



## ȘTEFAN FĂLCOIANU AND THE SUPERIOR SCHOOL OF WAR

Laura-Rodica HÎMPĂ, Ph.D. \*

This article aims to present Ștefan Fălcoianu's personality and vast activity, (June 6, 1835 - January 22, 1905) a research based on the Fălcoianu Family Fund original documents from the Romanian National Archives in Bucharest. The documentary fund dates from 1836-1944 and was taken from the Ilfov Archives Branch. The documents contain information about the Fălcoianu family's genealogy, on General Ștefan Ioniță Fălcoianu's activity. The preserved correspondence reflects Ștefan Fălcoianu's ties with personalities of the time: Constantin Barozzi<sup>1</sup>, Octav George Lecca<sup>2</sup> and the Belgian general Henri Alexis Brialmont<sup>3</sup>.

**Keywords:** Ștefan Fălcoianu; Superior School of War; "Carol I" National Defence University; Romanian military education.

### I. Ștefan Fălcoianu. Biography

A descendant of a boyar family with medieval roots in Wallachia, Ștefan I. Fălcoianu graduated from Bucharest Soldier's School in 1856, when he was assigned to the 3rd Infantry Regiment, as a second lieutenant platoon commander. The name of the family comes from the land they had possessed since the XVI century in Fălcoiu district, Romanați county (Olt). After his years of service, the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza sent him to France to attend the General Staff courses in Paris (1860-1862), where he also graduated from the General Staff Imperial School. During his studies he was promoted to first lieutenant (20 February 1860), then captain (6 June 1862). After completing his military studies, he was assigned to French Army's General Staff. During

this time he also attended the Polytechnic School in Paris (1862-1864).

On his return to the country, he filled various positions as professor at the Military School of Officers, assistant to the head of the Artillery Establishment Directorate, Chief of Staff of the 1st Territorial Military Division, Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of War, Chief of the General Staff (5 April - 23 May 1884; 13 January 1886 - 18 June 1894), Minister of War (23 June 1884 - 12 January 1886). During this time, he was gradually promoted to general (major in 1865, lieutenant colonel in 1868, colonel in 1877, brigadier general in 1883, major general in 1892).

Retired on 17 June 1870 (when he was already a lieutenant colonel), he returned to work on 23 August 1870 and received the 4th Line Regiment Command (1870-1871). Between 1871-1877 he was again placed in reserve, while he worked in the civil administration as a Ministry of Public Works secretary general and then as a telegraph and post office general director. On April 8, 1877, he was again called to duty with a colonel rank and served as a Central War Administration director general, with the War of Independence outburst.

After the military mission in Grivița 2 failed on October 7/19 1877, the Romanian troops' leadership in the Balkans was reorganized, and Ștefan Fălcoianu was entrusted as the Army of Operations Chief of Staff (October 8/20, 1877). The 4th Divisions were replaced by the 2nd while artillery bombardment and position

<sup>1</sup> Constantin Barozzi (1833-1921), general and politician, honorary member of the Romanian Academy, director of the Army Geographic Service, chief of the General Staff (1895-1898), founded the military geodetic service in Romania, which is why the Geospatial Intelligence Agency of Defence bears the name "Division General Constantin Barozzi" (AIGA).

<sup>2</sup> Octav George Lecca (1881-1969), Romanian historian and writer, cavalry officer in World War I, conservative politician.

<sup>3</sup> Henri Alexis Brialmont (1821-1903), General and Engineer of Belgian origin, known for his influence on the fortification plans of Bucharest.

\*"Carol I" National Defence University  
e-mail: l.himpa@gmail.com



corrections were carried out. The plan Ștefan Fălcoianu designed involved uninterrupted artillery firefighting on the enemy. Ottoman troops attempted to break through the circle of investment with a forceful exit on 28 November/10 December 1877. General Alexandru Cernat, the Army of Operations Commander, ordered the resistance in positions and, subsequently, the assault of the 2nd Infantry Division, which managed to penetrate Grivița fort and advance in depth. The attack, in concentric directions against the fortified positions at Opanez, was personally led by Ștefan Fălcoianu, thus managing to push the accompanying artillery as close as possible to the enemy strongholds. With the conquest of Grivița 2, Bukov and Opanez, the Turkish army, led by Osman Pasha, was defeated.

After the conquest of Plevna, at the Poradim War Council (November 30/December 12, 1877), King Carol I, Tsar Alexander II, Grand Duke Nicholas, General Alexandru Cernat and Colonel Ștefan Fălcoianu decided that the Romanian campaign troops should eliminate the Ottoman garrisons in western Bulgaria (Vidin-Belogradcik area), and the Russian troops would carry out the offensive towards Constantinople. Under these conditions, the Army of Operations was reorganized, General Alexandru Cernat took command of the troops in the area of operations as head of the Grand General Headquarters, and Colonel Ștefan Fălcoianu was appointed head of the Grand General Headquarters. The main objective, however, was the conquest of Vidin due to the resistance positions provided with forts, ditches and artillery positions and with the centers of resistance advanced position. In order to be neutralized, a semicircular formation with flanks on the Danube was made, divided into three sectors and framed by 15,000 infantrymen and 2,000 cavalrymen, with 84 guns arranged on the right bank of the Danube and 54 guns placed on the left bank. Because of the unfortunate experiences of the past, frontal assault tactics applied at Plevna, were avoided Ștefan Fălcoianu's proposals within the January 9/21 and January 11/23, 1878 War Councils, related to occupying the enemy's resistance centers were approved and thus, applied on Vidin fortress outer defenceline (Tagargik, Belarada, Rainovcea, Smârdan, Inova, Kapitanovcea, Novoselo). On 11/23 January

1878 Vidin was permanently blocked, the Balkan Mountains front south collapsed, and Mehmet Izzet Pasha declared the surrender of his troops on 13/25 February 1878 (12,0000 men). Peace, however, was far away (the Peace Treaty of San Stefano was signed on February 19/March 3, 1878), the political-diplomatic relations remaining tense between Romania and Tsarist Russia in the first half of 1878. This imposed the maintenance of the troops under arms and the composition of a new defence device on the Olt line.

Following the Peace Congress in Berlin, in the summer of 1878 (Service of the Central Historical National Archives 1878, 1-22) where Ștefan Fălcoianu attended as a military delegate, the Russian army evacuated the country and initiated the demobilization and the reorganization of the Romanian army, the military commands, following the accumulated experiences in the war and under pressure from the great Western European powers.

Ștefan Fălcoianu had an important role in this regard, directly contributing to law elaboration and application on the of military commands organization in 1882, increasing the number of permanent active troops in the army, the passage of reserve troops (militias to the large units and units formed since peace time). He contributed to drafting and applying the law on the military administration in 1883 (thus separating the military planning and leadership, the administration belonging entirely to the Ministry of War). Four corps were established to replace the territorial military between 1882-1884. The measures were taken to make infantry and cavalry permanent (in 1889, 1891 and 1893), initiating the works for the Focșani-Nămoloasa-Galați as well as Bucharest region fortification, the establishment of the Superior Council of the Army (July 10, 1878), consisting of the Minister of War, the Chief of the General Staff, the General Inspectors, commanders of the main fortified positions, the General Secretariat of the Ministry of War (advisory body for military administration and legislation). He also contributed to establishing the General Staff Advisory Committee in 1883 and the Infantry and Cavalry advisory committees (1884-1888), the Artillery (1888), he also created the positions of inspectors general of the Artillery (1883), of



Genius (1887), Cavalry (1889) and others (Oroian and Nicolescu 2001).

## **II: Ștefan Fălcoianu and the Superior School of War**

Established by High Royal Decree, no. 2073 of August 8, 1889, the Superior School of War represented the first Romanian military higher education institution, currently known as "Carol I" National Defence University.

The debut was modest, in the autumn of 1889, in several halls of the General Staff, which was then operating on Știrbei Vodă Street, in Bucharest.

The prestigious institution founder and organizer was adjutant general Ștefan I. Fălcoianu, chief of the General Staff, an officer who was among the first Bucharest Military School of Officers graduates (April 7, 1854-April 7, 1856).

The Superior School of War emergence debut came in a context in which the need for of senior military personnel training was seen as a national priority. Until 1889, high-ranking officers were sent to study in the major European capitals, to renowned military universities (Turin, Brussels, Paris, Berlin, Vienna)<sup>4</sup> (The Superior School of War 1939, 376). This way of education provided elitist training through direct contact with European civilisation and culture.

The establishment of the Superior School of War, as an intermediary and trainer of the Romanian Army doctrine constituted a necessity brought by the General Staff existence, on November 12, 1859, regulated by no. 83 High Order of the Day, signed by Alexandru Ioan Cuza. The officers who made up this body were recruited from among foreign war schools graduates who "possessed special military knowledge acquired through systematic studies" (Ardeleanu 1994, 5), but without having a Romanian military thinking of their own.

Founder of modern Romania, King Carol I had in mind to turn Bucharest into the capital region with administrative institutions, court houses, churches, cinemas, the Central University

<sup>4</sup> From 1919 to 1939, 49 Romanian officers were sent to study the great art of war in Paris and 8 officers in Turin. At the same balance of scientific activity was emphasized the vast Romanian military literature "materialized through profound studies and material improvements of all kinds".

Library "Carol I", high schools: "Matei Basarab", "Mihai Viteazul", "Gheorghe Șincai", "Spiru Haret", "Sfântul Sava", "Titu Maiorescu", the Library of the Romanian Academy, the House of State Monopolies, the Council of Ministers, the Palace of the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Justice, Agronomic Institute, Royal Palace, Patriarchate Palace etc. (Scurtu 2008, 24).

Among King Carol I's achievements one also counts the Superior School of War (Annex 1). In the founding law first article, the purpose of the institution was established: the training of staff officers and the spreading of high military knowledge in the army. The courses lasted two years and the conditions that the candidates had to meet, listed in article five, were as follows: to have held the rank of lieutenant, to have worked "for at least two years in effective troop service, to have had proper conduct in all respects, to be healthy and have a good physical constitution". A military doctor had to endorse the application referring to "the physical constitution of the candidate, especially sight and hearing".

After 1919, given the situation created by the new alliances concluded after the War of Unification, Romania's collaboration was limited to the Higher Schools of War in Turin and Paris. It is also officially recognized that Romania took over the French army doctrine after the Unification War (1914-1916).

From the evolution of the General Staff, from the initial forms to nowadays, conception and doctrinal training complex structure, all dominated by a specific national character, a decisive step was also the emergence from the Superior School of War, which left its mark on high-ranking officers education, while encouraging cooperation with other armies, research and innovation, all leading to the maximization of the operative capacity, and thus to the efficiency of the entire army.

Thus, the purpose of the prestigious Romanian military higher education institution was kept alive and achieved, served with devotion and high feelings of patriotism, both by the Romanian Army superior officers that formed, as well as by Romanian culture important names that made up the teaching staff, starting from Nicolae Alevra (organization and mobilization of the army), Alexandru Averescu (applied tactics), Ion Popovici (military and maritime

history), Mihail Boteanu (communications and fortifications), Scarlat Panaitescu (topography and fortifications), Radu R. Rosetti (tactics), David Praporgescu (tactics and notions of naval tactics), Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu (Romanian military art), Nicolae Iorga (general history), Ioan Găvănescu (military psychology), Zamfir Arbore (Russian and Bulgarian), Aurel Popovici (German), Grigore Alexandrescu, Simion Mehedinți, Dimitrie Gusti, Henri H. Stahl, Dimitrie Caracostea etc. (Pascu 1988, 145).

The need for modernization, improvement and alignment with the requirements of the time led to a permanent expansion of student officers' fields of training, arising from the Superior School of War inauguration speech delivered by its founder, General Ștefan Fălcoianu in November 1889, according to which "The need to create a Superior School of War was much felt and persistently requested by the General Staff of the Army. (...) We will put all our efforts in fulfilling this duty with the most vivid interest; we will comply with orders, and we are sure that we will get the support contest of our most enlightened comrades, and thus, we hope that together we will

all make this important institution give the fruits that the Army expects of it" (Fălcoianu 1889, 764-765).

There have been name changes and transformations, and the aforementioned words have accomplished their true meaning year after year.



Portrait of Ștefan Fălcoianu.  
Engraving by Nicolae Grigorescu,  
Library of the Romanian Academy



National Defence University "Carol I".  
Engraving by Eugen Ilina, The Union of Plastic Artists of Romania



## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1

#### **No. 2073 HIGH ROYAL DECREE/8 August 1889 (Army Monitor 1889, 891-894) ESTABLISHING THE SUPERIOR SCHOOL OF WAR.**

CAROL I,

By the grace of God and national will, king of Romania, to all present and future, good health!

In view of Article 4 of the law on March 1883, on the staff service, on the report of our Minister Secretary of State at the War Department no. 14.498, we have decreed and decree:

Article 1. A Higher School of War is established affiliated to the General Staff, with the purpose to train staff officers.

Article 2. The recruitment of student officers for this school will be done according to the law, through a competition between lieutenants and captains of all services, who will have had at least two years of effective troop service, with good conduct and a healthy physical constitution.

Article 3. The number of students to be admitted now, for the beginning, will be ten. Student officers will be detached from their original units and will wear the uniform of their service.

Article 4. The entrance exam will be written, oral and practical. It will consist of four tests: the written test, composed of two compositions, one of which is in French or German, the oral test on the subjects in the admission curriculum, the practical test consisting in applying the recognition drawing board on the field and the riding test.

Article 5. The subjects of the competition will be as follows: military legislation and administration, military art and history, artillery, fortification, geography, topography, infantry, cavalry and artillery regulations.

Article 6. The school's courses will last for two years. They will start every year on 1<sup>st</sup> of November and end on 1<sup>st</sup> of June next year, from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> October, students will perform exercises on the ground, such as topographical works, Staff trips, border trips and participation in the annual maneuvers. (...)

### ANNEX 2

#### **THE FIRST RULES OF THE SUPERIOR SCHOOL OF WAR SINCE 1889 (The Superior School of War 1939, 37-39)**

PART I

ORGANIZATION, EDUCATION, DISCIPLINE, HYGIENE

CHAPTER I

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL

Article 1. The Superior School of War aims to train staff officers and to spread high military knowledge in the army.

Article 2. This School is established in connection to the General Staff.

The Chief of the General Staff has superior supervision both over the school's progress and over the exams in general.

Article 3. The School's courses last for two years and start every year on November 1<sup>st</sup> and end on June 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year, and from July 1<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>, students are on the field exclusively, for topographical work, Staff trips, border trips and participation in annual maneuvers. (...)



**ADJUTANT GENERAL ȘTEFAN I. FĂLCOIANU OBITUARY**  
**(June 6, 1835 - January 22, 1905) (SANIC) (Military Romania 1904)**

With the death of adjutant general Ștefan I. Fălcoianu, the country lost another enlightened, patriotic son, and one of the most capable army generals, who took part in Romania's military rebirth.

General Ștefan I. Fălcoianu's military and public career is among the most brilliant ones, due to his work power, his vast erudition, superior intelligence, special education, his firm and energetic character.

On April 7, 1854 he joined the Military School, and on April 7, 1856 he was promoted to the rank of second lieutenant in the 3rd Line Infantry Regiment, being part of the first Military School promotion, which included the first army generals whose names will resist the country's independence history.

Later on, in 1859, he was sent abroad, in 1860 he was admitted to the General Staff School in Paris, which he graduated with great success in December 1862, remaining attached to the General Staff of the French army until 1864, the year in which he returned to the country with the rank of captain.

On September 4, 1865, he was promoted major to the Staff Corps on September 26, 1868, lieutenant colonel in the same corps, while he also served as a First Division Chief of Staff.

On January 17, 1869, he retired, and in August of the same year, he was recalled to work at the 4th Line Regiment.

On August 16, 1872, he retired again by the withdrawal of his position. Between 1870 and 1877 he filled the Ministry of Public Works secretary general position as well as that of the Telegraphs and Post General Director. Moreover, he was elected as a member of the Romanian Academy in 1876.

On April 6, 1877, recalled to service, he was promoted to the rank of colonel, as a director general for the Central Administration of War.

On 20 October 1877 he was appointed as an army Chief of Staff and took part in the operations around Plevna and those around Vidin. Later, he was appointed as a Government representative for the European Commission and then as a member of the Army Superior Council Permanent Commission.

On April 20, 1880, on the occasion of the Railway State's regain, he was appointed as a Railways General Director.

On 10 March 1883 (he was) promoted to brigadier general.

On April 15, 1883, he was appointed as a Chief of the General Staff of the Army and military schools General Inspector.

On 10 May 1892 he was promoted to major general, and on 8 June 1894 he resigned from the army.

He was a senator for several times, a president of the Polytechnic Society, a member of the Geographical Society, etc.

He received an inordinate number of medals, as follows: the Star of Romania as a commander, the Crown of Great Romania as an officer, the Hohenzolern cl. (class) II, Osmanie cl. III, with the medal Bene-merenti cl. I, The Golden Military Virtue-Defenders of Independence and Russian Commemorative, with the honorary signs of gold and silver for 18 and 25 years of service, as well as the Cross of the Danube Crossing.

By the regulation of no. 2291 High Decree, awarded October 10, 1876, he was granted the distinction of wearing the royal initial adjutant insignia.

This is General Ștefan Ioan Fălcoianu's state of service, military and civilian, a clear evidence of the fact that this late leader, so deeply regretted, endowed with superior organizational and conduct



qualities, contributed to setting the foundation for of our army glory and laying the grounds, to a special extent, not only for the organization but also for other state institutions, which he was called upon to be led by those who knew how to appreciate general Fălcoianu's vast scientific knowledge, as well as his exceptional energy. In particular, as a Railway General manager, he unified this important service and improved administration, performing a monumental work in this area as well.

The part, played by General Fălcoianu in the demanding position as an active army Chief of Staff, his role in the operations around Plevna – where he carried out in advance the preparations that the Turks were doing, for performing the breach on November 28 and announced the Allied army in time as well as (for the role) in the operations around Vidin, is known to all officers and Romanians who studied the Romanian army military deeds in the war for independence. This will always be carved in the national history. Who else could have been better entrusted with the difficult task of compiling the "History of the 1877-78 Campaign" but this historical character?

This work of great merit is the expression of the perfect work and special capacity which our late leader was endowed with. All of this professor's Higher School of War students who had the happiness to listen to the description of the war events directly from the source, will never be able to forget how much enthusiasm and devotion he placed in performing his patriotic and national duties.

On the occasion of Dobrogea Delimitation of, he brought great services to the country in drawing the border from Bulgaria.

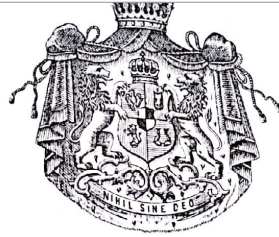
He was also used in the most important and sensitive missions abroad, which he accomplished with great tact and intelligence, bringing great and real benefits to the country.

Convinced of the command staffs' importance he worked relentlessly on the development of this service in which he saw the future of the army, and organized the Superior School of War in 1889, devoting an incredible amount of work and boundless benevolence, which made this high institution of culture the hotbed gathering the ranks of military intelligence, characters, and wills. Under his direction the first promotion of Superior School of War graduate officers came out .

The main factor that gave the army the necessary momentum to start off on the progress path in which it still is nowadays, was adjutant general Ștefan Fălcoianu who inspired his prodigious activity, in military and public life, by a characteristic note that can be described by will, work, patriotism, superior qualities that he knew how to plant in the mind and heart of his subordinates, through his intelligence, character, education and superior qualities. His works and deeds are undeniable testimonials to the love for this tireless fighter military life, a representative of the Romanian spirit. Those who were fortunate to serve under his command knew how great his mind and heart were, how endless his love and how much work he spent for the good of the army, how much he contributed to raising the prestige of the epaulette and the morale of the troops.

Founder of the Military Romania magazine, for which he has always shown the most special solicitude, sending its direction on the most appropriate and good path, he was the stem that gave rise to the next generations who had no other desire than to follow his great deeds good example.

All the soldiers' deep gratitude and the eternal memory that the Romanian Army will hold will undoubtedly make this great Romanian soldier's soul rest in peace.



28 23

# Carol I.

Din grația lui Dumnezeu și prin voiața națională  
Rege al României.

Veind a răsplăti serviciile aduse de Colonelul  
Fălcoianu Ștefan Noi prin Decretul  
Nostru cu N.º 802 din 6 Mart. 1883 l'am înăl-  
țat la gradul de General de brigadă cu in-  
credere că pururea va fi ascultător Tronului și le-  
gilor țerei, și că va fi gata în orice împrejurare să  
și jertfească viața spre apărarea Steagului și  
Țării, în timp de pace sau în timp de război,  
pe uscat sau pe apă.

Pentru care am dat această Regală Diplo-  
mă sub a Noastră semnătură și pecetie în reșe-  
dinta Noastră din București. Anul mân-  
tuirii 1885 și cel al XX<sup>lea</sup> al Domniei Noștre  
Dat în București la 10. Maiul 1885



N.º 114.

Carol  
Ministru Secretar de Stat  
la Departamentul de Război





29 27

Carol I.

Din grație lui Dumnezeu și prin voința națională  
Rege al României.

Văind a răsplăti serviciile aduse de S. General  
de brigadă Fălcoianu Ștef Noi prin Decretul  
Nostru cu N.º 1839 din 2. Maiu 1892, l'am înăl-  
tat la gradul de General de divizie cu în-  
credere că pururea va fi ascultător Tronului și le-  
gilor țerei și că va fi gata în ori ce împrejurare să  
și jertfească viața spre apărarea Steagului și  
Patriei, în timp de pace sau în timp de război,  
pe uscat sau pe apă.

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mă sub a Noastră semnătură și pecetie în reșe-  
dința Noastră din București. Anul mân-  
tuirii 1892 și cel d'al 27<sup>lea</sup> al Domniei Noștre  
Dat în București la 18 Maiu 1892



Carol  
Ministru Secretar de Stat  
la Departamentul de Război  
General Ștef

N.º 763.



(PHOTO: Laura Hîmpă, 12.08.2022)

The life-size statue of Mrs. Alexandrina Fălcoianu (9.11.1848-3.10.1870), offered to eternity in the Bellu cemetery in Bucharest by the French sculptor Antoine-Augustin Préault (1809-1879). Born Bascoveanu, the young wife died at the age of only 22, following complications at birth.

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