

# The Establishment of the Banatian Military Border and the Social Status of the Border Guards

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**T**HE ESTABLISHMENT of the Banatian military border was part and parcel of the reform program undertaken by the enlightened monarchy, both in terms of its military implications and in light of its social consequences. The border guard institution and, in fact, the entire army had a well-defined purpose in the policy adopted by the Viennese court towards integrating the diverse ethnicities and faiths across the empire.

The improvement of the defence system in the border area had been a long-lasting concern for the imperial circles, as the frontier of the empire kept advancing eastwards, but the period of the reformist monarchy witnessed the most abundant reforms and initiatives in this respect.

Besides the military considerations imposed by the geopolitical and strategic situation of the area, in the context of attempts towards stabilizing the border along the Danube between the monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, other factors that had to be taken into account were a series of local circumstances, as well as the effectiveness of the frontier system, which had already been tested in other border areas and subsisted on its own resources, providing the empire with a considerable military force and a proper guarding of its borders. The organization of the Banatian military border fell within a larger plan envisaged by the Court for safeguarding its frontiers with the Porte, all the way from the Adriatic Sea to Bukovina,<sup>1</sup> at a time of recoil in the empire's eastward expansion.

The militarization of the Southern Banat, necessary after the dissolution of the Tisa-Mureş border, was enacted in 1741,<sup>2</sup> but the commission entrusted with organizing the new border territory started working only in 1747, due to its mistrust of the local population after the latter's uprising during the Austrian-Turkish War (1736-1739). Only in 1764 was it decided that the Banatian border could be inaugurated through the creation of a Serbian and a German regiment.<sup>3</sup> The militarization of the Romanian population in the Banat, which was to end the frontier chain from the Adriatic to the border with Wallachia, was ordered in 1768 and began under the leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel Papila, having been quickened into action by the visit co-regent Joseph

had made in the region.<sup>4</sup> The memorandum submitted to the empress after this visit recorded the need for subjecting the Romanian population to militarization also on account of the need to contain the spread of epidemics and emigration.

The militarization of the Romanian population was achieved in stages, beginning in 1768. In the first stage, 35 villages were militarized, after prior consultations with the local population in a large assembly held in Caransebeș, where the knezes and 4-12 delegates for each of the targeted villages had been summoned.<sup>5</sup> The population had an opportunity to choose between the military and the provincial status; compensation was to be provided for those who would transfer themselves into the civil province, equivalent to the wealth they would leave behind in the militarized territory. Due to high costs entailed by this transfer, the authorities recommended loyalizing the existing population and avoiding any colonization measures.<sup>6</sup>

Most residents accepted this military status, although there were also instances of resistance, manifested through individual or collective emigration.<sup>7</sup> Gradually, however, the refugee population returned to the villages they had previously deserted, encouraged also by the approval granted by the co-regent in 1773, during his inspection of the Romanian border. Another part of the population accepted being transferred to the civil province.

The Romanian Battalion was organized between 1769 and 1773, being assigned the mission of organizing security at 50 cordon stations. On 1 November 1773, to the 35 militarized villages were added another 31 in the Clisura inferioară, Craina and Almăj. The organization of the Banatian border ended on 1 August 1774 by incorporating five other villages in the district of Caransebeș.<sup>8</sup> In 1774, the Romanian Battalion merged with the Illyrian Regiment, forming the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment, to which Caransebeș and 12 villages in the district were granted in 1783, raising the number of villages to 99.<sup>9</sup> By December 1791, the number of militarized villages had risen to 119, with 63,007 inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> In 1805, there were 72,628 inhabitants on the territory of the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment.<sup>11</sup>

The population across the entire Banatian border area amounted to 150,591 inhabitants in 1805, of which 72,628 in the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment, 64,498 in the German-Banatian Regiment, 5,790 in the Panciova military community and 3,675 in the Biserica Albă military community.<sup>12</sup> Colonizations with German, Serbian and Romanian population contributed to the population growth in the militarized territory. In 1816, the Banatian border included 192,892 inhabitants, 100,799 of these being on the territory of the German Regiment and 78,890 on that of the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment, while the others belonged to the aforementioned border guard communities.<sup>13</sup> A few years later, in 1835, the population of the Banatian border reached 241,110 inhabitants, 118,102 belonging to the German Regiment, 106,694 to the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment, and the rest to the military communities.<sup>14</sup>

From 1798 until 1835, the Banatian border had an overall population increase of 115,303, which meant an annual average of 3,034 inhabitants. During this period, the population growth rate was 91.6%, with an annual average of 2.4%. With the exception of the year 1806, the growing trend was constant, which was a characteristic of the population dynamics in this border region.<sup>15</sup> The increase was due to the private or

organized immigration phenomenon. The average annual population growth in the border was lower than the province, which could be explained by the losses incurred by the border guard population in wars and through the shorter duration for which the growth rate was calculated in the border area compared to the one established for the entire Banat. Colonizations with Romanian, Serbian and German population helped to increase the population of the Banatian border. In 1785, 137 peasant families from the Apuseni Mountains<sup>16</sup> were deported into the region of the Slavonic-Banatian border, in retaliation for the uprising in 1784, but shortly thereafter some of them returned to their native places in Transylvania. From Turkey 45,475 people took refuge in the border area, of whom 1,068 returned to Serbia. Between September 1813 and July 1816, 55,513 Serb refugees entered the border area, 36,033 of whom returned to their native places afterwards.<sup>17</sup>

The ethnic structure in the Banatian border area was as follows:<sup>18</sup>

	1816	1835
Romanians	91,207 (46.7 %)	110,938 (46%)
Germans	14,523 (7.5%)	21,879 (9%)
Slavs	83,109 (42.8%)	96,788 (40.1%)
Hungarians	2,849 (1.4 %)	3,739 (1.5%)
Other ethnic groups	1,114 (0.5%)	7,766 (3.2%)

By confession, the majority were Orthodox. In 1787, they accounted for 452,300 souls and, respectively, 80 % of the total population.<sup>19</sup>

	1819	1836
Orthodox	508,720	562,579
Catholics	130,650	227,383
Evangelicals	3,860	7,788
Reformed	2,950	5,547
Mosaic	1,130	4,029

The younger population, of up to 17 years of age, numbered 32,922 souls (21.8 %) in 1805 and 39,189 souls (22.3 %) in 1815.

The mobility of the population was relatively large in the Banatian border area. On 25 February 1775, 199 families returned from Wallachia, where they had probably sought refuge on account of the militarization. The War of 1788 caused, in turn, massive population movements. In July 1789, the military authorities' reports recorded 7,143 missing people or prisoners captured by the Turks, and only 67 of them returned that year. In December 1790, the military authorities ordered 5-year tax exemptions for those who would return to the border area from Hungary or Transylvania. In November 1810, 267 refugees from Wallachia settled in the border region, followed by another 252 in January-February 1811. During the revolution in Serbia, following the defeats they had suffered, a large number of Serbs fled to the border area. The military authorities' reports estimated their number to 45,475 in 1813, of which only 1,066 returned. That

year, the aid allotted by the military command for the Serb refugees increased to 2 Kreuzers/day to 6 Kreuzers/day, and for the Romanian refugees in Oltenia it was set at 3 Kreuzers/day in 1815.<sup>20</sup> In terms of population density, according to Hitzinger's assessment, this was the lowest in the entire monarchy, Fenyes estimating it to 96 inhabitants/square mile.

In 1805, the social and occupational structure of the border guard population reveals that agricultural work prevailed, as practised by 20,995 men in the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment and 18,729 in the German Regiment. The other categories had a much lower share in the total population: clerics - 164 in the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment and 113 in the German one; nobles - 3 in the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment; officials - 126 in the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment; bourgeois - 302 in the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment and 183 in the German one; domestics, gardeners, servants - 304 in the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment.<sup>21</sup>

The organization of the Banatian border in administrative, judicial, fiscal and military terms was gradually enacted, by extending the older legislation from other border areas or standardizing the normative system from all the margins of the Empire. The "military rights for the Generalate of Carlstadt and Varaşdin" ("Militär-Gränzrechte für das Karlstädter und Varasdiner Generalat") were extended in 1778 over to the Banatian border area, regulating the legal organization and the laws in force in the border guard territories.<sup>22</sup> The administrative organization was unified through the cantonal system, enforced in the Banatian border since 1787.<sup>23</sup> The constitution of the frontier territories of 1807 accomplished the border reform.

In 1787, through the "Sistemalverordnung" ("the cantonal system"), the unitary organization was introduced across all the Croatian, Slavonic and Banatian border areas, based on the principle of the separation between military and civilian affairs. According to this regulation, the regiment formed a tactical unit, with a purely military character, and the territory and population from the area pertaining to it formed the canton or district for the recruitment of the regiment in question. A dual - military and administrative - authority was thus established, exercised separately in the regiment and in the canton. The regimental commander had exclusively military duties and his authority concerned solely the army, while a lieutenant-colonel or a major was appointed at the helm of the canton, in charge of its administrative affairs.

The structure of the border guard administration was in agreement with the military organization of the regiment, consisting of two war battalions and two defensive divisions. The canton was organized into two districts, corresponding to the war battalions, led by a captain each and subdivided into *ocoale* (subdistricts), two in each district, equivalent to the constituencies of three companies. In the constituencies pertaining to the companies, the administrative functions were exercised by the canton officer, who was also invested with judicial powers in matters of lesser importance. He has responsibilities in the fiscal, educational, forestry or rural police domains. In the canton, the judicial responsibilities were incumbent on the auditor, while in the regiment the belonged to the syndic. At the lower rung of the system, the superior control authority was exerted by the village inspector, the master sergeant or the corporal, aided by a sub-inspector, sometimes, in the larger villages.

The separation between the military and the administrative affairs created confusion and divergences, insofar as the power holders were concerned. The cantonal system operated until 1800, when it was dismantled, under a new ordinance, “Regulierungs und Systemal Verordnung,” whereby the autonomous cantonal administration was repealed and replaced with an administrative body of officers. The regiment commander held once again the supreme authority on all the matters of the territory, helped by a senior officer who took over the responsibilities of the former *ocol* commander. The company commanders had an officer in their suborder, with the duties of the former canton officer. The new ordinance put an end to the dualism existing theretofore, concentrating all power in the hands of the regiment or company commander, in hierarchical order.<sup>24</sup>

On a legal level, the laws introduced in 1778 realized a partial modernization of the judiciary and the legislative system. The principles on which the “frontier rights” were based reflected a stage of transition towards a modern legal system. Founded upon the principles of natural rights, tolerance and Christian morality, the border guard laws applied only to the militarized inhabitants.

In criminal matters, the laws in force were the decrees and ordinances promulgated by Charles V, Ferdinand III, Joseph I and Maria Theresa, including “Constitutio criminalis,” insofar as they were compatible with the border guard system. The subsequent patents issued by Joseph II and the other emperors were extended to the frontier area or were adapted to the border guard legislation.

In civil matters, the law existing in the hereditary provinces was applied, with the same conditions referring to compatibility. In case of proved guilt, weapons, the agricultural inventory and the military fee were excluded from prosecution. The spiritual jurisdiction of the clergy was maintained in force and the regulations of the line regiments were applied with the same reserve of compatibility. Judicial organization was conceived in line with the military hierarchical structures, the ultimate court of appeal being the supreme tribunal in each generalate, while at the regiment level there operated a tribunal consisting of an auditor, assisted by a syndic and four assessors with the rank of officer or sub-officer. The regimental court, with the role of a first instance court, heard all criminal or civil cases, exercising jurisdiction over the entire population from the territory of the regiment, with the exception of the Orthodox priests, whose cases, in the first instance, were heard by the supreme tribunal. The Catholic clergy were removed from the jurisdiction of the secular courts. At the company level, the commander had legal powers in its territory, limited to the minor cases.<sup>25</sup>

In this administrative, legal and military framework, which was clearly enacted and regulated, being restricted, however, by military rigors, the social life of the Romanian border guards unfolded; thanks to their military position, they had been elevated to a higher social status than that of the population in the civilian province, primarily through their quality of free men. Their responsibilities included: providing the cordon guards, the deterrence of smuggling, combating wrongdoers and ensuring the security of the province, performing the garrison service in Timișoara through paid guards and military service in time of war, levying capitation and income tax.<sup>26</sup>

In exchange for these obligations, the border guards were entitled to use the military fee, to maintain the capitation and income tax to a certain invariable level, to be

exempted from the tithe and the industry tax, to freely use the mills, abattoirs, wineries and the traders' rights, to be exempted from taxes in time of war, to be compensated for service on the cordon in excess of their statutory obligations, to be exempted from capitation in the officers' case, and to make beer or spirits for their domestic needs.<sup>27</sup>

Not all the men were armed on the border territory. The cantonal system established in 1787 set the manpower of a regiment to 2,789 soldiers and 21 commanding officers during peacetime. Exceptionally, during peace the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment could have the wartime manpower (3,378 people) because of its very large constituency. The other available men worked the land, the forest, engaged in haulage or worked on roads, bridges and other assignments. Only in case of war was the unarmed population used in the cordon and garrison service. Executing productive work in agriculture, trade and the crafts, this population was responsible for the maintenance of the troop, or the border guards in the family.<sup>28</sup>

The effectiveness of the border guard system rested on the special social and economic status of the inhabitants from the frontier areas. The basic cell on the boundary was the so-called *comunion*, the frontier guard family or home, in which several persons were associated, whether related or not, enrolled in the same house (family), and holding joint possession over the real estates, in exchange for which they fulfilled military obligations. Those who did not perform the duties pertaining to the house for free were not members of the *comunion* and belonged to the category of strangers. This category included the servants, whose relations with the masters were regulated under the patent of 1786. Living in the *comunion* and owning land in entirety, ensured the efficiency of the frontier guard system, the ability to survive on their own resources, and provided a considerable military force, always ready for battle, with a minimum of expense.<sup>29</sup>

At the head of the *comunion* stood the family father, the oldest and most industrious of the components, aided by the mother of the family, who was not always his wife. The frontier constitution of 1807 included a series of stipulations regarding the organization of the house (family). The family heads were elected from among the members according to a series of moral, age or diligence-related criteria. To strengthen their authority, the constitution forbade punishing them in public. The members of a family had joint ownership over the property and all assets, and did not have a separate household in the form of capitals, tools, etc. In important matters concerning the family, sales, exchanges, leases of property, the final decision belonged to all the adult men in a family.

In principle, the laws of the 18<sup>th</sup> century did not admit one's exiting from the *comunion*. Under the constitution of 1807, however, exceptional cases were also provided for, concerning leaving joint ownership or the division of the family. Stipulations were also included regarding the conditions for entry into *comunion* and the association terms.

The frontier guard family was endowed, with the title of commonage, with a fee considered the equivalent of the pay for satisfying their military obligations. In time there appeared a series of new regulations concerning ownership status. "Frontier rights" regulated the regime of the buildings, ending abuse or cancelling illegal transactions. The right of ownership was transmitted to the successors, respecting the privilege of masculinity. If more than one, male descendants could divide the inheritance into equal parts only if the resulting shares were sufficient for the subsistence of the population on the

territory of the regiment. The priests from the border area also had ownership rights, in addition to the parish *sesie* (plot of land), on condition that the legal number of armed men be maintained. Those who were not part of the military estate did not have this right.

The fees were inalienable. Only exchanges or internal transfers of real estate property inside the regiment were allowed, most often for the sake of additions. Also, they could not be encumbered by easements, interest, rent, etc. For each fee, the house gave and maintained a footman or a horseman, but could not be forced to maintain more than three infantry and two cavalry, even if the number of fees was greater than the number of armed men. Tools and cattle, as part of the fee, had an identical legal status.

The legal ownership regime was partially modified by the frontier constitution of 1807, which exceptionally admitted the right of ownership also for people who did not perform services in the border area. Therefore, depending on the real estate possession, the border residents were classified into the following categories: border guards, privileged locals, border guards with limited rights and privileged strangers.

To ensure the fulfilment of the border guard family's needs and to prevent the fragmentation of the fee, the frontier constitution of 1807 imposed a series of restrictions on one part of the possession, which was divided into immovable (*stătătoare*) estates and movable (*întrecătoare*) estates. The former consisted of a dwelling house, a yard, a garden, an agricultural inventory and a land plot. The area of the border guard plot was determined according to the number of military personnel in the house (family) and of the family members. On the territory of the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment, the entire estate could measure 24 acres (18 of arable land and 6 of pastures) or there could be divisions of  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ . In the case of the German Regiment, it was of 34 acres, with the same divisions.<sup>30</sup> The division into movable and immovable estates was strictly regulated. If the border guard owned one quarter of an estate or less, it was registered entirely under the category "immovable" estate, while the excess of up to  $\frac{5}{8}$  belonged to the category "movable." When the fee exceeded  $\frac{5}{8}$  of the estate,  $\frac{1}{2}$  was registered as immovable, while the rest as movable. For an entire estate in the immovable category, the family had to possess also  $\frac{1}{4}$  assets in the moveable category. Buildings of any kind were subjected to the regime of movable assets. The legal regime of ownership was regulated in keeping with the two categories.<sup>31</sup> Immovable assets were inalienable, with certain exceptions: departure from the frontier territory, separation from the old family, the owner's incapacity to exploit it, the acquisition of excessively large areas. It could not be encumbered or leased, except in certain specified cases: the lack of men capable of work, family impoverishment, etc. By contrast, movable assets could be sold, encumbered or leased, but only with the regiment's approval. The border guards had the right of pre-emption on the buildings that did not serve border guard purposes. The 1807 Constitution provided for the right of expropriation, with redemption, for military or public works.

Privileged locals included merchants and craftsmen: they were separated from the *communion* and were not part of the military staff. In the border area, they could only own a house and two acres (3 - in the German Regiment) of arable land. Active officers, clerks and Catholic priests also belonged to this category. Orthodox priests who

lived in the *comunion* and fulfilled military duties enjoyed the same status and rights as border guards.

Privileged strangers were all the people who did not belong to the aforementioned categories and who, under the Constitution, could not acquire immovable assets in the border area, except for those who had owned possessions prior to this enactment.<sup>32</sup>

To supplement their income from farming the land, border guards had the right to carry out other productive activities, such as the crafts, trade, etc. In the border area, craftsmen were divided into two categories: those organized in guilds, the only ones who were considered professionals, and those pursuing their craft outside the guild, as a secondary activity besides working the fields. Basically, crafts that were not subject to organization under a guild were accessible to everyone. Similarly, the trade in cattle and agricultural products was unrestrained, to the extent that it did not affect the frontier guard service. Considered an additional source of income, chance trade in agricultural produce did not confer border guards the status of professional merchants. This belonged solely to merchants who were detached from the *comunion*. Border guards were entitled to make regular exchanges with the Turks, respecting the sanitary and customs provisions. Professionals, craftsmen and merchants were exempted from military duties.

Except for those who were invalid, border guards were obliged to pay a capitation of 4 florins and an income tax of 17 Kreuzers/acre, from the age of 16 on, regardless of whether or not they were under arms. For cordon services they received a soldier's pay in the amount of 12 florins annually and they were exempted from tithes. Those unarmed who were able to work, performed 18 days of manual labour in the field of public works and 4 days of haulage for each beast of burden. One day of haulage was equal to two days of manual corvée. Extra work days were paid with 15 Kreuzers. In the Banat border area there was also a system of corvée redemption, with 12 florins/year for the days of manual labour and 40 Kreuzers for those of carting.<sup>33</sup>

The imperial ordinance of 1800 brought a number of improvements to the border guards' status. First, the situation of the Orthodox clergy was improved, since they were disburdened from having to carry out field work. Capitation was abolished, but income tax was maintained. Just like income tax, corvées were set depending on the branch of agriculture at stake. The taxation system by person and exemptions granted to the ennobled people were cancelled.<sup>34</sup>

In its turn, the frontier constitution of 1807 amended, in part, the previous regulations. Among the advantages incumbent on the border guards under the new law, outlined in the instructions issued by the central authorities to the regiments, there was a clearer stipulation of their rights and obligations, the guaranteeing of inheritance rights to immovable assets, the right for the far too large families to be divided, the free endowment with weapons and ammunition, the entitlement of border guard houses to a pay of 6 zlotys annually during wartime, the gradual relief from corvées of the houses of armed border guards, the reduction of the corvée redemption fee to 10 $\frac{2}{3}$  Kreuzers; at the same time, the tax on communal labour increased to 20 Kreuzers, a maximum limit of corvées, which could not be exceeded, was established, buildings were subjected to a classification for a fairer distribution of duties, and mills and industries that ensured the household needs were relieved from tax burdens.



Among the rights to which border guards were entitled, most of them concerned the category of armed guards. Their families benefited from lower taxes for each armed guard during peacetime: 12 zlotys from the land tax. Annually, from the Erarium funds, each armed guard received a pair of boots, belts, weapons and ammunition. In cases of camp concentration or military assignments outside the regimental district, border guards received victuals from the Erarium, while in time of war they also received imperial *mundir* (gear), which remained theirs after the end of hostilities. In the meantime, however, the exemption from tax of the house was reduced to 6 zlotys, as the soldiers were fed by the Erarium. Unenrolled border guards who executed cordon service received, therefore, 4 Kreuzers/day.

As provided for by the Constitution of 1807, the border guards' duties fell into three categories: military, labour and monetary. The military tasks mentioned so far, including the obligation of regular instruction, arose from the military character specific to the border guard institution. Obligations in labour and money were carried out by virtue of the duties that all subjects had to the state (emperor). They did not reflect a servile condition, like in the civil province, given the border guards' status as free people, but a specific form of the frontier system, which had been conceived to support itself on its own resources.

Labour obligations to the commune or the Erarium were classified into village labour and imperial (erarial) labour. The former was paid or free, while the latter was determined or undetermined. As part of the free imperial labour duty, border guards provided a day of manual labour and half a day of carting for each acre of land, working in the construction or maintenance of roads to be used for mail, commercial or military purposes, cleaning the river beds, guarding the forest, lumbering and transporting wood, building erarial houses and making cordon stones. Those who were granted exemption were the officers, regulars and those who did not belong to the border guard structures, but who had to redeem this duty with a tax of 25½ Kreuzers/acre. Staff officers were also exempted from redemption, as were those without immovable assets, the Orthodox parish priests with parish land plots, the monasteries and other categories. Tax reductions were given to Orthodox parish priests belonging to a house, which was relieved from tax burdens for 34 acres of the land it owned. Depending on their rank, the houses of the armed guards had exemptions from 10 to 5 *fālcii* (1 *falcie* was the equivalent of 1.4 ha). Those who fallowed meadows were exempted for those areas for 6 years.

Paid imperial labour duty, which was compulsory for the border guards, was regulated to 12 days a year for one man and to three days for the livestock; under rulings issued by the general command, it could be raised up to 15 and, respectively, 4 days. The price of a workday had increased to 20 Kreuzers by 1807.

Irrespective of the size of the border guard plot, determined village labour, which was mandatory for all the men who were capable of work, was set at a maximum of 8 days of manual labour and 4 days of carriage for each plough beast.<sup>35</sup>

Monetary duties were incumbent on all estate owners, depending on the extent and quality of the land (differentiated into three categories):<sup>36</sup>

	Ploughland			Pastures			Vineyards	Orchards
	1	2	3	1	2	3	-	-
German Reg. (Kr.)	32	26	20	32	26	20	3	40
Rom.-Il. Reg. (Kr.)	32	29	18	26	20	14	3	40

The family's house and pen were exempted from land tax. The provincials who had acquired their immovable assets in the border area before 1800 paid a sole fee of 52 Kreuzers. All owners who did not belong to the military staff paid twice the amount of the land tax.

No tax was levied for the vegetable gardens of the staff and superior officers, for the mulberry orchards, the parish estates, the monasteries' land, for the acres granted to the military mail couriers and for the fallowed land plots (for a period of 6 years). The parishes priests included in the *communio* were exempted from tax for 24 arable acres, 10 acres of meadow and 8 of pasture of the total owned by that house.

The persons who had settled in the border territory and did not exercise a profession or own a possession formed, however, a family and paid redemption tax, worth 4 zlotys, because they benefited from defence inside the border area. Servants and the bourgeois were exempted from this tax. The Jews on the territory of the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment paid a redemption tax of 8, 6 or 4 zlotys, depending on their income.

The data presented above reveal a status that was clearly favourable to the border area compared to other Romanian areas in the monarchy, illustrated by the border guards' condition as free men, their better financial situation and a series of facilities, such as the access to trades and commerce, to education, to freedom of religion and the possibility of climbing the military hierarchical ladder.<sup>37</sup> While in the initial organization phase of the Banatian border territory only front-rankers and corporals were chosen from among the Romanians, after the stabilization of the border, the Romanians' access to the local or central military schools led to the formation of a compact layer of sub-officers and, from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, even of officers from amongst their ranks, illustrating the phenomenon of the crystallization of a Romanian military elite.

The reforms of the enlightened monarchy had notable results in the Banatian border, which were more spectacular than in the civil province. The school network in the militarized territory grew steadily after the war with the Turks in 1788, and by 1810 all the settlements on the territory of the Romanian-Illyrian Regiment had a school, recording outstanding progress in the process of spreading literacy. To the primary schools were added the trivial schools, where German was the language of instruction and which operated in the localities where the company command headquarters were situated, being designed to train sub-officers. Besides increasing and stabilizing the school network, there also grew the numbers of the population included in the process of education, who attended school in higher percentages than in the civil province. Attendance was improved in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially after 1829, when the border region saw the introduction of compulsory education, which made the literacy rate in the Banatian border area exceed the one existing in many Western countries.<sup>38</sup>

The progress of instruction and education in the Banatian border territory is confirmed by the large number of books attested in this area, by numerous introductory notes - oftentimes chronicles of the local or European events - featuring on those books, which reveal the border guards' sensitivity for printed or even manuscript books. From among their ranks there rose a category of officers and sub-officers who assumed the role of an elite for the entire population, whom they represented on an ecclesiastical or political level. The constant contact with other milieus of culture and civilization during the wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France considerably enlarged the geographical, cultural and political horizons of this category.



*Translated into English by Carmen Verónica Borbely*

## Notes

1. For the establishment and organization of the Banatian military border, see Bujor Surdu, "Înființarea graniței militare bănățene descrisă de un martor ocular," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj* (Cluj-Napoca) 4 (1961): 258; A. Dolga, "Condițiile înființării regimentelor grănicerești în Banat," *Studii de istorie a Banatului* (Timișoara) 4 (1976): 45-56; Havadi-Nagy, Kinga Xenia, *Die Slavonische und Banater Militärgrenze* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2010).
2. Antoniu Marchescu, *Gănicerii bănățeni și comunitatea de avere (Contribuții istorice și juridice)* (Caransebeș, 1941), 72.
3. Marchescu, *Gănicerii*, 72.
4. Marchescu, *Gănicerii*, 77.
5. Marchescu, *Gănicerii*, 78.
6. Surdu, "Înființarea graniței," 262-264.
7. "...for a month they kept fleeing into the mountains; they fled from all the villages, from Jupalnec to Armeniș, but most of them came from the largest places, from Mehadia 50 families, likewise from Cornereva, not so many fled from others...". Nicolae Stoica de Hațeg, *Cronica Banatului*, introductory study, edition and notes by Damaschin Mioc, second edition (Timișoara: Facla, 1981), 197-198.
8. Gr. Popiți, *Date și documente bănățene* (Timișoara, 1939), 98-100.
9. Marchescu, *Gănicerii*, 82.
10. Popiți, *Date*, 82-86.
11. Popiți, *Date*, 97.
12. Popiți, *Date*, 97.
13. Popiți, *Date*, 123.
14. Popiți, *Date*, 127.
15. The data have been processed after Hitzinger, *Statistik der Militärgrenze des Österreichischen Kaiserthums* (Wien, 1817), 172; Popiți, *Date*, passim; Fenyés Elek, *Magyar orszagnak's a hozza kapcsolat tartományok nak mostant allapotja*, 6 kötet (Pesten, 1839), 66.
16. David Prodan, *Răscoală lui Horea*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1979), 521.
17. Popiți, *Date*, 122.
18. Popiți, *Date*, 123, 127.

19. Magda Pál, *Magyar országnak és a határőrző katonaság vidékének legujabb statisztikai és geographiai leírása* (Pest), 482-496, 545-551.
20. Popiți, *Date*, 121-122.
21. Popiți, *Date*, 97.
22. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 86.
23. For the cantonal system, Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 97-103.
24. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 102.
25. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 86-96, the excerpts we have summarized.
26. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 73; Liviu Groza, *Gmănicerii bănățeni* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1983), 38-52.
27. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 73.
28. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 73.
29. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 91 sq.
30. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 122-123.
31. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 124. C. Feneșan, "Nemulțumiri în granița militară bănățeană la începutul secolului al XIX-lea," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj* (Cluj-Napoca) 16 (1973): 386-387.
32. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 125.
33. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 143 sq.
34. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 102.
35. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 143 sq.
36. Marchescu, *Gmănicerii*, 147.
37. In 1837, Marshal Marmont made a description of the border and of the border guards' social status in *Voyage de M. le Maréchal Duc de Raguse en Hongrie, en Transylvanie dans la Russie méridionale, en Crimée et sur les bords de la Mer d'Aroff, à Constantinople et sur quelques parties de l'Asie Mineure, en Syrie, en Palestine et en Egypte* (Bruxelles, Leipzig, 1837), 63-100.
38. P. Radu, D. Onciulescu, *Contribuții la istoria învățământului din Banat* (Timișoara: Casa Corpului Didactic, 1976), 72.

### **Abstract**

#### The Establishment of the Banatian Military Border and the Social Status of the Border Guards

The study presents the establishment of the Austrian military border in the Banat, the reasons which led the House of Habsburg to undertake the militarization of the Southern Banat, the stages in the organization of the Banatian military border, and the demographic evolution of the area. An overview is given of the legislation based on which the border was organized, the legal status of the residents, the economic and social system, the organization of the border family (*comunion*), the occupations of the inhabitants, the rights and obligations of the border guards and of the other inhabitants. The above data reveal a definitely advantageous status that the border region enjoyed in comparison with other territories inhabited by Romanians throughout the monarchy, the border guards' superior cultural level, as well as their superior geographical and intellectual horizon.

### **Keywords**

military border, border guards, Romanian-Illyrian Regiment, frontier law, *comunion*