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Romania

**THE ROLE OF PATRIOTIC GUARDS WITHIN
NATIONAL DEFENCE OF ROMANIA (1968-1989)**

Summary:

History of Romania shows many examples of using popular armed formations to support fulfilling of national aims, but we can really discuss about such coherent structures, based on military doctrinal and scientific principles, only starting August 1968, when the communist authorities decided to set up the Patriotic Guards (PGs), under de direct command of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (CC/RCP).

This study is aimed at analyzing the evolution of PGs, their command and control system, organization and functioning, the war fighting principles of employment, training and equipping with combat means. The entire analysis was correlated with the national military doctrine of that time and took into consideration the ideological character of such construction.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was the trigger that generated the establishment of the Romanian PGs as armed combat units of working people in towns and villages, part of the combat forces of the national defence system, aimed at strengthening homeland defence capability. PGs consisted of the Romanian citizens, men and women, organized on territorial and work place principles. Their missions have also developed over time, based on the development of principles for the use of forces in the war of the entire nation, the core concept of the national doctrine.

The entire activity of PGs was headed by the Central Command of PGs, a structure under the CC/RCP and supported by the Ministry of the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior Affaires, according to the ruling political bodies' directives.

Keywords:

Patriotic Guards, the war of the entire nation, the ideological character

Introduction

This paper is a part of a larger study that analyzes how the Romanians used along the time different armed formations, other than the regular army, in support of the national defence or in defence of social, political or national aims in particular historical period.

Due to publishing constraints, the paper is limited only to the creation, organization and functioning of patriotic guards from their inception in 1968 until 1989. The events of December 1989 constitutes, in fact, the moment when they went the stage of decay, disappeared as an element of combat forces in the national defence system.

Formation of the Patriotic Guards in 1968 – the geopolitical context that generated it

In 1968 geopolitics of the Eastern Bloc was marked by two major events one triggering the other: Prague Spring and, the invasion of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. On August 18, the decision to use military force in order to enforce the measures established by Moscow and to return Czechoslovak authorities on *the right road of the socialist construction*, was taken¹.

Romanian political leaders, although they did not agree with many of the current developments in the Czechoslovakia, consistently opposed intervention in the internal affairs, advocating the legal right to solve their internal problems. This position shows a division within the block of Eastern European states: on the one hand the what we may call a hard core led by Soviet Union, on the other hand Yugoslavia, under Josef Broz Tito leadership, Czechoslovakia following the Prague spring and, recently, Romania because of its position on the subject. Romania's inclusion in the group of "disobedient" was not only due to the Czechoslovakian problem, but also the result of a policy imposed by Ceausescu that tried to avoid the existence of a central leader of the communist movement who have decision-making authority over all other communist governments, dismissing the idea that, within CMEA, Romania is to be divided into three economic regions led by a supranational body (of course steered by the Soviets)² and, especially, rejected the Soviet model as a unique model.³

The invasion of Czechoslovakia, had taken somewhat by surprise leaders in Bucharest, on the one hand because Ceausescu had not been invited to attend the conference on 18th August and, on the other hand, because Romanian communist authorities did not conceive (yet) that the Warsaw Pact could militarily

¹ *Conference transcript of representatives of communist parties*, 18.08.1968, Moscow [in:] M. Retegan, *1968 din primăvară până în toamnă*, București, 1998, pp. 250-77.

² So called Valev Plan of 1964.

³ M. Retegan, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-30.

act against one of its member state instead of defending it as envisaged by the treaty.

Even so, the reaction of the Romanian authorities, was prompt and extremely critical. First, they discussed the situation in the CC of RCP in the morning of August 21st, when they took a decision of principle regarding the existing events, the most important being the condemnation of the invasion, the need to defend the homeland in all circumstances and against anyone and, creating the Patriotic Guards (PGs) as popular defence formations of working people in towns and villages⁴.

On the same day, during a mass rally held in Bucharest, Ceausescu announced decisions, in an equally harsh criticism and motivating speech, what – for some time – attracted an important popular trust, the nation being by excellence dominated by anti-Soviet feelings, as well as the sympathy of Western governments: *We have decided that from today, let's constitute patriotic armed guards, made up of workers, peasants and intellectuals, defenders of our socialist homeland. We want our people to have its armed units to defend the revolutionary gains, to ensure their peaceful work, independence and socialist homeland security. (...) The entire Romanian people will not allow anyone to violate the territory of our country. (...) Rest assured comrades, rest assured Romanian citizens that we will never betray our motherland, we will not betray the interests of our people...*⁵.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Defence (MoD) had taken measures to address the situation, ordering: cessation of leaving of garrisons by military units; ensuring continuity of management by commanders; recalling from holidays commanders at battalion level upwards; cancellation of holidays, permissions and consent; recall to barracks the personnel contributing to agricultural or industrial works; ceasing deployment of units to the USSR to execute planned fire drills;⁶ strengthening defence of aerodromes and keeping air defence troops in full combat readiness; organizing defence of civil airports; banning overflight over the Romanian territory, except for commercial flights; cease sending military personnel abroad; shift military radio networks on permanent working status⁷.

However, a problem still arises: was Romania really threatened at that time? If we consider what followed in fact, it appears that the answer is – no, but if we consider other aspects, it is clear that Romania was a potential victim.

⁴ *Transcript of Executive Committee held in the morning of 21st August 1968* [in:] M. Retegan, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-95.

⁵ N. Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul desăvârșirii construcției socialiste*, București 1969, pp. 416-17.

⁶ Large units of land tactical and operative-tactical missiles and middle and long range air-defence missiles.

⁷ *Minister of Defence's Order, no. OK 00355/21 August 1968* [in:] M. Retegan, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

Primarily, due to the position of some socialist' leadership that approved Moscow's intention to interfere in the internal affairs of other socialist states, including by the use of armed force.

Secondly, because at the Romania's borders, much closer than normally, were important forces of the states participating in the invasion of Czechoslovakia (about 20 divisions) which conducted actions of diversion and intimidation, such as the reconnaissance on the main access routes to Romania, simulation of preparing military actions or reconnaissance of crossing points and river-crossing exercises.

Thirdly, recent researches of some contemporary analysts or historians, as Larry Watts, demonstrating unequivocally that an invasion of Romania was envisaged should be taken into account. Most likely, only uncomfortable international position of the USSR, reactions of the international community, involvement, even if limited, of Western diplomacy and also the support of China, the only state which Romania asked for direct support, have avoided this action⁸.

Such opinions are also confirmed by CIA daily briefings to the U.S. President, made public in recent years. This, in a first reaction, caused that: *During a recent talk with Ambassador Davis, Foreign Minister Manescu said "danger is not entirely over", but his remarks and manner suggested a calmer view of the situation. Manescu stressed that Romania's leaders considered President Johnson's 30th August statement as having a "cooling effect" on a dangerous trend. (...) Romania and Yugoslavia, however, apparently has not reduced the alert status of their armed forces*⁹.

Later on, it shows that *Both Romania and Yugoslavia will remain apprehensive about Soviet intentions for some time, especially in view of Soviet assertions of the right to intervene in socialist countries. The Soviet probably do not now contemplate any direct military actions against Romania, although other means of pressure can be expected...*¹⁰ and, that *Soviet pressure on Romania and hostility toward Yugoslavia seems likely to continue for some time to come. Pressure on Romania perhaps includes hints of military moves and additional demands regarding Warsaw Pact manoeuvres on Romanian soil, and will probably continue at list so long Bucharest insists on [its] behaviour in an independent, and at times, unfriendly fashion*¹¹.

⁸ L. Watts, *Ferește-mă, Doamne, de prieteni. Războiul clandestin al Blocului Sovietic cu România*, București 2011, pp. 302-410.

⁹ CIA – *The President's Daily Briefing*, Washington 1968, p. 3.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000261303.pdf> (13.10.2016).

¹⁰ CIA – *National Intelligence Estimate*, No. 12-68, *Eastern Europe and the USSR in the Aftermath of the Invasion of Czechoslovakia*, Washington 1968, p.1,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005976347.pdf> (13.10.2016).

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

Fourthly, and very credibly intervene information from Public Archives Office of The United Kingdom which revealed, in 2000, that in September 1968 the British and Dutch intelligence had managed to find out details of the plan to invade Romania. According to this plan, Warsaw Pact troops led by Soviets were to invade Romania on November 22nd, at 4.00 a.m. British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, transmitted to Bucharest on November 21st a telex: *We have analyzed the latest information and came to the conclusion that the Russians are preparing in the shortest time possible military action against Romania.* Total number of invasion troops would rise to 150,000 troops¹².

In conclusion, the establishment of PGs had an objective determination, generated by totalitarian behaviour of the Soviets, supported by a part of "fraternal states", the real situation near country's borders at the time, the relative expectation of Western states that found largely the invasion of Czechoslovakia as an internal problem of the Warsaw Pact, the inaction of the UN and the conclusion unanimously accepted by the national political leadership that, in a scenario similar to Czechoslovakia, only the armed forces and the nation itself may oppose a possible aggression.

The legal basis of the Patriotic Guards and mutations produced into national defence

Although political decision on establishing PGs was taken earlier, not even the first formations marched in the parade dedicated to the day of 23rd August, the National Holiday, the establishment *de iure* was made only on September 5th¹³. The decree arranged: establishment of PGs; composition; organizing principles (territorial and workplace); subordination (direct leadership of the CC of RCP); command and control structures.

The explanations and clarifications regarding the establishment, composition and tasks of PGs had been made with the advent of Law No. 14/1972, on the organization of National Defence, but also deepened more the party's authority over thereof. The first category mentions, among other things, indication of the core tasks (the joint participation with the armed forces to defend the nation) and established the age of combatants (men up to 60 years and women up to 55), and the second category incorporated stricter and more obvious provisions than before on the direct leadership of the party to PGs¹⁴. Fortunately,

¹² I. Coja, *22 noiembrie 1968 – o zi care n-a mai intrat în istorie!*, IonCoja.ro, 20.05.2014, <<http://ioncoja.ro/22-noiembrie-1968-o-zi-care-n-a-mai-intrat-in-istorie/>> (24.10.2016).

¹³ Buletinul Oficial nr. 116, *Decretul Consiliului de Stat al RSR nr.765, privind constituirea, organizarea și funcționarea gărzilor patriotice*, Editura Buletinul Oficial al RSR București, 1968.

¹⁴ Monitorul Oficial nr. 160. *Legea nr.14/1972, privind organizarea apărării naționale a RSR*, Editura Monitorul Oficial al RSR, București, 1972.

the law identified also the need for concentration of effort and, the Article 106 provides that *In wartime situations, when large units or units of the armed forces perform warfare actions on the territory where patriotic guards act, PGs subordinate to the commander of military unit*¹⁵.

The period following the invasion of Czechoslovakia was not only one of turmoil on the country's immediate fate, but also a good opportunity to analyze the way in which Romania was ready to respond to an external aggression. If before answer to the question was relatively simple, since that time the answer was more complex: without minimizing the role of the Warsaw Pact, political leadership began to consider unilateral defence of the homeland, a conclusion that dominated national defence policy to the fall of communism in 1989. The analysis has produced results that have shaken the political leaders. Ceausescu realized that the results of the analysis of the national response system in actions like those in Czechoslovakia request urgent corrective actions to be followed. The main identified shortcomings concerned: efficiency of the Defence Council¹⁶; insufficient number of military units; arrangement of various deposits¹⁷; lack of reserves for long-term support; dependence on Soviet armament¹⁸; deficiencies in preparing the population, territory and economy for defence¹⁹; the absence of a national defence doctrines.

In this context, a new national military doctrine was formed, centred around the concepts of homeland defence capability and the war of the entire nation and, starting from the *main principle that Romania does not seek and will not seek aggressive goals against any state and that the Romanian people will always fight only to defend its independence and sovereignty, territorial integrity of their country against any attempt of domination and oppression*²⁰.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ The problem was regulated by *Legea nr.5, privind organizarea și funcționarea Consiliului Apărării al RSR*, Buletinul Oficial nr. 32 /1969.

¹⁷ Since September 1969 the 81st Mechanized and 57th Tanks Divisions were established, some deposits located on exposed directions were redeployed and, new deposits were set up in remote areas.

¹⁸ It was taken the decision to found defence industry sector. In the next 10 years, dependence on imports from the Soviet Union significantly reduced; basically, except for fighters, radars, land and anti-aircraft missiles, Romania was producing the full range of weapons and military equipment needed. Moreover, it created huge export availabilities.

See also: V. Roșulescu, *România – Industria de armament în epoca Ceaușescu*, VladimirRosulescu-istorie.blogspot.ro, 21.05.2013 <<http://vladimirrosulescu-istorie.blogspot.ro/2013/05/romania-industria-de-armament-in-epoca.html>> (21.10.2016) and A. Grumaz, *Mărirea și decăderea industriei românești de apărare*, Adevarul.ro, 05.09.2014, <http://adevarul.ro/international/foreign-policy/marirea-decaderea-industriei-romanesti-aparare-1_540835b70d133766a8d99def/index.html> (21.10.2016).

¹⁹ All these areas were regulated by decrees of the Council of State, which became laws adopted by the Grand National Assembly.

²⁰ M. Arsiintescu, V. Deaconu et al., *Coordonate ale doctrinei militare românești*, București 1986, p. 85.

Unquestionably, the resulting doctrine had a strong bias based on the ideology of the RCP: *The only leaders of our armed forces are the party, government and national supreme command. Only they can give orders to our army and only those orders can be executed in the Socialist Republic of Romania*²¹. Leaving these issues and analyzing doctrine only from a scientific perspective, we find theses and concepts very well grounded, some valid even today.

The new national military doctrine defined concepts as: Defence of the country; Defence capability; The war of the entire nation; Preparing the population for defence; Preparing national economy for defence; Preparing the territory for defence; Cities of work, struggle and defence; National defence system; Combat forces; Civil defence/protection; Territorial defence. Simple overview of the concepts shows national military doctrine's emphasis on the effort of all people/nation to the defence, the national character of the defence, self-management and self-sufficiency in territorial defence and the role of popular armed formations in the overall effort. All those concepts were also implemented through particular laws.

The composition and principles of organization of the Patriotic Guards

PGs were set so as to include Romanian citizens, who were not included in the work of mobilization of the armed forces, having an important role to strengthen the defence capacity of the homeland. PGs were formed by counties (and capital Bucharest), municipalities, enterprises and institutions. The principles for establishing were the territorial and working place respectively. Territorial principle was applied primarily to the formation of large units (battalions and larger) or to combat support (CS) and combat support services subunits (CSS)²².

From an organizational perspective, the basic principle was the ternary, each unit or subunit is composed of three subunits immediately below. In peacetime, the guards were set up on rifles units, CS and CSS subunits. Formations at battalion or an independent company level were the basic structures. Given the peculiarities of the relief of the country, subunits were organized, equipped and trained in relation to them – the existing rifles battalions and independent companies specialized in mountainous, river, coastal defence or defence in permanent fortifications and simple companies of gunmen. In combat, battalions and companies could receive as reinforcement CS and CSS subunits from PGs, or even from the armed forces when worked with them²³ (Fig. 1 and 2).

²¹ N. Ceaușescu, *op. cit.*, vol.4, 1970, p. 601.

²² CC of RCP, Patriotic Guards' Staff, *Gărzile patriotice și Formațiunile de pregătire a tineretului pentru apărarea patriei – Rolul și misiunile lor*, nr.1577/23.09.1981, Biblioteca UNAp "Carol I", cod B_M25, pp. 10-11.

²³ CC of RCP, Patriotic Guards' Staff, *G.P.-2, Regulamentul de luptă al gărzilor patriotice*, art.15-25, Tipografia militară București, 1981.

Fig. 1. Rifles Company organization chart

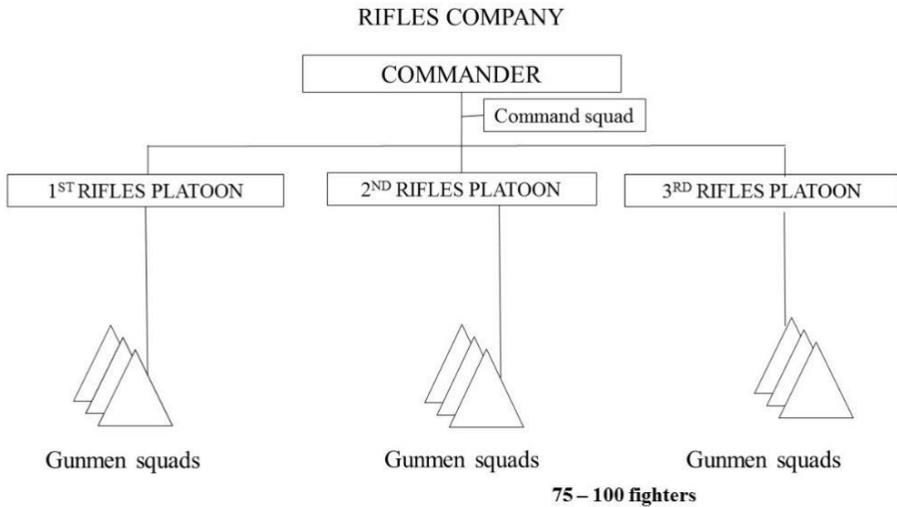
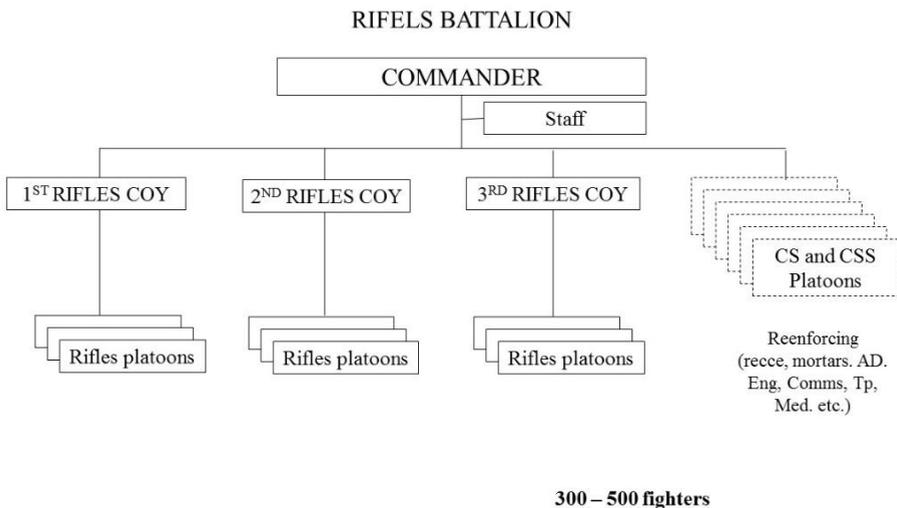


Fig. 2. The Rifles Battalion organization chart



PGs groups and brigades were constituted only at war time by the decision of the local defence council. To create a group, a minimum of 2-3 battalions were needed, as well as a number of companies and CS and CSS subunits and the possibility of creating, locally, a headquarter. The PGs Brigade and Group

were considered joint task force units, which could perform similar missions and had similar capabilities as a motorized rifle regiment (Fig. 3 and 4).

Fig. 3. PGs Brigade set up at municipal/town level into a mountainous area

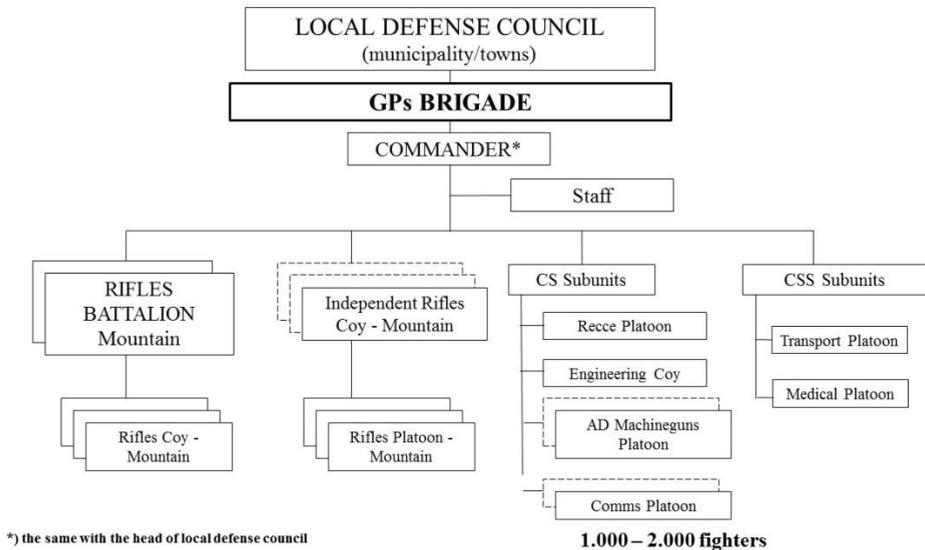
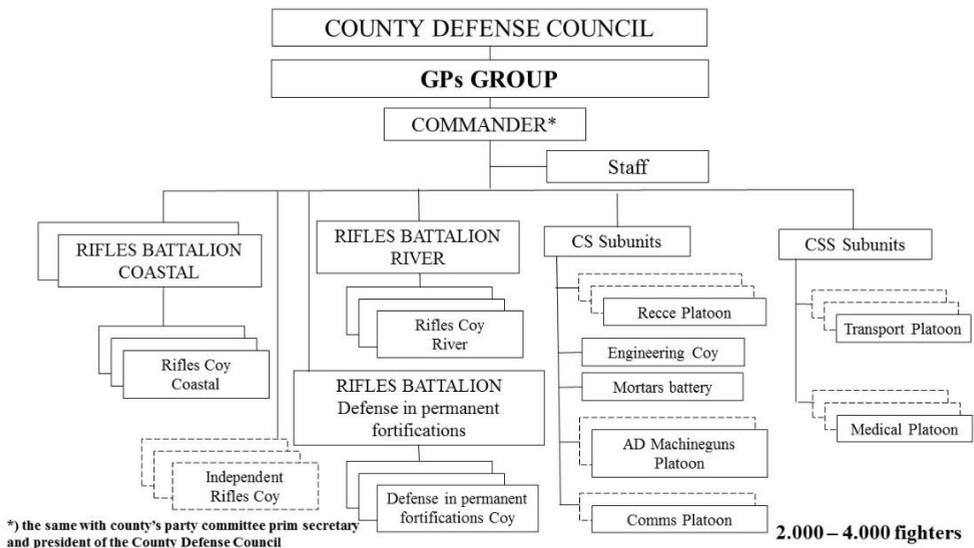


Fig. 4. PGs Group into a coastal zone



The role and purpose of the Patriotic Guards, principles of use in combat and missions²⁴

The role of PGs was determined by the position they have (in peacetime, in special circumstances, at war for defending the homeland), where they are (into warfare area, behind it, into the territory occupied by the aggressor), under whose command they act (military units or local councils of defence) and possibilities to ensure and support their actions in combat.

A first objective was fulfilment of combat missions with the armed forces, particularly for preparing of defence for firmly maintaining localities, industrial platforms and important objectives, turning them into cities for work, fighting and defence. Second task involved, participation in activities organized by o MoI's units in order to protect state security, ensure public order, defend socialist and personal property, prevent and detect crime, defend special objectives of extreme importance, capture or destroy terrorist elements, protect security of land and rail traffic running special transports. Third objective came down to supporting border guards to ensure the security of the state borders. Fourth task regarded participation in activities carried out by fire-fighters and civil defence formations to protect people. Finally, PGs were intended to fulfil tasks as set by the local defence council, together with other defence parties, if on their territory no military units acted.

Even if PGs included a large number of fighters, competing in this respect with the armed forces, organizational structure, equipment, level of military training, reduced mobility and, even fighters' age have pushed developing a set of principles for use to customize their use in armed struggle.

Thus, a first principle was the PGs' use in localities, on the industrial platforms or in close proximity to them, according to their possibilities. Secondly, they were expected to be used behind natural barriers, in inaccessible or hard accessible land, and in areas where the enemy cannot act in mass with armoured vehicles. The third principle stipulated the need for subordinating to the military units operating in the area. Fourth, regardless of the mode of action, independent or subordinate military units, it was expected that PGs should be strengthened with CS subunits from military units and supported by artillery fire, aviation's strikes, and support of echelons' reserves which they are subordinate. Last but not least, the principle of supply stipulated that PGs were primarily supplying necessary materials from sources made available by the local defence council. After having used opportunities locally, PGs subordinate military units could receive supplies, on demand, from military campaign deposits. In all cases, however, munitions and materials with military specific were provided from territorial or campaign military sources.

²⁴ For this chapter, we used as biography: Ref. 23, Chap. VI-IX; Ref. 22, pp. 14-24 and C. Soare et al., *Tipologia conflictelor armate contemporane*, București 1988, pp. 215-31.

The PGs' missions were established according to PGs' role and purposes listed above. During the states of emergency and mobilization, while raising their capacity for action, PGs perform missions to support regular armed forces and MoI units. In the war of the entire nation, PGs were employed during operations within their disposition to act subordinate military units to fulfil a wide range of missions, both in the fight of defensive and offensive combat.

Particular attention was paid by PGs, both in defence and on offensive actions, to harassment defined as warfare *all embodied in a multitude of short shots, executed by fire and repeated attacks, against enemy's stationary or moving troops and objects and his administrative apparatus with the purpose of producing losses in personnel and military equipment, to create a permanent state of anxiety and uncertainty to weaken morale and will to fight*²⁵. To achieve this purpose, PGs used a variety of forms, methods and procedures.

Command and control of the Patriotic Guards

The leadership of the PGs and its associated command and control system is probably the most exciting area of analysis. We affirm this because the leadership of guards met two defining trends for the Romanian society of the time. On the one hand, it tended to ideological communism in light of the fact that the RCP is a "vital centre" of the entire society and directly drove all areas of political, economic, social, cultural and other activities, involving national defence as well and, on the other hand, the military were tasked to support the establishment, organization, equipment and training of the PGs in peacetime, and command their use in warfare. Without necessarily be antagonistic, these trends caused some friction in the relationship among party, military personnel and the PGs. Perhaps therefore, leadership system of the PGs was quite complex, sometimes ambiguous from responsibilities' perspective.

Management structures mentioned above were eminently political structures even if they had comprised members with military training, functions and ranks (in general commanders of garrisons and heads of county military centres). Local defence councils were set, in turn, to act independently of the armed forces. Thus, national laws stipulated that they are *deliberative bodies that operate in counties, municipality of Bucharest and its sectors, municipalities and cities having the responsibility to solve the problems of defence both in peacetime and in wartime. Local defence councils are subordinate and responsible for against the superior councils and, locally against local party committee and to the board of popular councils. The local defence council is working with the rights and duties of a commandment*²⁶.

²⁵ G.P.-2, art.316.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, art. 39. Usually, the secretary of party committee and of the president of local People's Council (mayor) were one and the same person (NA).

This combination of functions and responsibilities has created a C2 structure that we are trying to exemplify in the figures 5 and 6.

Fig. 5. PGs general C2 system

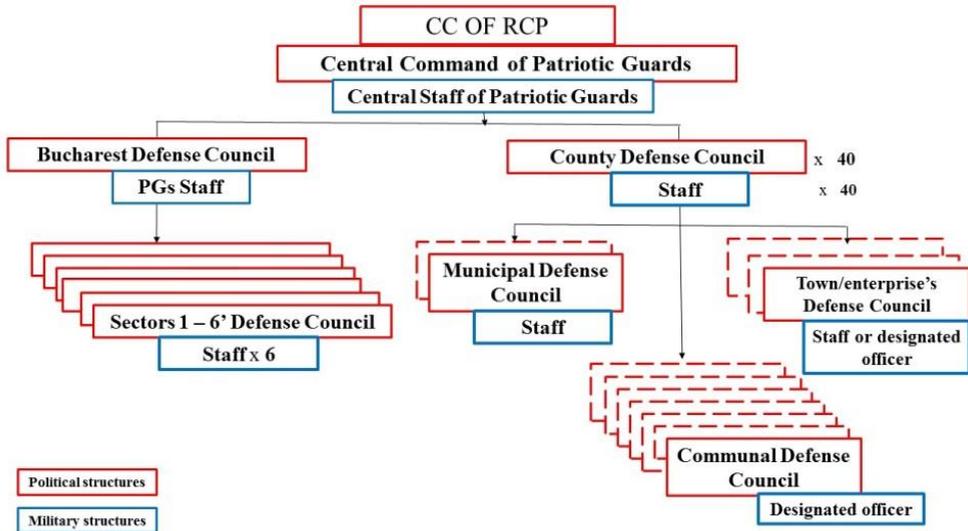
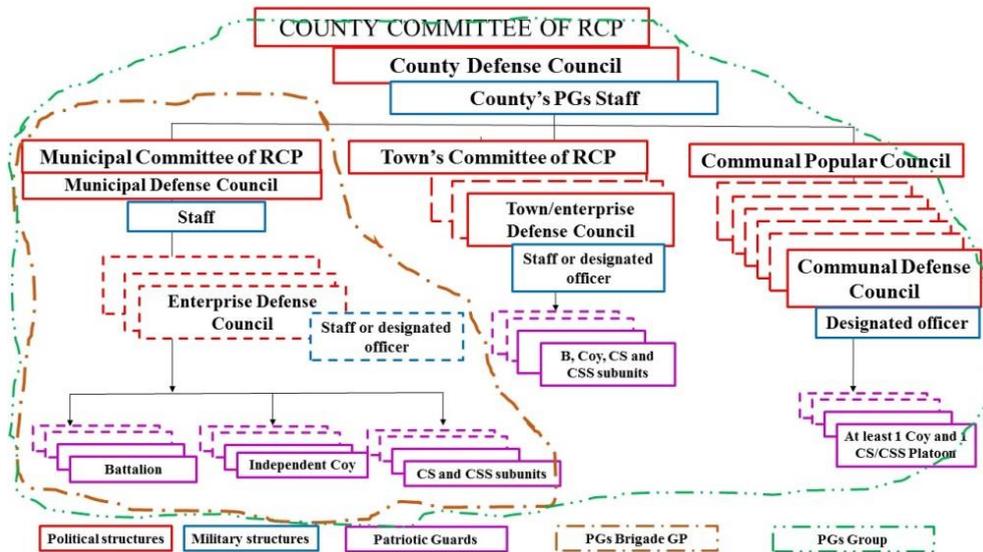


Fig. 6. C2 system at county level



Although one of the basic principles of using the PGs in combat clearly stated that they are subordinated military units operating in the area, it does not

occur automatically but through an operative task-team, temporary leadership organs of the PGs formations and units subordinated to the military²⁷.

It is to be mentioned that the leadership driving attributes and characteristics recognized and enforced in the armed forces were kept. Furthermore, the procedural proximity was ensured by the presence of active (mostly) and reserve military personnel in the central and local staffs that would ensure pretty full compatibility between the two systems of command and staff works.

Patriotic Guards training and equipment

Entire training process had also a strong ideological character. The main document on which training based is *The Directive of Supreme Commander on Military Training, Political-Educational and Action of Patriotic Guards and Youth Training for Homeland Defence Formations*. This document covered virtually all areas of activity, from management, training to equipping and, necessarily having a chapter on political-educational labour, appreciated by communist leaders as the basis for training and action in every area.

Training was achieved through military training and political-educational preparation, the latter one was actually a continuation of the training required by the communist party to all working places – political and ideological education. Military training included general military training, tactical instruction, firing with individual weapons instruction and training for specialists and was differentiated by category of subunits (rifles, CS and CSS).

For achievement of the training, regulations, methodical manuals and instructions were developed, inspired by those developed by the armed forces, dealing with general and/or specialized issues. Also, the PGs enjoyed their own training facilities, especially for fire instruction with individual weapons, within specially designed shooting ranges and training areas around majority of urban settlements and industrial sites. Where there were no such facilities, instruction and shootings were organized into military garrisons' training areas.

The Romanian Army had a key role in the military training of the PGs and other defence formations. The configuration of Army's support functions was achieved by various forms and processes, such as: tactical exercises, field exercises and applications and command post exercises jointly organized; provision of training facilities; collaboration in the development of regulations, manuals and specific instructions, etc.

Exercised manoeuvres represented the peak of this collaboration, during which the compatibility of the two systems of forces in terms of time, space and missions could be really verified. As an overview of the PGs' training I would like to quote the Division General Alexandru Petricean²⁸, who once expressed

²⁷ *Ibidem*, art. 45.

²⁸ Division General (MG equivalent) was the deputy head of Defence Intelligence (1963-1970) and the deputy of the chief of Patriotic Guards Staff from CC of RCP (1970-1988).

maybe a subjective one thought: *we were doing training with almost all working people, but we had subordinated only those who could be mobilized at working place. (...) We monthly perform one meeting of military training, with all fighters of the Patriotic Guards. And the acting way of the Patriotic Guards was well regarded by commanders of military units*²⁹.

Regardless of official assessments made public and the views of someone that were part of PGs' structures (understood to be subjective), an objective analysis of PGs' military training must conclude that 3-4 hours per month cannot ensure a high level of combat training as weather reports claimed. Equally, we must recognize that higher forms of training – manoeuvres, tactical applications in the field with or without firing exercises and command post exercises – contained a small number of the PGs' staffs and a smaller number of the PGs' fighters, in particular those who belonged to formations which constituted large industrial platforms. All these aspects draw us to the conclusion that, despite public propaganda, the PGs training for combat was lower than reported.

To discuss about the PGs equipment at the start of their history, we use again the memory of General Petricean: *In 1968 we started to equip the Patriotic Guards with Czechoslovak ZB rifles. (...) The weaponry found in equipment lists was at the time of the Second World War. After that, we made a proposal for a weapon that is specifically designed to the Patriotic Guards. (...) It entered into production and subsequently every year, with 50,000 to 100,000 pieces each year, we sustained formations of the Patriotic Guards – which were set such that do not affect the plan for the mobilization of the army. Four million people were in the Patriotic Guards*³⁰. That was the reality at the time recounted above, but over time, especially after the emergence of the national defence law of 1972, things changed for the better, in the sense that equipment has been continuously improved.

The responsibility for ensuring weapons, ammunition, combat equipment and other necessary materials to the PGs was for the MoD.

It must be stressed that some rules were formed at the basis of providing guards with weapons and military equipment. The first rule was that guards are to be equipped only with individual weapons. After 1970 this rule was abandoned. A second rule, which was maintained throughout the duration of the guards referred to the fact that they receive armament which was no longer used by the armed forces, or was a surplus for them after satisfying tasks including mobilization. A third rule was that the PGs' subunits did not have own transportation means, used in both peacetime and war, available vehicles were provided by economic units or local councils that generated them. Another rule

²⁹ A. Petricean, interviewed by LTC (r) P. Opriş. Art-Emis.ro, 18.11.2011, <<http://www.art-emis.ro/jurnalistica/703-general-r-alexandru-petrician-memorii-inedite-3.html>> (24.09.2016).

³⁰ General refers to the total personnel that took part to PGs' training, even occasionally, including those who were into mobilization tables of the armed forces.

referred to storage of PGs' weapons and ammunition: the PGs' weapons and ammunition in urban areas were kept in the storage of garrison or military units of the MoD, or lack thereof MoI units.

Conclusions

Existence for over 20 years of the PGs, the analysis of their entire development, from incorporation to dissolution, allows us to draw a broad set of conclusions, which are presenting in brief:

- The establishment of the PGs objectively determined and provoked by the events in Czechoslovakia, external threats – expressed more directly or in a veiled way – the autonomy trends of the national authorities and, the existing signs that Romania could become, in its turn, an object of intervention of the Warsaw Pact's armed forces.
- As courageous and ambitious were the communist authorities in Bucharest, personally Ceausescu, the attitude adopted and the measures taken in consequence would not be successful in the absence of three key factors:
 - massive popular sympathy and support to the taken measures;
 - the absence of Soviet troops on national territory;³¹
 - external support, as result of Romanian diplomatic efforts.
- The PGs, the new national military doctrine and the setting up of the defence sector within national industry were disincentives against any armed aggression; it is enough to imagine the attacker position versus a defender willing to fight with the whole population, trained and equipped, at least declaratively, for this purpose; only in the years of 1980s patriotic guards totalled over 700,000 fighters.
- The organization and functioning of the PGs have replicated the armed forces model. The proximity of the two systems was facilitated by the presence of military personnel in the PGs' staffs and of military commanders in local defence councils, as well as the fact that the PGs' members satisfied military service (men) or followed military training during college (women with higher education) or in training formations of youth for homeland defence.
- RCP has entirely maintained the leadership of the PGs, which – on the one hand – pointed to the lack of confidence of the communist leaders on the regular armed forces and – on the other hand – has generated an ambiguous C2 system in terms of responsibilities.
- Training and procurement processes meant a significant human and material effort relative to country's possibilities and priorities. It had indis-

³¹ Soviet Troops withdrawn following the agreement signed by Romania and the USSR on 24 May 1958.

putable results, but also important limitations. Despite the communist propaganda at least two limitations should be considered:

- the precariousness of a training consisting of only one training day per month, and, the lack of exercises and applications independently or in cooperation with the armed forces;
 - the existence of a quite large quantity of obsolete armament and equipment, much removed from the armed forces procurement tables.
- The PGs' evolution confirmed a principle of the masses sociology, that the enthusiasm of the masses and their support for the rulers are strongly determined by the congruence of objectives, the social and economic standard of living provided to the first and measures taken by leaders for its improvement, with direct reference to Ceausescu:
- as long as Ceausescu promoted some freedoms seen as innovative at the time and generated some measures that led to the modernization of society and raising living standards, support and sympathy of people were located at high level;
 - once the forced industrialization, the political indoctrination policy, the obsessive promotion of the cult of personality, the severe limitations of freedoms of movement and information, the imposition of real demands of sacrifice for the payment of foreign debt and the constant deterioration of living standards took place, support and sympathy decreased to zero, even turned antagonistic before the events of December 1989.
- The existence of popular armed formations, raises a big question about the appropriateness of their existence outside the strict control of the regular armed forces. Romanian experience of December '89 presents some important examples:
- the communist regime itself, intentionally or due to the lack of confidence, intended to crush protests in the period from 16th to 21st of December employing only unarmed formations;
 - the distribution of weapons and ammunition to the PGs, that took place after Ceausescu's departure, and their involvement in fighting with existing or only imagined terrorists, did nothing but contribute to the general chaos of those days and increased the number of victims;
 - the presence in the streets of thousands of the PGs' members, armed or not, devoid of a single command, along with ordinary citizens, all subjected to an organized and targeted bombardment of information, secured the exact necessary mass of manoeuvre in order to run events following December 22nd to the direction desired by the organizers.

Finally, as a personal opinion, I conclude that popular armed formations, as Romanian Patriotic Guards were, could remain a viable option for the coming time, as long as they are constituted in order to strengthen territorial defence, are subject to the democratic constitutional control and subordinate command of regular armed forces.

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