective of manipulation on addressing a Romanian-Turkish agreement<sup>14</sup>.

Thus, at the beginning of 1911, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1911, major Dabija expedited the Great Major State the translation of an article called “Our neighbours”, published in “Narodni Prava” newspaper, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, with the mention that the respective newspaper belonged to Radoslavist party, which, although it had united to the Stambulovist party, it continued to nurture the hatred against our country, which is exemplified in the following lines:

“We are all familiar with the feelings that our neighbours have for us, especially the Turks and the Romanians: there ought to be no doubt on this concern, thus there is proof that it is needed the careful supervision of their actions on addressing us, the readiness to prevent any unwanted occurrence, and nit expect to the events to take us by surprise, when everything can be tardive.

It should never be forgotten the Roman principle “hospes hostis”, that is, to always see an enemy in our closest neighbour; our hospitality on addressing the foreigners is renown, we have never been concerned and cautious to their behaviour in our country. Our tolerance towards foreigners is a true crime. Let’s not forget that the trust in the foreigners is sometimes paid expensively; the case of a certain Prince Bibescu shall be reminded here, on whom our newspapers

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<sup>9</sup> General G. A. Dabija, *Amintirile unui atașat militar român în Bulgaria 1910–1913*, Bucharest, Universul Publishing, 1936, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 10–13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 120–136.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 136–145.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 92–96.

had written, he flew in his airplane over the Danube from Romania on our territory, he avoided, here and there, the frontier, and even the inland, allowing himself to have fun one night, with some projectors over the city of Rahova. Which was the mission of this gentleman is still unknown, nobody has asked about it, the feeble announcing of our authorities being enough.

Our minister of war must leave this passive attitude and to award the appropriate meaningfulness and the appreciation to the consequences of such excursions done by different foreigners who wander too freely through Bulgaria. One day, the inactivity of our authorities, especially that of the Minister of War, which dozens of superior officers belong to, shall be pricey one day.

Aren't we capable of understanding and appreciating the often visits paid by the Romanian officers appropriately, who, under different pretexts, in large groups, visit the Bulgarian cities of? Vidin, Plevna, Rusciuc etc.? And when a Bulgarian general attempted to return the visit with some of our officers, with the agreement of our Minister of War, the Romanian Government shrewdly denied the request. Why? Are there needed further comments? Why such indifference from our authorities? Aren't they enough to understand the intention of the Romanians, or should there be mentioned the case when our Government, allowing the Romanians to measure the Danube on our side, only due to a fortunate coincidence a frontier officer of ours found a disguised Romanian engineer, holding some plans in which there were recorded topographic details of our bank; the blueprint was given back to the Romanian authorities, by one of our commanders, for no further complications?

What importance shall be awarded to the case when the Romanians opened fire on a military ship next to Silistra? Shout the enigmatic disappearance, on one night, of 11 military decks of the pontoneer battalion that was at Jantra River mouth that year?

What can be said about the depriving us of Arab-Tabia next to Silistra, by the Romanians? What about the continuous persecution of everything that is Bulgarian, in Romania? Do we have to indicate facts that would indicate that we are not the ones provoking and looking for "Cassus belli", but the Romanians, who for numerous years have been provoking us continuously, with such audacity that diminishes our state dignity and prestige.

This is the reason for which we should be ready and to carefully watch our neighbours' behaviour, who are not ashamed of speaking bluntly in their press, that we are the ones that provoke them continuously"<sup>15</sup>.

In the end of the report, major Dabija felt the need to underline that the respective article mirrors the Bulgarian mentality, clearly showing the feeling that they had for the Romanians, and that, in the Bulgarian press, these attacks were not scarce, their purpose being to keep the hatred against Romanians alive, a fact that the Bulgarians did not even bother to hide, writing that:

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<sup>15</sup> Depozitul Central de Arhivă Pitești al Arhivelor Militare Naționale Române (Pitești Central Archive Repository of the Romanian National Military Archives, hereinafter: Central Repository AMNR), Marele Stat Major. Biroul atașăți militari Fund, file no. 28, ff. 11–12v.

“They dream, of a Great Bulgaria, in which Dobruja should be included because: «along with Macedonia, as the pensioner general Dimitrievici would say, it forms the lungs of Bulgaria». I answered the before-mentioned general that I have seen phthisic people who live with only one lung. It is not less true that the Bulgarians, through all their manifestations, show nothing but hate and disdain, thus, it is our duty to always be ready”<sup>16</sup>.

Towards the end of the same year, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1911, forwarding two translated articles to the Great Major State, published in “Bsalkanska Tribuna” newspaper, on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of September, major Dabija underlined that such attacks occurred daily in the Bulgarian press, most obviously showing the feelings that the Bulgarians had for Romania, especially the ideas concerning Dobruja. In conclusion, the Romanian military attaché was noting that “The answer to these attacks cannot be another than the reinforcing of our army, an action that infuriate them, due to the fact that, regardless their smugness, they would acknowledge that the preparation of our army sends them away from fulfilling their ideal, the conquest of Dobruja”<sup>17</sup>.

Thus, in the issue 732 from the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, in “*Balkanska Tribuna*” newspaper, with the headline “The Romanian Conduct”, there were published the following lines:

“Last year, the discovery made by «Le Matin» newspaper, on addressing the secret military convention between Romania and Turkey, against Bulgaria, was sensational news. Back then, Romania denied the rumours officially, calling it tendentious and unfounded. Nobody believed the denial, and each was suspecting that it must have been dishonest. The events that followed proved the deceitfulness of Romanian on addressing Bulgaria.

The Italo-Turkish War was a good proof to convince each of them that Romania is always in the service of its ally, Turkey, against Bulgaria. The war is at its beginning and Romania hurries to take a stand against Bulgaria. Suspecting that Bulgaria would take advantage in this case and enter in Turkey and therefore increase its territory, Romania is in a hurry to concentrate its army at the Bulgarian border, so that it can, at the right time, occupy the «Quadrilateral» that comprises our territory between Silistra-Rusciuc-Şumla-Varna. Romania claims this part of Bulgaria, as compensation, for its Kutso-Vlach brothers, and because Bulgaria separates Romania from Macedonia, it is impossible for Romania to possess a part of Macedonia, which it suspects Bulgaria will occupy. That is why they agree to cede this part of it to Bulgaria, in exchange for which to occupy the «Quadrilateral». In this regard, Romania becomes ridicule, when it leaves what is its own and runs after what it is foreign. It is known that in Transylvania there are several million Romanians, who live under an oppressing, pursued for their nationality. But because Romania's

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, file no. 27, f. 13.

foreign policy is entirely in the hands of King Carol, who is a sincere friend of Franz Joseph, the official Romania does not turn its eyes to this province, which is rightfully its own, but seeks the possibility of enlarging its territory, towards Bulgaria, tearing a part of its territory, populated exclusively with Bulgarians and Turks; Romanians are in a small number only in Turtucaia.

The fact that Romania is preparing for war, shows the telegraphic communication in Bucharest from the current day of 18, with the following content: « The Minister of War communicated to the army corps to present clear and accurate information about the state of the military depots. The armies of Pitești and Târgoviște prepared for war are sent on an unknown path ».

But this unknown path is Bulgaria most certainly, because, in the current confusing political state, Romania has nowhere to send its armies. The assurance is provided by the telegraphic piece of news, which reads: « The entire Danube Squadron Romanian does military exercises in the harbor and in its surroundings ».

All this proves the dishonesty of Romania towards Bulgaria. The leaders of our foreign policy must be foresighted and take all measures to guard against Romania. It ought to be known that if it makes criminal alliances towards Turkey, the possibility of an alliance between Bulgaria and another country, not defensive, but perhaps even offensive against Romania, which will be at the expense and through the fault of the latter, is not excluded.

We will follow the events in the Balkan Peninsula closely and we will keep you posted<sup>18</sup>.

In the next day's issue, the newspaper "Balkanska Tribuna" repeated its offensive anti-Romanian attitude with the article entitled "Unprecedented and unheard-of Cowardice", under the signature of Colonel M. Mihailovschi, who, after writing that the Balkan states were preparing for a joint action against Turkey, wrote:

"Romania mobilizes, as well, part of its army, destined for the Bulgarian border. The armies of Pitești and Târgoviște have already left on an unknown road. Every man with sound judgment will justify, at the moment, the measures taken by the Balkan states, apart of course from those of Romania, because these states still have in the Balkans countrymen of their own, who are still under bondage, have the enslaved territory with which they border and for which during the ages they have shed rivers of blood.

Speaking of the action of the Balkan states, we unwittingly ask ourselves: What is Romania looking for in the Balkans? Perhaps to have claims for territorial compensation? Was it once, even for a single day, master at least on a piece of land in the Balkans, in the south of the Danube? For a few Karakachans, Kutso-Vlachs and Macedo-Romanians, is Romania heaping its armies on the Bulgarian border?

After all, if Romania thinks that it has some territorial rights in the west of the Peninsula, they ought to go there, defend their right and take their share; but it must not intimidate Bulgaria behind its back in a cowardly way and

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 14.

demand compensations for this gypsy-like gathering of Kutso-Wallachians, Karakachans etc., the remains of the Roman plebeian. That will never happen. Let Romania remember that Bulgaria will better give up and postpone the accomplishment of its ideals in Macedonia, rather than cede the smallest piece of land as compensation.

Romania must not forget that its vessel floats on Slavic seas, in which soon or later, the Romanians will drown with their ship and perish forever. This destruction will take place all the sooner, as they strongly support the absurd idea of a Bulgarian compensation. The Bulgarian people is patient, they are not in a hurry, they will first force themselves to disturb the Slavic seas, and to sink the Romanian vessel, and after that, feeling freed at last, they will renew their temporarily postponed action in the Balkans.

For God's sake! Can't you see how, at the moment, while the Balkan Christian states – and among them Bulgaria – are struggling to help their enslaved brothers in Turkey, Romania – an all-Christian state – in alliance with the oppressors of the Christians, are lurking on their backs? What can Romania be like? How can its wicked and treacherous conduct be qualified? Reflecting on this, we wonder and wonder how the great Christian state, Russia, accepts right in front of its eyes, the Germanism in the East, and how has not yet come the time to crush the head of this owl in the Carpathians, so that it will no longer sit on foreign chimneys? If the time has come, let Russia tell us, the rest of us will do it ourselves.

Since it concerns us, the educators and commanders of the Bulgarian army, who know the constant strength of the Bulgarian soldier and his ability to bear all the hardships and troubles of the war, we can certainly and with a quiet conscience hope and wait, that the Bulgarian army, although still young, but full of energy and abnegation for the parental home, will erect its glorious monuments on the Dobrogea plains”<sup>19</sup>.

The financial, material and propaganda efforts eventually managed to form a competitive army compared to rival armies in the Balkans, prepared, equipped and motivated, as proof being the success of the operations in the autumn of 1912.

The Bulgarian army went to war on October 18, 1912. Three days later, on October 21, the battle of Kirkilise began, the victory being declared only after a day of fighting, on October 22, when ottoman military units left the front in disarray, abandoning many localities without firing a single shot of arms.

At the end of the first month of the war, between October 29 and November 1, no less than 100,000 Bulgarians and another 100,000 Turks fought fiercely at Lule Burgas, proof of the large number of human casualties: 16,500 Bulgarian combatants and 25,000 Turkish troops. The vengeful enthusiasm of the Bulgarians brought them victory this time too, thus managing to close the circle around Adrianople, an important Ottoman strategic center in Europe. An overwhelming and lengthy siege ensued, which contributed greatly to the outbreak of cholera in the overpopulated

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 15–16.



city by taking refuge from the Bulgarian armies. From here, cholera quickly spread throughout the Balkan Peninsula, wreaking havoc on all the combating armies and on the hard-pressed population.

The Bulgarian offensive forced the Ottoman army to retreat behind the fortified line between the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea, positioned 45 km away, was in fact the last military belt to secure the imperial capital.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1912, the Bulgarian army launched the offensive on the fortified Ceatalgea line, with decisive confrontations taking place between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> of November. With all the fierceness with which they fought, proof of the losses of more than 12,000 troops, the Bulgarians failed to break through the Ottoman resistance. Alarmed by the dramas caused on the front, but especially among the civilian population, the great powers sent warships to secure Constantinople against the bellicose actions of the Bulgarians, having intimidation missions and humanitarian actions, as was the case with the Romanian ships<sup>20</sup>.

The failure at Ceatalgea did not prevent the Bulgarians from continuing the siege of Adrianople and with reduced manpower to advance in Macedonia, following the directions to Stip, Struma and Doiran and with other units to reach Thessaloniki<sup>21</sup>.

While in Stara Zagora, on October 19, 1912, Major Dabija reported in Bucharest the observations made on the Bulgarian army, writing that on September 21 the concentration of troops began and on October 5<sup>22</sup> it ended, the day when the Bulgarian military forces started the offensive on two fronts: in Macedonia and in Thrace.

After presenting the conduct of the military operations, Major Dabija recorded some observations on what had been found in the past period, writing that the Bulgarians had kept "the most absolute secret" on the concentration marches and on the concentration, with officers and soldiers not being allowed to write to anyone other than that they were fine, without indicating the date or place, then the letters were collected by the regiment, read, given to the local post office, which sent them to their destination without putting the stamp; once in the intended city they received the postmark and were handed over to the recipient. Also, for secrecy, the newspapers did not publish any uncensored news.

Dabija would emphasize the secrecy of the Bulgarians by writing that the military attachés were told and are told absolutely nothing, receiving the daily bulletin a day later than it was made known telegraphically to the whole world. Moreover, the military attachés were brought to Stara Zagora on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October not to see and know the conduct of the operations, but to distance them from Sofia, where information could be obtained much more easily.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 50.

<sup>22</sup> The report is dated in the old style, on the new style dated October 18, 1912.

Major Dabija considered that the reason for keeping the military attachés so far from the front should not be sought only in the Bulgarians' desire to keep the secret of the movements and crises that occur after the battle, but especially to hide the tactical action itself from some inquiring eyes.

The same was done with the newspaper correspondents, but there was an exceptional consideration for some of them, our major confessing his impression that the Bulgarians chose 2-3 correspondents from each country, amongst the most prominent.

In Stara Zagora there was a censure office with a major of the general staff as chief and having several helpers from different teachers, some even professors, who spoke foreign languages and who had no action on the front. Here was censored any telegram that any military attaché or press correspondent wanted to send, cutting off any information that was not contained in the Official Gazette or that could not be inferred. The telegram received a stamp, it was put in a stamped envelope, and the interested person took it to the telegraph. Also, all the letters sent from the front reached this office, where they were censored.

No officer or civilian says anything, and in order to point out how secretive the Bulgarians are, Major Dabija resumed a story told by the Italian military attaché that several local people of Stara Zagora were looking through the window of a bookstore at the map of the Balkan Peninsula and were talking. During this time, an Italian who traded in agricultural machinery in Stara Zagora approached them, when the Bulgarians noticed him, one of them gave the signal saying: "silence, for he is a foreigner". After the Italian's departure, they resumed their talks.

Under the same rule of secrecy, the Bulgarians did not make known the lists of losses, dead or wounded, not even the families were notified. The wounded were sent to hospitals located in cities other than those from where they were from, they or their regiment. In order not to know which units the wounded belonged to, the counter-epaulets with the regimental numbers were removed. Nothing was mentioned about the prisoners.

As for the moral side of the Bulgarian military, Major Dabija would find that it was very high, being driven by the ideal of the Macedonian brothers, hence the determination to die and win.

To the Turks it was the other way around, Dabija reporting how a military attaché colleague managed to talk to a Turkish prisoner officer who said that the Ottoman government was in error because it had not given Macedonia the reforms promised for a long time and that the war had to be won by those who were right, the Romanian major concluding that if this is what all the Turkish officers were talking about, then it was useless to resort to war.

There was a rumor that Christian soldiers enlisted in the Turkish army were causing panic and surrendering massively to the enemy, with equipment with everything, even during the battle. The Turkish soldiers were well equipped, but badly fed. According to Bulgarian sources, per day they received only 1,500 grams of bread for ten people.

To exemplify the moral condition of the Ottoman military, Major Dabija wrote that he had encountered fez-wearing prisoners, that is, Muslims, very discouraged, weakened, tired, but resigned, that resignation characteristic of the Mohammedans, by which they showed that it was the punishment of Allah. Instead, the Christian Ottoman prisoners he met were cheerful, greeting the population they met in Bulgarian.

Glossing over this situation, Major Dabija wrote that “whoever could ask themselves the question where is the old military spirit of the Turks, where is the moral value of this army?”, a rhetorical question on account of which he reflected writing in the spirit of the times from the beginning of the twentieth century:

“it seems that everything was destroyed by the Jewish politicians and Freemasons, who have sown politics seeds among the military. Undoubtedly that the army is the foremost guilty of this, because it did not know how to keep itself above the political parties and before becoming their clientele, they should not forget that the army is the country's and that it has a mission far superior to the political passions. May this sad example serve other peoples”.

After presenting the mode of action on the front of the Ottoman army, the Romanian military attaché concluded that from what he had seen until that day it could be said that the war would be won by the Bulgarians, not by material force, but by their moral force, despite the great shortcomings they had to face, that is, a mediocre superior command, a non-unitary staff, officers coming from different schools, incomplete training, insufficient ammunition, heavy artillery, weak trains but fighting against an army that has also lost material qualities and especially moral ones<sup>23</sup>.

Military operations on which, over the years, when he had the rank of lieutenant colonel, he would stop for a detailed presentation<sup>24</sup>. Gheorghe A. Dabija remarked “The spirit of the army and the patriotism of the people” as one of the grounds for the victory of the Bulgarian army, noting that:

“The spirit of the army was pretty good before the war. The reserve officers lived in good harmony and close connection with the active officers, forming a unitary and solidary mass, capable of great positive actions.

The patriotism of officers and soldiers was high, there was deeply grounded in officers and soldiers, a national ideal «Great Bulgaria of San Stefano», for this ideal it was endeavored, is being endeavored and will be endeavored”<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Central Repository AMNR, Marele Stat Major. Biroul atașăți militari Fund, file no. 29, ff. 30v–33v.

<sup>24</sup> Lt. col. G. A. Dabija, *Războiul bulgaro-turc din anul 1912–1913 (cu 12 crochiuri și 13 oleate)*, Universal Printing House, Iancu Ionescu, Bucharest, 1914, pp. 63–252.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22.

An emphasis which, generalized to the conflagrations of these centuries, may replace the conclusion on addressing the determination with which people would willingly accept the sacrifice for the national ideal.

The retired Brigadier General Gheorghe Dabija is found amongst the thinkers of the outstanding Romanian military<sup>26</sup>. He had the chance of a career that can hardly be matched or overcome, even nowadays. He was a career military man and commander of military structures up to the level of the division, with which he participated in combat actions. He made a career in the field of military diplomacy as a military attaché and excelled in the field of military publishing. It is regrettable for the Romanian historiography that the work dedicated to participating in the campaign of 1919, when he was in command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Hunters Division and participated in the battles against the Hungarian army, was not published. Through all his theoretical activity, Brigadier General Gheorghe Dabija was an original thinker, who refused to follow the easy path of taking over ready-made ideas and solutions, seeking to promote modern methods and ways of training, of analysing the military phenomenon.

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<sup>26</sup> Gabriel-George Pătrașcu, *Gheorghe Dabija – militar, diplomat, scriitor*, in “Gândirea militară românească”, no. 2/2020, pp. 124–135.

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