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Franco-Romanian contacts and protocol relations (1930-1936)

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Abstract. Romanian-French military relations were enhanced during this period too by many actions and events that referred both to the present and to the most fruitful periods of the collaboration between the two armies. The friendship associations established during the interwar period, both in France and Romania, contributed greatly to the development of relations between the Romanians and the French, between the two armies. During the period 1930-1936 there are also other manifestations of the gratitude of the Romanian authorities towards the French soldiers who contributed to the good relations between the two armies. We can mention an incomplete list, of course, of those who were decorated with orders and medals for such merits. Among those decorated were the names of participants in the 1916-1918 campaign in the French Military Mission in Romania, led by General Berthelot.

Keywords. Romanian army, French Mission, France, decoration, General Berthelot

Romanian-French military relations were enhanced during this period too by many actions and events that referred both to the present and to the most fruitful periods of the collaboration between the two armies. Reciprocal visits were made from the highest levels of military leadership and decision making to the lower echelons, contacts were established between veterans of the two armies, between comrades from the Great War, friendship associations were formed, bringing together military officers, military and civilian personalities, politicians, promoters of Romanian-French general collaboration and military also.

The demonstrations of respect, gratitude and honour for those who defended the interests of France and Romania in times of hardship continued. One such moment was the death, on 28 January 1931, of one of the Romanian people's most faithful friends, General Berthelot. The homage paid by the Romanian nation to the great man which had passed way took various forms. The Romanian Minister in France placed on his coffin the Grand Cross of the Order "Ferdinand I", conferred by King Carol the IInd, and two wreaths of flowers. In front of the church, among the many wreaths, the ones with the following inscriptions stood out: "Honorary Citizen, General Berthelot - Romanian Parliament", "To General Berthelot, on behalf of the Romanian Government", "To General Berthelot, on behalf of the Romanian Army"¹.

In the country, the two chambers of the Parliament organized a solemn commemoration of the General, in which prominent Romanian personalities praised the virtues

¹ Jean-Noël Grandhomme, *Le général Berthelot et l'action de ..la France*, p. 904

of the great friend of the Romanians and expressed their gratitude for his services to the Romanian people. Among those who delivered speeches were General Lupescu, academician Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, the great historian Nicolae Iorga, the President of the Assembly of Deputies, Ștefan Cicio Pop, the President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs, G. G. Mironescu, Doctor N. Lupu, politician and historian Gheorghe I. Brătianu, Octavian Goga².

A few quotes from these speeches are relevant to the role of the French general in cementing the ties between the two armies. Thus, the President of the Assembly of Deputies, Ștefan Cicio Pop, underlined the dedication and skill that the Mission and its chief, General Berthelot, put into the service of the revival of the Romanian army: "With these sentiments he put his experience, his patience, his perseverance, his clarity of mind, all the treasures of his soul, at the service of the difficult mission of helping to rebuild and reorganise the Romanian army, separated from its allies in the west, abandoned by its allies in the East and haunted by plagues [...]. He also saw the fruits of his benevolent activity at Mărășești, where the reorganised Romanian army stopped the advance of a stronger and more heavily armed enemy"³.

G. G. Mironescu stated that Berthelot's name will remain forever linked "...to the fulfilment of our national ideal and, in the Book of our Nation, General Berthelot has a page of glory and veneration. He is one of the architects of the unification of our nation"⁴.

In his turn, Gheorghe Brătianu saw in General Berthelot the symbol of the secular ties between Romania and France: "When General Berthelot arrived at the head of the French Mission, with him came not only a brilliant commander and organizer, but the forever victorious soul of France itself. From the abundance of love and generosity of this soul, the Romanian people, throughout their destinies, have strengthened their faith in their historical destiny, in all the acts by which we have asserted our right to a free and democratic existence; in all the decisive moments in which the Romanians were shaping their future, France has been at our side in thought, soul and deed.

Thus, General Berthelot came to our midst driven by a constant and generous tradition. Following it in turn, he lived as a brother among us, advising, reorganizing, inspiring and sharing without reserve our sufferings as well as our hopes..."⁵

Another facet of the action of the French Mission and General Berthelot during their presence in Romania was revealed by Dr. N. Lupu, who considered that the General and the Mission he led contributed to the extension of the Romanian-French friendship from the intellectual level where it had been confined until then to the Romanian and French people as a whole. "This is the historical role of General Berthelot that will make him imperishable in the history not only of the homeland of his birth, but also of his adopted homeland, Romania" - he declared⁶.

Octavian Goga summed up in his words of homage the significance of the French presence on the Romanian front for the future: "General Berthelot brings back to the memory of the country the noble tradition of two peoples who clasped hands on the battlefield for their justice, sealing with blood a collaboration destined to preserve the moral and intellectual heritage of humanity. With General Berthelot, closely linked to our epic, rise now, at the

² Official Gazette, No. 35, 4 February 1931, Parliamentary Debates - Assembly of Deputies, p. 720-723

³ *Ibid*, p. 720.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 721.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 723.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 723.

moment when his being sinks into eternity, rise all those officers and soldiers of France who fell side by side in Moldova under the folds of the same flag. Their shadows will be the vanguard of our approaches tomorrow. One cannot imagine a fuller and more highly ethical call for future friendship than this twinning of rotten bones. Until the end of time they will guide Romanian sentiment"⁷.

One year after the death of General Berthelot, on 29 January 1932, the Romanian Academy organized a solemn commemorative meeting. The staff of the French Legation, headed by Gabriel Puaux, the French Minister Plenipotentiary in Bucharest, was also invited. Opening the meeting, the President of the Romanian Academy, Ion Bianu, recalled the difficult moments when the French Mission arrived in Romania, its merits, the popularity it enjoyed among the Romanians: "Since then, General Berthelot has become for our people <<Father Berthelot>>. He was thus grafted into the Romanian nation. When he came among us, our house was lit up, and when he went home to his family, we were saddened as if after a dear and beloved relative. The name of General Berthelot is and will remain written in the Book of Heroes and Great Friends of our Nation, and the day of his death is for us and will be inscribed in our historical calendar as a day of national mourning".⁸

The friendship associations established during the interwar period, both in France and Romania, contributed greatly to the development of relations between the Romanians and the French, between the two armies. The links established between Romanian and French officers received attention from both sides. The friendship associations set up in both Romania and France have made an essential contribution to strengthening these links. Among them, in France, the association suggestively called "Poftim", set up on the initiative of the members of the Mission and which included many of the soldiers who had accompanied General Berthelot to Romania. On the 20th of April 1920, on the initiative of the aviator Paul Schneider, a meeting was organised of more than 200 former fighters from the Mission led by General H.M. Berthelot in Romania and from the Danube Army, commanded by the same general when the Romanian army returned to action in November 1918. It was Berthelot himself who chaired this meeting. The activity ended with the establishment of the Friendly Association of Old Members of the French Mission in Romania, which was given the Romanian nickname "Poftim!"⁹. At the end of his speech, Paul Schneider invited the audience to sit at the table using the Romanian words: „Poftim la masă”! – (as in "Please, come sit at the table!"). Explaining the reason why the newly formed Association of French Veterans of the Romanian Front had been given this name, General René Chambe said: „Pentru ce Poftim?” – (as in "What for?"). I need not remind the French who were there (in Romania n.n.) that the first Romanian word they ever heard was this kind word, this word of welcome which constantly came back on the lips of this people so distinguished, so polite, so refined and so conquering - the Romanian people, whom we had met. This word, Poftim, is equivalent to the French expression "s'il vous plaît". Here you are! Here you are! Please come in! Come in, then! Here you are! Here you are! and for this unforgettable memory, "poftim" became "Poftim!"¹⁰. The statute of the Association of the Friendship of Former Members of the French Mission in Romania¹¹, founded on 20 April 1920,

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 722

⁸ Romanian Academy, *Solemn meeting for the commemoration of one year since the death of General Henri M. Berthelot, 29 January 1932*, Imprimeria Națională, Bucharest 1932, p. 3-4 (Speech by General Radu Rosetti)

⁹ Jean-Noël Grandhomme, *Le général Berthelot et l'action de ..la France*, p. 905.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ A.M.R., War Ministry fonds, Cabinet, file no. 236, f. 7-9

stated that its purpose was to develop friendly relations between former members of the Mission, to provide financial and moral support to those members who needed it, to care for the graves of comrades of the Mission who died during the war in Romania, to develop Franco-Romanian relations in general.

Colonel Ionescu-Munte, the military attaché of the Romanian Legation in Paris, was invited to become an honorary member. The leadership of the association reaffirmed its intention to strengthen ties with Romanian comrades and to be actively involved in all manifestations of Franco-Romanian friendship¹²

Also in Romania, during the interwar period, many associations were established to promote friendly relations between Romania and France. Among them was the "League of Friends of France"¹³. In May 1936, the General Staff reported to the Minister of War that the "League of Friends of France" had been set up under the leadership of former Minister Periețeanu. It also had a military section. The French military attaché in Bucharest, Lieutenant-Colonel Delmas, at whose suggestion the military section had also been set up, asked for clarifications as to whether active Romanian officers could join the League¹⁴. His intervention was prompted by the fact that the Romanian Ministry of National Defence had drawn up a circular order, no. 78 of 22nd of May 1935, formally forbidding "all officers to take part in any association or society, regardless of the purpose it might pursue". For understandable reasons, considering the special relations between Romania and France after the Great War, the Romanian Minister approved the exception to Order 78/1935, allowing officers to belong to the "League of Friends of France". The League had in its structure a military section whose leadership was proposed by the retired general Marcel Olteanu. The approval given was based on an obvious consideration, namely that by its aims and by the actions organised it did not contradict the provisions of the Romanian military regulations in force at the time. Analysing its statute, we see that the aims and methods of its realisation were aimed at "developing and intensifying intellectual and spiritual relations with France, through conferences, concerts, exhibitions, performances, publications and any other literary, artistic and scientific manifestations, giving the Romanian public - from villages and towns - the opportunity to get to know the most characteristic expressions of French thought and art.

Finally, the Society will endeavour to be a useful collaborator of all public and private institutions, Romanian or French, in Romania or abroad, which pursued the same goal.

However, the society absolutely forbids any political or religious manifestation in any form. Its exclusively moral aim is to bring the two peoples together through the closest possible contact between individuals and cultural institutions.

The Society is composed of an unlimited number of members: they are of four kinds: a) founders, b) active, c) honorary, d) donors"¹⁵.

A simple enumeration of the sectional structure of the new organisation shows that aspects tangential to military relations were also included in this statute, among others: "I)Literary Section; II)Theatrical Section; III)Musical Section; IV)Fine Arts Section; V)Legal Section; VI)Economic-Financial Section; VII)Medical Section; VIII)Scientific Section; IX)Technical Section; X)Education Section; XI)Legion of Honour Section; XII)Section of Former Warriors and Heroes' Cult; XIII)Press Section; XIV)Section of Physical Education,

¹² *Ibid*, f. 6

¹³ *Ibid*, f. 9

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, file no. 177. f. 59.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, f. 58.

Sports and Tourism; XV)Farmers' Section; XVI)Section of Public and Private Servants. The Administrative Council may create other sections, but the number of such sections shall not exceed twenty. The Administrative Board may also change the names of existing sections. These provisions will be ratified by the general meeting. Critics will be part of the respective sections of their activity".

To be admitted to the association, the candidate, civilian or military, had to send an application to the president of the society, specifying the section to which he wished to belong, which was then approved by the general assembly. The administration of the Society was entrusted to a board of nine members elected by the general assembly, with a president, two vice-presidents, a general secretary, a cashier and a secretary. The Presidents of the Sections were ex officio members of the Council. In turn, each section was headed by a committee composed of a president, a vice-president and a secretary, whose duties consisted of fixing the programme of activities, carrying them out within the limits of the funds allocated by the general assembly, formulating proposals for the future work of the League on the basis of the suggestions of the section members¹⁶

The associations presented contributed greatly to the development of relations between Romanians and French, between the two armies, during the interwar period. On the 15th of April 1933, the military attaché in Paris sent a report to King Carol the IInd, based on the idea that increasing mutual knowledge between the two peoples was also beneficial to the development of military relations. Praising the propaganda for Romania made in France by Elena Văcărescu, Colonel Paul Teodorescu requested the sovereign's High Patronage for the establishment of the Romanian House in Paris.¹⁷

Other contacts between the two armies took place during the period under review, but at a different level and on different levels. In 1932 several French military delegations paid protocol and information visits. On May 20, 1932, the School Ship "Jeanne D'Arc" arrived in the port of Constanta, being welcomed by Captain Martac Alex, who was appointed as liaison officer. It was a new French naval presence, as a continuation of the relations between the two armies. In March 1927 a French squadron commanded by Rear Admiral Bouis paid a visit to Constanta. In honour of the naval officers who also visited Bucharest, a luncheon was given at the National Military Circle by the Minister of War. Among the guests was the Marquis Hubert de Belloy, a former sea captain and colonel in the French Mission which had been led by General Berthelot¹⁸.

After the "Jeanne D'Arc" saluted the land with 21 cannon shots and was answered by the Naval School Battery, she entered the harbour, saluting the Destroyer Squadron Command with 11 shots, which was answered. The ship then docked at berth 5 at 9.45 am.

On the morning of 21 May, a delegation composed of the ship's captain and 6 French officers went to visit Bucharest. The French cadets visited the destroyers and the Base Ship "Constanta", where they had a snack. In the afternoon some of the French officers played tennis on the Navy Club court.

The Town Hall of Constanta offered a dinner in honour of the French officers in the Hall of Festivities, on which occasion the usual speeches were given by representatives of both armies.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ National Archives of Romania, Royal Household fonds. Officials, King Charles II, Cabinet, file 15

¹⁸ A.M.R., General Secretariat, file no. 807, f. 24-25

On May 22, the French officers accompanied by Romanian officers visit Mamaia beach, the Royal Palace, Eforie and Carmen-Sylva resorts, the transport being made by a special train provided by the C.F.R. Directorate.

On the same day, a delegation of French officers and masters led by the second in command of the ship and the French Consul and a delegation of Romanian senior officers led by the commander of the Sea Division laid wreaths at the graves of Romanian and French heroes.

In turn, the Romanian students from N.M.S. "Constanta" visited the ship "Jeanne d'Arc". At the same time, the French masters visited the Romanian destroyers and the Base Ship "Constanta". In the evening, the French delegation returned from Bucharest. Here they were received by King Carol II, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chief of the General Staff.¹⁹

On the 23rd of May, at 8.30 a.m., the destroyer "Marasti" departed to Sulina with the Admiral Commandant of the Navy and the Commander of the Sea Division on board, when the distinctive mark was raised, the French ship saluted with 17 cannon shots, which were answered.

At noon, the Commander of the School Ship "Jeanne d'Arc" hosted a luncheon in the presence of the French Minister Plenipotentiary Puaux, and invited, among others, Admiral Buchholtzer, General Petrescu, senior officers from the navy and the land army, civil authorities - the mayor and the prefect.

In the evening, a reception was held on board the French ship, to which more than 300 people from the navy, army and civil society were invited. The following day, at 1 a.m., the French ship left the port for Varna.

Also in May, the aviation competition "Bibescu Cup" (Paris - Milan - Bucharest) is the occasion for the visit of Lieutenant Colonel Bouscat and Captain Tavera. Welcomed at Băneasa Airport by Prince Bibescu, Colonel L'Hermite - the French Air Military Attaché, Colonel Negrescu and Captain Bănciulescu²⁰, the French officers were warmly welcomed and treated with the greatest attention. The event provides an opportunity to award decorations - the Gold Cross of the Order of "Air Force Virtue" to senior and junior officers of the French Air Force. Among them, Major François Henri Leon, for the brilliant result obtained in the non-stop Paris-Bucuresti raid, executed in six hours and thirty minutes, thus winning the "Bibescu" Cup for 1934, and Lieutenant Louis Stephane Genin for the same result²¹. It was a response to the gesture of the management of the French Aeroclub, which in June 1933 had awarded the Silver Medal of the Aeroclub to the Romanian pilots, Captain Botez and Adjutant Chief Manolescu, for the "interesting performance" obtained in the "Bibescu" Cup, 1933 edition²².

The meetings between the Romanian and French military, as well as the commemorative activities, continued as in the period prior to the fourth decade of the last century, although they naturally had a more or less formal connotation, required by diplomatic customs, were among the actions with a particular contribution to the perpetuation and consolidation of relations between the military of the two armies. Taking into account the specific character of the Romanian-French cooperation during the Great War, relations of this kind also had an entirely different moral and spiritual dimension. French-Romanian military cooperation during the difficult years of the world war, combined with the prestige that the

¹⁹ A.M.R., War Ministry fonds, Cabinet, file 158, f.79-88

²⁰ *Ibid*, f.63

²¹ A.M.R., State Undersecretariat of Air, file no. crt. 373, f. 211

²² Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris fonds, file no. crt. 663 (unnumbered)

French army had enjoyed in Romania throughout three quarters of a century of history, together with the perception of France as the guarantor of the new European order, meant that these official events went beyond banal speeches, the formalism that usually marked them and the character of cold protocol meetings.

The visit of Marshal Franchet d'Espèray, invited to honour the national holiday of Romania - the 10th of May 1936 - is also part of this line of heartfelt and sincere events. The programme drawn up for the period of the stay of the French guest, whose name was linked to many moments in the final stage of the confrontations with the enemies in 1916-1918, included his reception by the Romanian sovereign, participation in the military parade, a conference at the Romanian Athenaeum and several meetings with high-ranking Romanian officers, with whom he had collaborated during the campaign²³.

Another internationally recognised French icon is also visiting at the same time. In an address dated 15th of May 1936, the Royal Romanian Air Club informed the Minister Secretary of State for Air of the fact that "Mr. Antoine de Saint Exupéry, former airline pilot in the French Air Force" was to give a lecture on the 29th of May 1936 at the Romanian Athenaeum. "The subject of the conference is : "Vol de nuit" which is precisely the name of the novel that made his literary glory throughout the world. The French guest had been invited to give a lecture as part of the cycle of lectures with foreign guests - The Foreigners' Cycle. The authors of the briefing suggested that the Ministry of Air and Navy should also give him a special welcome and even possibly decorate him. "We hereby have the honour to ask you to consider whether it is not appropriate to be celebrated in some form by the Ministry of Air and possibly to be proposed to the Sovereign for some distinction"²⁴. The first vice-president of the Romanian Aeroclub (the president being Carol the IInd), Prince George Valentin Bibescu, asked for the Minister's approval for a visit of the French guest to the I.A.R. factories and a meeting with the Romanian military aviators at Pipera: "At the same time we ask you to approve that the lecturer be received by the fellow Romanian aviators at Pipera, and that the I.A.R. be authorized to show him its factories. The Ministry's reply is favourable, and with regard to the decoration, some information is requested on his activity and the Romanian decorations he had received prior his current visit.

In very large numbers, the visits of the French military helped not only to change the view of the Romanian state, presented in gloomy colours by the propaganda of the states that had something to claim from it, but also to bring the armies of France and Romania closer together.

The actions carried out by the two armies for a better knowledge also aimed at increasing the representation in French museums of the Romanian army, its contribution to the 1916-1918 campaign. The initiative came from André Honnorat, senator and former minister in the French government. He drafted a decree to set up a "Museum of the Great War". In order to ensure that the Romanian army was adequately represented in this museum, the French politician sent a letter to the Minister of National Defence in Bucharest, via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in February 1935, asking for assistance in completing the exhibits presenting the Romanian army. He found that the panel for Romania was very limited and unedifying on the historical role that the Romanian nation played in the war. These exhibits were reduced to

²³ A.M.R., Ministry of National Defence, Cabinet, file no. 176, f. 26-27

²⁴ A.M.R., State Air Secretariat fund, file no. crt. 988, f. 484-488

"three pastels and six lithographs by your artist Stoica and some drawings of figures of Romanian prisoners executed during his captivity by my compatriot, the painter P. Bertrand²⁵ .

The analysis of the request made by the Historical Service of the General Staff led to the proposal to intervene with the Museum of the Invalids in Paris to give the materials sent by the National Military Museum, but which had not been exhibited in their entirety, to be supplemented with 60-70 wartime photographs²⁶ . As the Museum of the Invalids has announced that it intends to give more space to the Romanian army, and therefore needs the exhibits still in storage, it is decided to send new museum objects from Bucharest. These consist of three 32/42 photographs of King Ferdinand I, Queen Mary and King Carol the IInd . To these were added six photographs depicting army commanders from the First World War, 50 photogravures of scenes from the Romanian front. They captured images of machine-gun and cannon posts on the front line, the presence of the King, Queen and Prince among the soldiers at different moments of the campaign, ceremonies of decoration of Romanian soldiers and battle flags of some units by the King, the presence of Queen Mary in hospitals, the swearing of the oath of allegiance by former prisoners in Russia who formed the Corps of Ardeleni and Bucovineni Volunteers who came to fight in the Romanian army, other suggestive images of battle scenes on the Carpathian front. Among the photographs of the generals were those of Constantin Prezan, Alexandru Averescu, Eremia Grigorescu, Arthur Văitoianu, Constantin Christescu and Gheorghe Mărdărescu²⁷ . The collection of photographs was completed with various paintings, watercolours, pen drawings, sculptures, as well as a projectile, 75 mm calibre, an album with war scenes, a sketch of the disposition of enemy units on the Romanian front and six maps representing the deployment of troops during the World War²⁸ . The exhibits were sent by the Grand Staff, Historical Service, with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In response to this manifestation of appreciation of the Romanian army's contribution to the Great War, the Board of Directors of the Romanian National Military Museum completed an initiative whose beginnings date back to 1931. In March of that year, a statue of Marshal Foch was unveiled in the museum's hall of honour, attended by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the military museum, the Minister Plenipotentiary of France and General Condeescu, the Minister of the Army at the time. Praising the personality of General Berthelot, the Romanian Minister made a solemn promise to install in the museum a bust of "this great pro-Romanian and precious collaborator of Romania". The museum's board of directors, with the support of the ministry, materialised this promise by creating a bronze bust of General Berthelot, the work of the French sculptor Goué - reported General Grigore Costandache - president of the board of directors. As this work had to be inaugurated, given the friendly ties with France, "emphasized by the trip that His Majesty King Carol II made to Paris, by the trip and the attendance of General Sichițiu, Chief of the General Staff, to the French army manoeuvres, it would be appropriate for this inauguration to take place with special solemnity, within the framework of a programme approved by you"²⁹ , on the occasion of the visit to Bucharest of the French Chief of the General Staff, General Maurice Gamelin. The request is approved. Marshal Prezan, who had collaborated under optimum conditions with the head of

²⁵ A.M.R., M.St.M. fund, 2nd Information Section, file 738, f. 220-221

²⁶ *Ibid*, f. 223

²⁷ *Ibid*, f. 214-216

²⁸ *Ibid*, f. 217

²⁹ A.M.R., M.R. fund, Minister's Office, file no. crt. 599, f.168

the French Military Mission in Romania during the 1916-1918 campaign, also took part in the ceremony on the 4th of October 1937³⁰.

In the same direction of collaboration, the National Military Museum in Bucharest was donated by Lt. Colonel Palasse, the French military attaché, a number of 24 photographs of French officers who died on the Romanian front in the 1916-1918 campaign. In turn, the National Directorate of Museums in Paris sent the Romanian institution a Yearbook of National Museums for 1931 and two reports on the administration and conservation of the national museums in Paris for 1929 and 1930³¹.

During the period 1930-1936 there are also other manifestations of the gratitude of the Romanian authorities towards the French soldiers who contributed to the good relations between the two armies. We can mention an incomplete list, of course, of those who were decorated with orders and medals for such merits. Among those decorated were the names of participants in the 1916-1918 campaign in the French Military Mission in Romania, led by General Berthelot.

Thus, by Royal High Decrees 1227 and 1228 from 1931, the King conferred the Order of Aeronautical Virtue in various ranks, as well as the Gold Cross of the Order of Aeronautical Virtue on French soldiers, which were presented to them by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs³². Among those decorated were the aviator reserve captain Dieudonné Costes, the aircraft pilot Maurice Belonte, decorated with the Order of "Aeronautical Virtue" in the rank of commander, Major Pelletier d'Oisy, Captain Arrachart Ludovic - in the rank of officer; in the rank of knight with swords - the aviator captain Gond Maurice, Mallet Georges, Mailly de Neslé Augustin - legendary names of the Romanian air force on the Carpathian front during the Great War, and Fonck René. The aircraft pilot L'Alouette was awarded the Gold Cross of the Order of Aeronautical Virtue for his merits.

A year later, the King conferred the Orders "Star of Romania" and "Crown of Romania" as follows: The Star of Romania in the rank of officer to Major Jars, head of the civilian cabinet of the Ministry of War, and to Major Grosjean Jules Marie, of the General Staff of the French Army, and in the rank of knight to Captain Olle-Laprunne, of the same structure of the French Army. On the same occasion, the Order of the Crown of Romania was awarded to Lieutenant-Colonel Laurent Edmont Bernard of the French Army General Staff³³. Such distinctions have also been awarded to officers of the French Navy. Among those decorated at the end of 1931 were Captain Jean Fortin and Georges Saunois, and by High Decrees 2255 and 2261 of 22 July 1932, Commander André Marquis and Captain Henry Glotin were awarded the "Star of Romania" in the rank of Commander and in the rank of Officer. With them, Captains Paul Raymond and Henri d'Estienne d'Orves received the Order of the Crown of Romania in the rank of officer and Second Lieutenants Jacques Sassy, François de Roberval and Etienne Sicard in the rank of knight, all belonging to the same army - the French Navy³⁴.

In turn, the French authorities award the National Order of the Legion of Honour to General Irimescu, Colonel Manolescu, Major Mincu and Captains Opriş and Nicolau. The

³⁰ Petre Otu, *Marshal Constantin Prezan. Vocația datoriei*, Military Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, p. 347

³¹ A.M.R., M.R. fonds, Cabinet, file no. 158, f. 153-154

³² Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris fonds, file no. crt. 663 (unnumbered)

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ *Ibid*

patents of this high distinction were forwarded to the Romanian Minister in Paris, Cesianu, on the 17th of July 1933, with the request that they be given to the holders³⁵.

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³⁵ *Ibid*