

SIGNAL CORPS - SUPPORT FOR MILITARY LEADERSHIP

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***Abstract:** This year (on July 14) we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the "Signal corps" weapon, an important moment in the history of our army, with major implications in the subsequent evolution of military conflicts.*

***Keywords:** Army, military leadership, signals, celebration.*

The need for connection, as a material support of leadership in the army, can be talked about since ancient times. Certainly the ancient world has its examples in this respect, for one cannot imagine how the great empires of the time would have secured their rule over the vast earth if, for example, the "supreme commander" - the emperor or the king - did not have the procedures and techniques to convey his decisions to the troops or if he could not receive their reports and information.

Regardless of the historical period, any military action - and not only - needs to be conducted. At the same time, effective management presupposes the existence of an integrated system of links between decision-making and execution echelons, through which orders can be transmitted and reports received.

This simplified view of the role of the link in the campaign only expresses the need for a system, in reality much more complicated and, in any case, increasingly complex, as society has advanced in its development and technological performance has increased.

Acoustic means - voice, wind instruments, percussion instruments - were supplemented by optical means (fire) or by relay (on foot, on horseback or through pigeons) to transmit or receive signals with a certain meaning about the imminent danger of producing a natural disaster or an invasion of neighbours, in the first stages of development of human society.

Later, under the impulse of technological development and the awareness of the need to communicate, the means of communication were perfected to meet the requirement to transmit and receive a signal in the shortest possible time, in the most complete formula, under conditions of protection and safety, with the lowest costs.

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The Industrial Revolution - with its inventions and innovations (the steam-powered steamboat, the locomotive operating on the same principle, etc.) - is also responsible for the giant leap in means of communication between long-distance communities, through the discovery of the electric telegraph in 1837, by American Samuel Morse. This invention spread quite quickly across the Ocean, compared to the long and very slow evolutionary process up until then. Less than 10 years after the discovery, the first telegraph line was already built between Berlin and Frankfurt am Main, and by 1865 all European countries had this fast and convenient connection system.

The Romanian space also knew this resource quite early, namely in March 1855, when a team of French specialists, led by Captain Lamy, finalized the installation of a telegraph line between Bucharest and Giurgiu and established a telegraph office near the College of Saint Sava in Bucharest¹. The operation was necessary for strictly military reasons, the line being used for war correspondence in the Crimean campaign². The French extended the connection, through a subfluvial cable, to Rusciuk (a first in the field) and then to Varna.

For the same reason, the Austrians concluded special conventions for the introduction of electric telegraphy, both with Bucharest and Iași, in November 1854 and, in the same year, established a link between Vienna, Predeal and Bucharest. The following year, the connection extended to Giurgiu. According to the conventions, the common materials and the unspecialized "working hand" used in the construction were Romanian, and the established telegraph offices were served by Austrians. Let's remember that the Austrian troops were operating in the Romanian space in the context of the same war.

The official and Western media were surprised by the capacity and communication facilities offered by the Romanian space when the great powers decided to accept the creation of the United Principalities through a veritable plebiscite - the ad hoc divans. Later, the young Romanian state, entered for a decade in the attention of the European media and political circles, quickly realized the benefits of a system that compensated for its

¹ Revista telegrafică, telefonică și poștală, 1914-1916, nr. 3, pp. 5-8.

² Russo-Turkish War, 1853-1856, in which the Sublime Gate was supported by important French, British, Austrian and Piedmont contingents.

poor development in other areas, and invested important resources to expand it: 355 kilometers of telegraph network in 1855 was reached in 1875 at 3,820 kilometers, a feat equivalent to similar developments in the West and, in any case, greater than many surrounding countries.

Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza thought that this means of communication would certainly be necessary for the army, so he ordered, by High Order of the Day no. 671/1863, to be supplied with campaign telephones³.

In fact, when the competences in the field of foreign affairs of the young Romanian state, under the sultan's authority, were still not well defined, Bucharest's delegates were accepted in Paris to sign the Telegraphic Convention, adopted by the International Telegraphic Union (1865).

Once the capabilities of this new means of connection were validated for the functioning of state institutions, it was immediately taken over for the needs of the armies. Commanders at all echelons were impressed by the system's performance, which allowed for the rapid exchange of data and information necessary for combat management. In the midst of the war, the military telegraph was experimented with by the French, Ottoman, Austrian, British and Russian armies⁴. The first subunits of transmissions appear shortly before or immediately after 1870, and their development is related to the military campaign - short but violent - that opposed France to Germany (1870-1871)⁵.

Until then, military authorities in various European countries believed that civilian institutions specialized in telecommunications could be successfully used in war by simply mobilizing or militarizing them. The Franco-German war demonstrated, however, the precariousness of this solution, so that the armies were forced to establish subunits and even units (the German army had 8 telegraph battalions) to ensure command links in the campaign. Soon, it was found that military telegraphers were also useful in peacetime, on the occasion of applications or maneuvers or even for maintaining and maintaining current telegraphic and telephone circuits between commands.

³ Monitorul Oastei nr. 38/16.VII.1863, pp. 625-626.

⁴ H. Naves, *La telegraphie appliquee a l'art militaire*, Paris, 1871, p. 7. The author provides extensive commentary on how this means of communication was used by the French Army during the Crimean War and the Franco-German War (1870 - 1871).

⁵ Maior Constantin Hârjeu, *Telegrafia Militară*, București, 1890, pp. 16-17.

Romanian military circles were very well informed about the lessons learned from the Franco-German war. The Romanian ruler, Prince Carol I, could not evade and detach himself completely from a conflict in which his former comrades and his relatives from Germany were involved. At the same time, the prince - known for his respect for his word - could not ignore the dominant pro-French current in Romania of which he was the master, so he had nothing but to observe, with understandable emotion, the unfolding and ending of the war he wanted as short as possible.

After the war, the prince sent Romanian officers to the area to ascertain, on the spot, the organization of the transmissions in other armies. The results of these missions materialized in translations of articles and gender studies published in "Monitorul Oastei" in 1873⁶ and in necessary organizational measures. The most effective of the officers who had the mission to study the Western experience in the field turned out to be Major Constantin Poenaru, the commander of the Genius Battalion. Based on his information, the Minister of War, General Ion Emanoil Florescu, proposed to the reigning prince that electric military telegraphy, which has become a necessity for all armies on campaign for several years, be established in the Romanian Army. "Today - it was recorded in Monitorul Oastei - this element, following the last war, is more organized in all nations in a rational and almost definitive way. For the organization of this service here too, for which part of the material has already been ordered, we have found it appropriate to establish for the time being only a section of military telegraphers, which will be part of one of the existing engineering companies, in order not to give the opportunity to a new core creation"⁷.

In this way, the first telegraphy subunit in the Romanian Army came into being, as a Section within the company of miners in the Battalion of Genius, on **July 14, 1873**. This date was assumed by the transmissionists, later, as the day of their weapon. The solution - let's face it: "half measure" - had long-term effects. Although those in charge immediately realized the importance of this specialty, acting almost synchronously with the main European powers, they chose the path evoked above, which made the next step - an own command for this new weapon, with a specific role, different

⁶ Monitorul Oastei nr. 2, 1 aprilie 1873. Studiul *Telegrafia de campanie*; Monitorul Oastei, nr. 12, 14 octombrie 1873. The second part of the study was titled *Telegrafia electrică de campanie*.

⁷ Monitorul Oastei nr. 15/1873, collection, p. 510.

from the weapon of genius, in ensuring combat actions - to be produced only in 1952, this time far behind other countries.

On July 1, 1942, by the Order of the General Staff no. 85959 of 02.06.1942 and Decree no. 3818 of 31.12.1942, the Transmission Command is established. The date of July 1, 1942 marks two particularly important moments in the history of the army: by the Great Staff Order no. 85959 of 02.06.1942 and Decree no. 3818 of 31.12.1942 the Command of Transmissions and the Training Center of Transmissions with the School of NCOs of Transmissions and the School of Transmissions Officers are established.

The politico-military situation in South-Eastern Europe tended to become more and more complicated and was rapidly evolving towards open conflict. The maneuvers of the following years (1874-1876) led to the idea that a telegraph section must be provided for each of the four territorial divisions of the Romanian Army and another for the General Headquarters⁸. The maneuvers were a useful exercise in training telegraph operators for their battlefield missions just a year from now during the country's war for independence.



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⁸ In 1874 the autumn maneuvers took place in areas of Muntenia, then (1875 - 1876) in Oltenia (the bulk of the forces).