

REFERENCES RELATED TO THE DEFINITION OF THE STATUTE OF AERONAUTICAL STAFF IN THE PIONEERING PERIOD OF THE ROMANIAN MILITARY AERONAUTICS

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Abstract: *The establishment of the Military Aviation 110 years ago, a historical event with reference to the audacious flight made by the engineer Aurel Vlaicu, on the Cotroceni land, with the Vlaicu airplane no. 1 on June the 17th, 1910, the founding of the first Civil Pilot Schools and, later on, of the first Military Flight Training School, specialized aeronautical institutions that will initiate the training of military pilots, represents the starting point that will generate major debates in the leadership and political factors of the Armed Forces, regarding the theoretical and practical methods for the development of this new reality at the beginning of the twentieth century, the selection of the human resource excellently trained and motivated to carry out fearlessly and courageously dangerous activities in the field of air weapons, but also the taking of some measures to regulate the status, the obligations and rights of the aeronautical personnel, aspects that will find their solution by developing innovative legal instruments, adapted to the requirements of the times, which will decisively influence modern developments in the fundamental area of Air Law.*

Keywords: Aeronautics, air weapon, aviation, air balloon, air mission, air observer, pilot, flight.

1. INTRODUCTION

110 years have passed since the first air jump executed in Romania from a plane designed, built and flown by a son of the Romanian people, who came from Transylvania to the Old Kingdom to fulfill his dream. A relatively modest jubilee passed in today's unfavorable conditions almost unnoticed, but fundamentally marked by important achievements, which some of the world's leading countries never had.

Among the first three great pilots of Europe, the Romanian Traian Vuia was the first to fly in Paris in 1906, followed by Ader and Santos-Dumont. In 1908, the legendary Henry Farman made the first flight of 1 km in closed circuit, and in the same year, our famous Vlaicu tested his wooden glider, which, a year later, would lift him in the air while dragged for takeoff by three horses in the whiplashes of his friends [1].

On June the 4th 1917, at 18.00, in the presence of important military and civilian personalities and a generous public, on the third attempt, after a 40 m roll, the Vlaicu airplane no. 1 took off, performing the first 50 m of flight at a height of 3-4 m. It was the anniversary of the Romanian Military Aviation because the plane had been built at the Army Arsenal, with the support of the Ministry of War, Vlaicu himself being remunerated for his achievement [2].

In 1911, the small country from the Danube and the Carpathians already had two pilot schools, a national workshop in Chitila for the building of airplanes, the first patented military pilots and had used airplanes in military maneuvers of the Army.

But the emergence and further development of aviation also meant the solution of three basic problems: the design of the flying machine, its construction and, fundamentally, its testing and operation in flight. The third problem at the beginning of aviation was the most difficult. And for its successful passage, there was need for "fanatics" who, with the sacrifice of their lives, made possible the victory of the belief that flight was possible and achievable. From this perspective, it can be stated that Romanians have contributed perhaps more than others through thought, energy, determination and sacrifice for mastering the air.

Born at the same time with the World Aviation, in times of great trials and changes in international life, aviation in our country immediately needed specialized institutions, capable of training brave pilots, with love of flight, even at the cost of blood sacrifice, able to exploit the new technology. And for the realization of these aims the enlightened minds and the doctrinaires of the times understood that new regulations were needed to substantiate the complex processes of selection, recruitment, development and, especially, to motivate the staff able to fulfill these national aims.

2. FIRST REGULATIONS RELATED TO THE STATUS OF AERONAUTICAL STAFF

Under the patronage of a fruitful development in the first years after its establishment, the Romanian Aeronautical Program, especially in the field of aircraft endowment, continues positively, especially in the direction of training aeronautical personnel. By High Royal Decree, on April the 1st, 1912, for the training of military pilots, the Military Pilot School was established in Cotroceni under the leadership of Major Ion Macri [3]. The National Air League, established at the initiative of Prince George Valentin Bibescu in order to equip the Army with airplanes, was established in Băneasa, in the same year, as the second piloting school [3].

In order to standardize the instruction in the piloting schools and the optimal development of the educational process, the Ministry of War elaborated the *Norms for the theoretical and practical courses for the students of the Aviation School and the Regulation of the Aviation School*. These first regulations represent the initial foundation for substantiating the process of recruitment and selection of student pilots, respectively "unmarried", "... recruited from among the officers of all weapons, from non-commissioned officers, platoon leaders, corporals or soldiers, from volunteers employed at the Park of aviation...", "...having to be well graded by all hierarchical leaders, healthy and not older than 30 years [4].

The training course lasted six months, during which time one learnt "... taking aerial photos and shooting with bombs in the firing range ...". Besides the specialized disciplines, the Military Aviation School taught mathematics, chemistry, physics, general mechanics, geography of the country, disciplines that provided future aviators with a good general and specialized training.

As these criteria did not prove to be sufficient, and aviation had to frame this dangerous weapon with elements of certain moral and professional value, in order to solve a complex problem from an organizational, technical and legal perspective, at the initiative of the first patented pilots, the Ministry of War proposed the adoption of legislation for the organization and operation of the air weapon. Realizing the need to adopt this revolutionary act, at the proposal of the Government, the Romanian Parliament

adopted, with entry into force on April the 1st, 1913, **the Law on the organization of military aeronautics**, sanctioned by the sovereign of Romania, King Carol Ist by **High Royal Decree no. 3199 of 18th/30th of April 1913** [5]. The adoption of this law actually regulated the organization and operation of a new weapon in the Romanian Army, the Aeronautical Weapon.

The law provided the technical-organizational and aviation training structure in the form of the *Military Aeronautics Service* that had in Bucharest, according to art. 5, a *Central Park, with staff, school, technology and all necessary equipment*.

It was intended for "... *the study, procurement, construction and use of air navigation equipment, which could be used in the army*" and was responsible for "*everything related to the administration and mobilization of units for this service, as well as for staff training*". The Military Aeronautics consisted of two sections: the "*Aviation Section*" which dealt with aviation issues and the "*Aerostation Section*" which dealt with the military aerostation [5].

From an organizational point of view, the Military Aeronautics Service is subordinated to the General Inspectorate of Engineering, which has thus become also of "*the Military Aeronautics*".

Besides the organization of the new weapon, the Law on the Organization of Military Aeronautics is, in its infancy, the first statute of aeronautical personnel by the fact that it contained provisions on the aircrew conditions, the criteria for admission and graduation of flight schools and established for the first time bonuses for flying hours. Officers were admitted to schools according to the chronology of the applications, having to meet specific conditions "*well marked by all hierarchical heads in all respects, to be healthy, resilient, certified by a doctor, a statement that the officer is coming unconditionally and should not be older than 35 years*" [5].

The same criteria were maintained for the lower ranks, specifying that they had to be unmarried and under the age of 30. The teaching staff was recruited from the best pilot-officers, recommended for this purpose by their own commanders. Candidates who did not prove flight skills and did not progress in operating the aircraft in the first two months were excluded from aviation schools and returned to the troops from which they came.

The law also provided the qualification conditions for military pilots. To obtain the license, the pilot students had to pass a series of highly complex tests during the six months spent in school regarding the execution of the flight at certain flight ceilings, maneuverability exercises and landing at the landmarks established by the commission.

The text of the law did not leave out one of the burning problems of aviation, the maintenance of technology, implementing rules for technical specialists, mechanics and their assistants, as well as their responsibility for the proper functioning of aircraft.

According to Article 38, there was initially approached the provision of weather data for flight activities, endowment with specific technology, devices for measuring wind power and altitude, chronometer for determining speed, compasses, cameras, a station for studying the weather, projectors for aircraft and three cars for transporting students, materials and appliances [5].

Constituting itself in a true statute, the law provided the establishment of the "*Permanent Air Force Corps*" [5], which included **pilots** (airplanes and balloons) and **mechanics** (airplanes and balloons), each category holding military licenses depending on their own specialty. After graduation and obtaining the specialized licenses, sergeants, platoon leaders, corporals and soldiers on term were promoted to the next rank.

It is interesting to note that the law in art. 11, par. 10, established the *obligation for permanent pilots to fly at least 120 days a year*, otherwise being *sent to their bodies*, an objective set even today for operational pilots, but always difficult to achieve.

The specific bonuses were granted to staff in the Permanent Aircraft Corps according to the category of personnel and the level of qualification achieved as navigating or instructing personnel.

According to Article 11, additional insurance has been introduced for the retirement of aeronautical staff due to flight events, and seniority exemptions assimilated to internships in the campaign have also been established [5].

3. REGULATIONS MADE DURING NEUTRALITY AND PARTICIPATION IN WAR

The outbreak of the First World War, the evolution of the international situation determined by this event determined the responsible structures to identify, by involving the command of the school and the aviation park from Cotroceni, measures for aviation development, based on the conclusions that resulted from its participation in of the Second Balkan War in the summer of 1913.

The settlement of aeronautics as a combat weapon was validated by the adoption of the **Regulation of the Military Aeronautics Law**, at the beginning of 1914, a document drafted by Romanian pilots with the involvement of the General Inspector of Engineering and Aeronautics, General Mihail Boteanu.

Essential action guideline for all commanders, pilot-instructors, teachers and other specialists in military aeronautics, the regulation established the organization of military aviation schools, the origin and conditions that instructors and teachers had to meet, admission to aviation schools organized by private initiative, flight equipment for students and pilots, recruitment and selection of candidates, admission conditions, school schedule, air navigation personnel licensing. The tasks of the private piloting schools for the training of Military Air Navigation Personnel were established, the graduation quality criteria harmonized with those imposed by the Ministry of War, rules for their inclusion in the aeronautical system during the crisis and war, being provided that, when mobilizing, personnel and equipment were made available to the Army. In this sense, the role of the Central Aeronautics Park was to coordinate and supervise the training of pilots in these schools, flight scheduling and all other aeronautical activities.

The developments of World War II led to the settlement of aviation as a weapon of war, and our Foreign Military Attaches submitted numerous reports on the missions and aeronautical activities carried out by the belligerent aircraft, especially German and French. Based on such signals, General Mihail Boteanu, as Head of the General Inspectorate of Engineering and Aeronautics, with the participation of Air Force Captain Andrei Popovici, Lieutenants Stefan Protopopescu and Gheorghe Negrescu drafted the **Instructions on the use of airplanes**, which are based on the necessary measures to train Romanian aeronauts in the perspective of entering the war.

Completed with the **Service Rules for the use of airplanes in the campaign**, the adopted regulation system ensured the substantiation of the Organizational Model of Aeronautics in the situation of mobilization for the campaign, the role of educational institutions for training and staffing aeronautical structures planned to be established at war.

Thus, according to the adopted ministerial decisions, it was decided to organize a course on several series, for the training of air observers necessary to recruit combat squadrons, first by the participation of personnel especially from artillery, and later, given the complex conditions of the battlefield, staff officers, graduates of the Superior School of War, under the coordination of the Romanian Aviation Corps [6].

During the school of observers, the student observers benefited from specific rights of the air navigation staff: flight allowance, equivalence of time spent in school with that of the campaign for pension rights, insurance in case of incurable disability arising during and due to service and rights to a pension similar to those acquired during the war, survivor's pension in the event of an accident followed by death [6].

Teachers and training pilots, mechanics and craftsmen, paid from the "affected aviation fund" [6] also benefited from additional rights consisting of daily allowances for teaching and flight activities, as well as for the maintenance of the planes. At the end of the course, the participants obtained the certificate of observer-aerial officer and a badge specially dedicated for this category of aeronautical personnel.

After Romania's entry into the war, the General Staff adopted **Temporary instructions for the use of aircraft during the war** [7], new regulations, adapted to new realities, regarding the new missions to be performed, the organizational structures of aviation (squadrons and groups of squadrons), arrangement of airfields, protection by disguise and air defense of targets against enemy air attacks.

Through successive measures, there has been passed to training of other categories of specialized aeronautical personnel for ongoing air missions as well. Thus, by Ministerial Decision no. 207 of 17/30th of May 1916, within the Aviation Training and Advanced Training School in Pipera, the courses were opened for "*... bombers and snipers necessary for military aviation, recruited from the lower ranks, with a complete primary course and I want to serve the Air Force as a navigating personnel...*"[8]. In order to become snipers and bombers, the candidates had to be in excellent health and in very good physical condition, to be very good snipers and the motivation to employ the Air Force as navigating personnel.

The reorganization of the Aeronautics in the autumn of 1916 and the winter of 1917, the ever-pressing needs to staff with specialized personnel in order to participate in the planned campaign in the summer of 1917 implied the ongoing of training specialized aeronautic personnel, pilots, air observers from planes and balloons in the schools located behind the front and, at the same time, the formation of a new category demanded by the realities of the combat devices, the photographer operator [8].

The organizational frames adopted by the Romanian command, the activities carried out for the training of the specialized personnel of the Military Aeronautics, the instruction and performances of the aircraft at the level of the most advanced belligerent aviation ensured the success of the Romanian people and its army in the battles of Marasti, Marasesti and Oituz and, later on, for the liberation of the national territory and the defense of Greater Romania achieved following the plebiscite acts in Chisinau, Cernauti and Alba Iulia.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The beginning of the Military Aviation in our country was marked by important steps for the embryonic development of domestic aviation law related to the Statute of Aeronautical Personnel. The process was amplified by the need to train and develop new categories of aeronautical personnel, required by the dynamics and complexity of the missions that took place in the airspace of the belligerents during the Second Balkan War and the First World War.

The results commensurate the efforts made by the first Romanian aviators and the great personalities of the nation who understood the role and importance of the new weapon for Romania's National Defense.

These achievements will be the starting point for the progress that will take place in the interwar period, and later on, simultaneously with the overall evolution of aviation in all its forms and of International Regulatory Bodies.

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