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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

THE ROMANIAN MILITARY CLERGY FROM AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
DURING THE GREAT WAR

-Summary-

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On Austro-Hungarian territory, religious and pastoral assistance given to soldiers received attention since ancient times. Until the end of the eighteenth century, in the Religious Services of Austrian Empire's Army, most of the military chaplains were Catholic, because most of the soldiers were mainly Catholics, but also because the empire was a traditional stronghold of Catholicism. The reign of Joseph II was, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, the era when a greater attention began to be also given to other nations and confessions living within the empire. From this period on we have the first evidence of Romanian military priests. At the beginning, Romanian military priests were to be instituted only for Border Regiments and only during war time. In peacetime, Orthodox and Greek-Catholic soldiers remained under the jurisdiction of local priests.

By the first decade of the nineteenth century, Habsburg Romanian priests were *rara avis* in the Army, but from the third decade of notable changes occurred regarding the religious assistance granted to Orthodox and Greek Catholics soldiers. According to imperial decrees, it became mandatory for soldiers to attend at least once a month a Holy Liturgy, and if in a regiment, 1,000 soldiers had the same religion or confession, they would receive a chaplain to attend them in their faith's rite. Under these circumstances, Habsburg Romanian priests became a constant presence in Austrian Army, both in peace and wartime. The vast majority of soldiers and priests came from areas where Border Regiments were established and where a tradition of serving the emperor was created.

Despite internally and externally turbulent period, beginning in 1848 and ending with 1866, the Habsburg Romanian military priests did their duty, wherever they were sent with the soldiers. In regiments chronicles, appear several notes about the courageous attitudes of priests, rewarded afterward with medals. The devotion, courage, and loyalty had a very

specific purpose: to demonstrate the loyalty of the Romanian nation, in exchange for recognition and rights.

After 1866, in the Empire followed the long period of peace, a time in which the military clergy continued to promote loyalty to the emperor of the House of Habsburg and Dual Monarchy. In this regard, in sermons, they disseminated the mythological constructs approved in Vienna, who insisted on the cordial links between nationalities and emperor, the advantages of being subjects of the monarch in Vienna, and spirit of sacrifice shown by ancestors for the throne and the fatherland. Such ideas have been promoted not only by Habsburg Romanian military clergy but by most of the priests within the empire, for the same political purposes.

An important role in promoting imperial loyalty also had the educational system. The effects of the long peace, and the increased attachment to Vienna, which was tied to the national one, was reflected in the enthusiasm shown by the majority of Habsburg Romanian soldiers, be they from Banat, Transylvania, and Bucovina, when departed to the front in 1914, to avenge the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sofia.

The local military conflict, which debuted in August 1914 was supposed to be short, and aimed to punish Serbia, or so predicted Austro-Hungarian authorities. The complicated system of military-political alliances, determined most European countries to go to war with each other, and with them an impressive number of soldiers. Authorities who sent troops to war had to ensure not only the essential materials for battle and survival but also what was necessary for moral and soul. Because of this, especially well educated civilian priests, familiar with the different language spoken in the Dual Monarchy, and good orators, of all denominations, were mobilized to care for the growing number of soldiers on the front line, in hospitals, and prison camps.

The outbreak of the Great War centenary determined, particularly in Europe, but not only, a revival of research dedicated to this event. Thus, ed numerous studies and books, which addressed different aspects from a different perspective: from political-military considerations to the history of collective mentalities, culture, religiosity, feelings, and emotions, appeared. Neither in Romania the cultural turn was neglected and thus significant studies, mainly dedicated to cultural and religious history, mentalities and collective memory of the Great War, were published.

This thesis borders at the same time the cultural, military and religious history of the Great War and focuses on a subject not very much researched, both in Romanian and international historiography: the Romanian military clergy from Austria-Hungary in the Great War. Given that no previous event to the Great War requested total mobilization of society and man, needed so much spiritual support and because no systematic study analyzed the topic, this thesis seeks to answer in it's for chapters and consistent annexes, relevant for research on the subject, to a series of fundamental questions. They were meant to help demonstrate that through their activities, most Habsburg Romanian chaplains managed, given the political circumstances, and the moral and spiritual influence they exercised, to provide millions of soldiers on different fronts a way to cope with fears, hopelessness, suffering or homesickness. How? With the religious, pastoral and charity assistance they provided. Military chaplains tried to explain, in terms of scholastic theology, the Great War as a consequence of secularism and sins. In their message, the only way that could lead to much-desired peace, strength and salvation, was returning to Christian virtues: love, sacrifice, prayer, participation in Holy Mass, the Sacrament of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. Their speech was not limited to religious issues, and this made it sometimes ambivalent and ambiguous, a merger between loyalty towards God, their nation, and the emperor, because they were simultaneous subjects

of God, the emperor in Vienna, Romanians, sons of their provinces. The sermons and ideas they promoted, made them responsible for the development of a particular religiosity. This religiosity focused not only on the salvation of the soul but also on the fulfillment of duty to the Romanian nation and the emperor, seen as ordained by God, even if this implied that Orthodox and Romanians had to fight against each other.

Since studying the impact of war on different religions and denominations in Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina would require research on a huge volume of sources, this paper aim is to focus, on the Habsburg Romanian military clergy from the Dual Monarchy during the Great War, the importance they had on religiosity and population's perspective on war. However, the effects of war on the life and work of the clergy are also examined.

Regarding research methods addressed, we opted to identify different types of sources, published and unpublished, from before, during and after the outbreak of the Great War, to treat as many aspects related to clergy activities. The collected information was compared and analyzed to find more about:

- the tradition that existed in Austria-Hungary and Romania on religious and pastoral assistance granted to Romanian soldiers;
- organizational and administrative development of religious support given by military priests from Austria-Hungary and Romania;
- the role and the functions military priests had in the army in peace and wartime;
- the role that was played by Romanian military priests in Austria-Hungary in educating the national and supranational loyalties;
- specific war experiences of the chaplain;
- duty to promote peace or just war and the arguments they used;
- answers they gave to those affected by war;
- the role that images and the concept of holy war or crusade, and elements of popular religiosity had;
- motives and associations used in sermons in peace and wartime;
- actions which constituted duty towards God, emperor, country, nation and the soldiers they had to guide and help to cope, according to instructions sent by hierarchs, war, and geographical space;
- typology of the Habsburg Romanian military priest from Austria-Hungary;
- emotions and religiosity of over 800,000 Habsburg Romanian soldiers;
- mutations produced by war on emotions and religiosity.

Among the most important sources for the work, stands unpublished sources from War Archives in Vienna (Kriegsarchiv), legislation, orders from the commanders, from the Apostolic Field Vicariate personal files, pastoral reports, etc. An essential role had the interpretation of information from pastoral reports sent by the Romanian military priests, during the war, to the apostolic field vicar, commanders of armies, districts, hospitals or prisoners of war camps where they serve. These reports were indispensable in reconstructing priests relationship with imperial and royal (k.k.) authorities, in this period of radical transformation, daily life, and religiosity.

Besides the archives in Vienna, we paid attention to memoirs, collection of letters from World War I from Romanian National Archives- Cluj County Section, and to Alexandru Vaida Voivod Collection, from the National History Museum of Transylvania. They were used mainly to investigate how military chaplains work was perceived, which effects they produced on soldiers religiosity and to highlight the emerging variety of religious experiences.

Wartime correspondence constituted one of the principal sources for reconstitution of war effects on soldiers and their families religiosity. Alexandru Vaida Voivod's writings were used to identify the attachment of Transylvanian Romanians to Franz Ferdinand. In their contents, we found evidence to prove the involvement of military priests in the nation's political welfare projects. They complete information from Transylvanian Romanian press of the time, where memoranda written by Habsburg Romanian military clergy were published.

Given that press was one of the primary sources of information during the war, also on the work of military clergy, periodicals, constituted another important source for our research. In analyzing the information, we took into account the strict censorship imposed by the authorities, especially after 1916. Research on the newspapers from the main cities of the monarchy, such as Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Graz, and Salzburg, aimed to identify the presence of Habsburg Romanian priests and find how they were perceived in the major Catholic territories. Newspapers from Banat and Transylvania, supported by Church, was equally important because mobilized priests were perseverant collaborators and published articles both in the period before the outbreak, and most importantly, during the war.

Because the Great War mean not only fighting and struggling on the front or the home front, we paid attention also to prisoners of war camps, where thousands of Romanian were sent. Here, in addition to archival sources, very useful were studies devoted by Austrian historiography to this reality. From Romanian historiography, of great importance, were the memories of those who survived incarceration and reports requested by authorities after returning in Romania, even if most of them offer officers prospects.

Corroborating information from the archives, newspapers, ego documents and various studies dedicated to religiosity, life behind the lines, war captivity, military hospitals, etc., was necessary, given that sources on the subject are scattered in almost all the great cities of the that were once part of the Dual Monarchy.

Regarding the structure of the dissertation, the first chapter was dedicated to the period before World War for two reasons. Firstly, because until now no study investigates the Romanian military clergy from Austrian Empire. Secondly, because we aimed to identify the general features of the situation before August 1914 essential to understand their ideas about war, homeland, nation, family, courage, heroism, sacrifice for political ideals.

Chapter two starts with the proper analysis of the activity of Habsburg Romanian military clergy from Austria-Hungary during the war. To better highlight the importance of Italy's war entry, in May 1915, and that of Romania in the summer of 1916, we focused primarily on the period between 1914 and 1915 with few relevant exceptions.

The third chapter concentrates on the period between May 1915 and the end of the Great War. This period was characterized by the change that had significant effects on Romanians loyalty to the House of Habsburg and Austria-Hungary. Despite Habsburg Romanians attachment to Vienna and support for emperor's decisions, showed at the beginning of the war, the population on the home front but also the soldiers became victims of suspicions and authorities abuses. This behavior and the protracted war led to erosion and, ultimately, to destruction supranational loyalty. This determined Habsburg Romanians to concentrate all their energy to obtain better conditions for their nation.

The last chapter was dedicated to the study of emotions, religiosity, popular beliefs and humanitarian assistance granted to soldiers during WWI. They played a significant for resistance until November 1918. Because war and religious experiences have influenced each other, we highlighted the effects of war on religiosity and religious ritual. We did not omit the

significant cultural changes in Romanian culture, to investigate the collective effort to send readings to the front, in hospitals and prisoners of war camps and the efforts to increase the number of literate soldiers.

Annexes supplement the information in the four chapters. Through illustrated maps, we underlined transfer of population, brought by war through mobilizing. This contributes in sending Romanian soldiers and priests in territories where previously, probably, no Romanian foot was stepped before. Photos showing snapshots of lived moments lived, the sometimes result of propaganda activities, restore some aspects of the life and mentality of a changing world, a world under the impact of technological and informational war. For each, experiences and emotions varied from individual to individual, and given that until now we did not identify a source in which all Habsburg Romanian priests were recorded, we tried to systematize army records, information from archives, newspapers, to provide a tool for future research. They were placed on a table where priests were divided by denominations, and alphabetically. The other categories of the table provide information related to the location where came, the type of army have been deployed (military Joint Landwehr or Honvéd) and some prosopographic details, to the extent that we were able to identify.