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DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF POPULATION STUDIES AND HISTORY OF MINORITIES

From Duty to Desertion. The Phenomenon of Desertion among Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I

SUMMARY

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Keywords:

World War I, desertion, Transylvania, memoirs, trauma, abandonment, emigration, legislation

Abstract

The theme of military desertion in the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the period of World War I was popularized in Romanian literature by the writer Liviu Rebreanu, through the character Apostol Bologa in the novel "Forest of the Hanged" Inspired by the tragedy of his brother, Emil Rebreanu, the novel portrays the drama of an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army sent to fight on the Transylvanian front against the Romanian army. The internal struggle between loyalty to the Austro-Hungarian army and national sentiment tragically culminates in the protagonist's death sentence for attempting to desert to the Romanian enemy lines. According to the author's testimony, the moral dilemmas of the character Apostol Bologa encompass the turmoil of the wartime generation². Drawing inspiration from his brother's tragedy, numerous literary critics have overlaid the novel's story with the personal drama of Emil Rebreanu³. Although acknowledging the significant contribution this experience brought to shaping the novel, Liviu Rebreanu confessed to infusing Apostol Bologa with many characteristics of his own generation concerning national feelings and hesitations in fully embracing them⁴.

Nevertheless, the novel reflects major themes regarding loyalty to the Austro-Hungarian Empire among its soldiers. Throughout the novel, Apostol Bologa is depicted as a loyal soldier of the army and the cause of the war waged by the dual monarchy. However, as the war unfolds, he gradually begins to doubt the cause he faithfully served, until he decides to desert to those he considers kin while stationed with his troop on the Transylvanian front.

The theme of geographic proximity that either ignites or reignites the sense of national identity appears in most war memoirs that record acts of betrayal against the Austro-Hungarian army. Cassian Munteanu, Octavian Tăslăuanu, Ilie Stricatu, Pavel Jumanca, Vasile Branca, Enache Boţoacă, Enache Pop, Simion Zaharescu, Laurian Aron, and Petru Talpeş are just a small fraction of those who recorded desertion to Romania. Like Apostol Bologa, Petru Talpeş crossed into

¹ Liviu Rebreanu, *Pădurea spânzuraților*, Editura Minerva, București, 1978, *passim*.

² Idem, *Mărturisiri*, 1932 apud. Niculae Gheran, "*Prefață*" în Liviu Rebreanu, *Pădurea spânzuraților*, p. XIV.

³ Niculae Gheran, "Prefață"..., p. XIII.

⁴ Liviu Rebreanu, *Mărturisiri...*, p. XIV.

Romania after it began hostilities against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Cassian Munteanu, Octavian Tăslăuanu, and Ilie Stricatu used their recovery and hospitalization periods in Transylvania to make their way across the mountains. Some deserted to Romania in the early years of the war while still stationed with their regiment in Transylvania, while others did so just before being incorporated. The documented memory of those who betrayed the imperial army shaped this tendency, which is supported by primary sources concerning the subject of desertion towards Romania.

The information gathered by the Romanian border guards, analyzed in chapters three and four of this work, provides new details intended to nuance the phenomenon of desertion towards Romania during the war. However, amidst these data arise questions and hypotheses that call for further research. One of the key observations is how the deserters' data were collected by the border guards. Apparently, this process revealed not only discrepancies in recording but also a possible lack of well-defined rules regarding the reception and management of deserters. In a period when borders were of paramount concern, border guard units and local gendarmeries worked together to ensure security. Nevertheless, the documents analyzed indicate that their area of expertise was not clearly delineated, and coordination between the two institutions was not finalized.

Within the complex context of war, the data provided by the border guard corps can only reconstruct a portion of the reality of this phenomenon, with the possibility that this information may not comprehensively reflect migration towards Romania during World War I. Furthermore, the interruption of deserter records in the summer of 1915 cannot be overlooked in the investigation of this subject. A decrease in the number of deserters due to the transfer of predominantly Romanian regiments to the Italian front could be one possible explanation. Subsequently, Romania's entry into the conflict and the occupation by the Central Powers could be among the factors that led to the Romanian authorities' lack of concern for this phenomenon. Another hypothesis regarding the cessation of records in the summer of 1915 involves changes in the responsibilities of border guard soldiers or the transfer of this activity to other institutions, such as local gendarmeries. The primary documents analyzed in the preceding chapters are of a military nature, with a strict hierarchical process. Therefore, similar statistics may exist in other archival sources from the Old Kingdom of Romania that remain unidentified for now.

Analyzing the information collected and reported by the Romanian border guard corps, several significant impressions regarding the migratory movement towards Romanian territory in

the early months of the war have emerged. A substantial portion of these civilian refugees or deserters from the Austro-Hungarian army shared a common trait: they were of Romanian nationality. Most of them originated from the bordering areas of Transylvania (or Bukovina, in the case of the border guard company in Dorohoi), usually from localities and counties located in the immediate vicinity of the Romanian border. Soldiers hailing from the mountainous and border regions of Transylvania grasped the scale of the unfolding war and sought refuge in Romania. The regiments to which these soldiers belonged were stationed in cities located near the Romanian border. It is likely that many of those who are listed in the border guard reports at the end of 1914 are those who did not experience the front's realities before arriving in Romania, deserting from their garrisons. The temptation to desert towards Romania was particularly pronounced in the border areas. The composition of the deserters' lists suggests that most soldiers collaborated to cross the border together. Details such as belonging to the same military unit, entering Romanian territory on the same date and through the same entry point, make it unlikely that these elements were mere coincidences in the reports compiled by the border guard soldiers. Additionally, desertion is a deeply social act. The camaraderie that inspired and united soldiers during the war had a similar effect in cases of desertion. Soldiers collaborating to plan desertion exposed themselves to the risk of being exposed to military authorities, which could have had fatal consequences. Some of these soldiers likely knew each other before the war, or perhaps a distinct event within the garrison or at the front brought them together and tied their destinies until the moment of desertion.

Transit routes towards Romania indicate a preference among soldiers for points closest to their regiment's garrison town. The majority of soldiers from the 23rd Honvéd and 31st Infantry regiments, stationed in the town of Sibiu, crossed into Romania through the bordering localities of Râul Vadului, Muntele Galbena, and Piscul Negru, all situated approximately 50 km away from their garrison town. The same distance seems optimal for soldiers stationed in Braşov as well. The entry points into Romania are on average around 50 km from their garrison town. When choosing to desert, opting for a shorter route may suggest that deserters aimed to minimize the stress level they would face on a longer journey. By selecting a shorter route, they sought to avoid encountering potential dangers or complex situations that could arise during a lengthier trip. Thus, choosing the shortest path not only allowed them to reach their destination faster but also reduced potential difficulties or uncertainties that might have arisen if their route required covering a

greater distance. This could have been a strategy to manage their emotional and psychological state during the desertion process, providing them with a sense of control and safety in a tense situation.

These findings were supported and complemented by news reports from 1914. Romanian soldiers from the Austro-Hungarian army who lived near the Romanian border and were part of regiments stationed in border towns like Caransebeş, Sibiu, and Braşov, offered details from the outset of the conflict. At the start of the war, the press highlighted these soldiers' loyalty to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and interpreted their desertion as a self-protective gesture against the Russian enemies. However, starting in the fall of 1914, press articles presented other motivations for desertion, such as national discrimination, shortcomings in the military system, and aspirations to join the Romanian army.

Beginning in 1915, the records of the border guards highlighted several opportune calendar periods for desertion towards Romania. The numbers significantly increased in January, as soldiers were granted leave to return home for winter holidays, as well as in the months of May and June. The fluctuations in the summer months of May and June could be interpreted as soldiers' reactions to the Austro-Hungarian army's Carpathian campaign, involving most of the Romanian regiments in Transylvania. Another factor influencing the decision of many to leave the borders beginning in May was the alteration of age limits for mobilization. Specifically, Imperial Ordinance 108/1 May 1915⁵ brought changes to Law 90/6 June 1886⁶ regarding military recruitment. Before this alteration, the law stipulated that during war, all men aged 19 to 42 were eligible for mobilization. However, due to the losses suffered by the dual monarchy in the first year of conflict and the necessity to send replacement troops to the front, an important change was introduced in May, extending the age range for mobilization from 18 to 50. The increase in the enlistment age is among the declared motivations of deserters who entered Romania under the jurisdiction of Company 6 Turnu Severin, part of the 1st Border Guard Regiment⁷. In addition to identifying information such as names, nationality, state, and the regiment from which they deserted, these lists also include the motivations underlying their decision to leave the Austro-Hungarian army. In fact, this is the only

⁵ Biblioteca Națională a Austriei, *ALEX Historische Rechts und Gesetzestext*, Biblioteca Națională a Austriei, *ALEX Historische Rechts und Gesetzestext*, https://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=rro&datum=1915&size=45&page=231, accesat la 18 aprilie 2023.

⁶ Idem, https://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=rro&datum=1886&size=45&page=321, accesat la 18 aprilie 2023.

⁷ DCAAMNR, Fond 1663-Corpul Grănicerilor, Dosar 76, ff. 64, 66, 131 și Dosar 82, ff. 38, 55, 80, 107.

border guard company that recorded the cause of desertion in its reports. Among the over thirty recorded deserters, nearly half emphasized the unfair treatment by superiors in the Austro-Hungarian army as a motive for desertion. Eleven of them mentioned lack of food and malnutrition as determining factors. The initial records, beginning on 8 January 1915, reveal that some soldiers deserted due to poor conditions on the battlefield and improper treatment in the hospitals where they were treated. The most notable group of deserters, ten soldiers from Regiment 64 stationed in Orăștie, indicated "injustices against Romanians and persecutions by Hungarians" as reasons for desertion. Subsequent examples cited lack of food as the main cause for desertion. Among those who avoided mobilization were Atanasie Dobraia, who crossed into Romania at the age of 49 due to the change in age limits, and Ion Stancu, called to arms despite being exempt from military service¹¹.

Unfortunately, in few instances did deserter soldiers reveal to the border guards the reasons that led them to abandon their positions within the Austro-Hungarian army. When questioned by the border guards, Romanian deserters mentioned only a few motives underlying their decision. These motives included chronic food shortages, changes in age limits for recruitment, and the demeaning behavior of Hungarian officers. These were the only explanations that deserters presented to the border authorities. These motivations were reiterated in press articles from 1915, which recounted the experiences of Austro-Hungarian army deserters who sought refuge in Romania. The reports on deserters emphasized the lack of military equipment and food¹², physical exhaustion¹³, national discrimination¹⁴, fear of returning to the front¹⁵, and lack of motivation to fight¹⁶.

In an attempt to broaden the spectrum of motivations influencing Romanians within the Austro-Hungarian Empire to desert from the imperial army, we investigated the written testimonies of Romanian participants in World War I who served in the Austro-Hungarian army. Reconstructing the motivations and feelings of Romanian soldiers in the context of World War I

⁸ *Ibidem*, Dosar 82, f. 38.

⁹ Ibidem, Dosar 76, ff. 64, 66, 131 si Dosar 82, ff. 38, 55, 80, 107.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, Dosar 82, f. 80.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, Dosar 76, f. 131.

¹² *Dimineața*, 7 ianuarie 1915, 18 mai 1915 și *Universul*, 15 aprilie 1915.

¹³ *Universul*, 8 iunie 1915.

¹⁴ Universul, 23 februarie 1915.

¹⁵ Dimineața, 25 ianuarie 1915.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

proves to be a challenging task when we focus exclusively on the written and published accounts of those events. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that most of these narratives come from educated individuals in 20th-century Romanian society, and these testimonies cannot be considered representative of the entire range of experiences and motives encountered among the Romanian population in Transylvania or within the broader Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Despite this lack of representativeness, testimonies related to World War I manage to capture a variety of aspects related to the phenomenon of military abandonment. These writings not only reflect the authors' personal experiences but also provide a voice for their comrades and their experiences, highlighting the various dimensions and forms of the decision to leave military service within the Austro-Hungarian army. From the memoirs of Coriolan Băran, we identified an atypical form of avoiding front-line service, orchestrated with the complicity of military courts ¹⁷. For soldiers of Austrian or Hungarian origin, relatively minor sentences of 7-8 years of imprisonment were imposed in order for them to be eligible for rehabilitation on the front. Conversely, for individuals of other nationalities, such as Slovaks, Czechs, Romanians, or Ruthenians, the punishments were much more severe, ranging from 15-20 years and even more, effectively denying them the opportunity for front-line rehabilitation. This calculated and discriminatory approach to avoid front-line service is, in fact, the reverse of the military policies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The imperial military measures of dividing nationalities into regiments and on the front weakened imperial identity and loyalty, fostering regional allegiances. In the context of significant losses and loyalty issues, insecure regiments received support from soldiers belonging to nations deemed loyal by the High Military Command, and deployment on the front-line was guided by the same considerations—sensitive positions were entrusted to Hungarian and German regiments and troops¹⁸. This action resulted in the formation of linguistically homogeneous groups within units, diminishing camaraderie and trust between officers and soldiers.

Another strategy for evading enlistment in the Austro-Hungarian army involved enrolling in higher education institutions in the field of theology. Young individuals thus benefited from

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¹⁷ Coriolan Băran, Amintiri, în Valeriu Leu, Nicolae Bocșan, op.cit., vol. I, p. 238.

¹⁸ Mark Cornwall, Morale and patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian army..., p. 178.

"favors"¹⁹ in terms of enlistment, being exempted from military service. For instance, Lucian Blaga, prompted by those around him, enrolled at the Faculty of Theology in Sibiu, under whose auspices he managed to evade conscription²⁰. Some families were proactive in protecting young individuals from enlistment, such as Aurel Cosma Jr.'s uncle, who facilitated his enrollment in the Orthodox theology institute in Arad to shield him from military service, even without informing the young man²¹. This "sabotage"²² system was also maintained due to the goodwill of professors who made efforts to protect students from enlistment. The reason Lucian Blaga resorted to this form of evading military duty was the desire to protect his own life from the whirlwind of the erupting war.

Furthermore, soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian army developed ingenious strategies to evade military service on the battlefront through practices of self-mutilation and simulating serious ailments. An example was shooting their own arms using various methods to conceal the wound, such as placing a piece of bread or any other hard object between the rifle barrel and the hand²³. Other forms included simulating burns or other types of wounds using objects or substances to create the appearance of injuries²⁴. Alexandru Vaida-Voevod recounts how he induced a soldier to experience severe weakness and heart palpitations by consuming a quantity of tobacco with water to avoid enlistment²⁵. The practices of self-mutilation and simulation demonstrate not only the disillusionment and disappointment of soldiers regarding the conditions of war but also their determination and meticulous planning in their efforts to maintain their freedom and avoid the risks and dangers of the front.

Suicide represents the most drastic form of military abandonment. This gesture appears in war memoirs attributed to Petre Ugliş and Dr. Dominic Stanca. The way these accounts are included in the memoirs of the two provides two distinct perspectives on suicide. The suicide of

¹⁹ Biblioteca Națională a Austriei, *ALEX Historische Rechts und Gesetzestext*, Biblioteca Națională a Austriei, *ALEX Historische Rechts und Gesetzestext*, https://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=rro&datum=1889&size=45&page=137, accesat la 18 aprilie 2023.

²⁰ Lucian Blaga, *Hronicul...*, p. 159.

²¹Aurel Cosma Jr, Începuturile activității mele..., p. 669.

²² Lucian Blaga, *Hronicul*..., p. 159.

²³ Octavian Tăslăuanu apud Vasile Dudaș, Ioan Traia, *Un caz de sustragere de la îndatoririle militare în anii Primului Război Mondial și consecințele sale asupra unui tânăr bănățean*, în Banatica, nr. 21, 2011, p. 356 și Coriolan Băran, *Aminitiri* în Valeriu Leu, Nicolae Bocșan, *op.cit.*, *vol. I*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, p. 213.

²⁴ Vasile Dudaș, Ioan Traia, *Un caz de sustragere...*, p. 356.

²⁵ Al. Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii*, vol. I, ed. Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1994, p. 261.

Istrate, Petre Ugliş's comrade, despite the seemingly humorous tone and the admiration stirred within his troop, highlights the depth of despair and trauma that affected him. Additionally, the offensive speech directed at his commander in his farewell note may reveal some form of rebellion against authority, perhaps even an attempt to express discontent or disapproval, even though it is a final one²⁶. Istrate's case is humorously mentioned by Petre Ugliş, but even the mention of it reveals that the soldiers' suffering pushed them towards extreme actions. Dr. Dominic Stanca mentions the case of a soldier, whose anonymity is preserved throughout the narrative, who requested medical leave on the grounds that he wanted to return home to get married²⁷. For the soldier in question, marriage was meant to free him from the feelings of fatigue, exhaustion, and fear he experienced on the front. His desire to marry and find solace in love and family reflects the human need to find refuge and a reason to carry on amidst the chaos of war. Upon returning home, he committed suicide on the very day of his wedding. Dominic Stanca mentions this event without providing any interpretation, yet indications of his acute state of exhaustion and his burning desire to return home from the front reveal a profoundly psychologically affected state due to the traumas and stress of the front-line experiences.

The memoirs of former soldiers from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, primarily written in the interwar period, bring to the forefront an interesting dynamic in addressing their experiences in World War I. In these memoirs, the suffering experienced on the front and participation in the war often serve as a prologue to the central subject of memories: the formation of Greater Romania. If we closely examine the accounts of those who deserted, such as Octavian Tăslăuanu, Cassian R. Munteanu, Ilie Stricatu, Pavel Jumanca, Petre Ugliş, Petru Talpeş, Teofil Moraru, they all invoke the call of national identity as the primary reason for desertion; however, upon closer analysis, the subtext of their memoirs also reveals a personal motive. The horrors of the front affected Tăslăuanu so deeply that he was unwilling to return²⁸. Cassian R. Munteanu was to be tried by a court-martial for the content of his articles before deserting to Romania²⁹. And Pavel Jumanca emphasizes the general tragedy of the war and the grim prospect of losing his own life in its name³⁰.

²⁶ Petre Ugliș Delapecica, *Jurnal de război din anii...*, pp. 116-117.

²⁷ Dr. Dominic Stanca, Între două fronturi..., p. 94.

²⁸ Octavian Tăslăuanu, *Trei luni pe câmpul...*, p. 308.

²⁹ Cassian R. Munteanu, *Bătălia de la Mărășești...*, p. 65.

³⁰ Valeriu Leu, Nicolae Bocșan, et.al., Marele Război în memoria bănățeană 1914-1919, vol. II..., p. 235.

In the case of Romanians who evaded military obligations or deserted from the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I, an undeniable sense of disconnection with the mission and cause of the army they were enlisted in is observable. The lack of identification with the agenda and goals of the Austro-Hungarian army prompted some to defy orders and choose to endanger their lives through desertion or surrender to the enemy. Memory and subsequent historiography have interpreted and depicted these actions through the lens of the Great Union of 1918 as acts of patriotism and loyalty to the new national entity.

Soldiers who wrote memoirs about their own desertion, such as Petre Ugliş or Petru Talpeş, paid special attention to the difficulties and risks associated with their actions. They emphasize the severe punishments they could have faced if captured by the Austro-Hungarian army. Accounts of violence against deserters abound in Romanian memoirs as well, with Lae from Banat providing one of the most descriptive episodes of punishment of a group of Czech soldiers captured by the Austro-Hungarian army³¹.

Desertion, as an action of abandoning military obligations and duty in an army, has a profound impact on its functioning and effectiveness. It undermines essential foundations of military structure and service, such as subordination, discipline, and personal sacrifice³². Therefore, coercion was necessary to maintain the functionality of the army. Throughout history, regardless of the political regime, attempts have been made to prevent desertion through the imposition of capital punishment. This was seen as a method of deterrence, aimed at conveying a clear message about the seriousness and consequences of abandoning military duty. However, during war, when human resources became limited and the need for soldiers became critical, many armies had to resort to alternatives to capital punishment. Lesser corrections and sanctions, as well as rehabilitation to the front, as was the case with Teofil Moraru³³, were preferred to keep as many soldiers in service as possible.

The phenomenon of desertion also affected detachments of Romanian Transylvanian volunteers, seen as expressions of Romanian nationalism during World War I. In December 1917, in Galați, four Romanian deserters from the volunteer detachment in Russia were captured and tried: Alexandru Bartă, Curpeș Vasile, Gheorghe Gheorghe, and Bere Gheorghe³⁴. They explained

³¹ Lae din Banat, *La Regimentul 43 nimic nou!?...*, p. 356.

³² Serhiy Choliy, Military Desertion as a Counter-Modernization..., p. 277.

³³ Gheorghe Cernea, Voluntarul Teofil Moraru..., passim.

³⁴ DCAAMNR, fond 1668 Corpul voluntarilor, Dosar 4, fila 142.

that they deserted due to abuses committed by the commanders of these detachments³⁵. The platoon leader accused these volunteers of arriving from Russia to secure their livelihood and prolong the war³⁶. There are verbal accusations that some volunteers joined these detachments with the clear intention of deserting³⁷. This critical perspective is partially justified, as those volunteers who had previously abandoned their army or deserted might repeat the same behavior in another army. Other documents highlight a hostile and suspicious attitude towards Transylvanian Romanians who fought in the Austro-Hungarian army and returned to Romania. They were viewed with skepticism and often blamed for desertion and lack of discipline³⁸. As emphasized in the preceding chapters, soldiers who became prisoners accumulated battlefield experience, providing them with a subjective perspective on the war. Those who hadn't found their motivation to fight within the Austro-Hungarian army and opted for captivity, refuge, or desertion had a chance to rediscover their identity within the Romanian army. However, if captured, surrendered, or deserted for reasons such as exhaustion, fear of death, or any other emotion related to conflict, the desire and necessity to escape the present reality remained constant regardless of the army they were in.

Compared to other ethnic and national groups in the Austro-Hungarian army, the behavior of Romanian deserters can be understood in the broader context of desertions that occurred during World War I. Internal tensions, cultural diversity, national discrimination, and differences in treatment by Austro-Hungarian military authorities created a conducive environment for desertions among nations considered minorities: Serbs, Czechs, Poles, Ruthenians, Italians, and Romanians. These "national" predispositions toward desertion were essentially the consequences of the Empire's military policies that created and reinforced the notions of "loyal" and "disloyal" nations within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

One of the objectives of the doctoral research was to identify a source that would provide a quantitative dimension to the phenomenon of military abandonment. To analyze and synthesize the information extracted from the archival records of the Border Guard Corps, a data analysis program was used, where the information collected and reported by border guard soldiers

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³⁵ Ibidem,

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ DCAAMNR, fond 1668 Corpul voluntarilor, Dosar 2, fila 17.

³⁸ 1917, noiembrie 6. Raportul It. colonelului adjutant Stîrcea în Radu Stancu, Florica Bucur, *Sub cenușa imperiului*. *Soldați români în armata austro-ungară*, Arhivele Naționale ale României, București, 2018, p. 296.

regarding the crossing of the Romanian border from the Austro-Hungarian Empire was input. All this data was centralized and is available in Annex 3 of the doctoral thesis.

Based on the centralizations made by border guards on Romanian territory, from the outbreak of the global conflict until June 30, 1915, a total of 3304 individuals³⁹ entered, including military and civilian refugees. Some companies make a distinction between military deserters and civilian refugees, although in the case of the latter, it is not possible to clearly determine how many of the men registered as civilian refugees are actually individuals who deserted to avoid incorporation or temporarily used permits to escape military status and cross into Romania as refugees. This is especially true as many of them were of active age. Unfortunately, we have no information about the criteria used to distinguish between civilian and military refugees. It is possible that the latter were dressed in uniform, armed, or possessed military documents, while men who managed to avoid such identity indicators may have declared themselves civilians. However, the sources do not provide an explanation regarding this aspect.

To ensure a balanced perspective and comparative analysis, two other relevant archival sources were included: the Directorate of Justice and the Statistical Service of the Ministry of War. These sources contributed to revealing the phenomenon of desertion within the Romanian army, thus allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of the motives and factors that influenced soldiers' decisions to abandon. Through this methodological approach, the aim was to provide a balanced picture of desertion in the context of war, avoiding a one-sided perspective that would limit the analysis only to Romanian soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian army. This research aimed to uncover the challenges faced by Romanian soldiers in the Romanian army who were also involved in a prolonged and devastating conflict.

Another fundamental pillar of this doctoral research involved the meticulous mapping of routes and entry points into Romania for refugees from the Austro-Hungarian army. This was an essential step to clearly and visually illustrate how the phenomenon of abandonment manifested within the war and how the migrations of these individuals unfolded. This cartographic approach provided added clarity and understanding of the geographical dimensions of abandonment during World War I. By creating detailed maps, the routes that Austro-Hungarian army deserters followed

³⁹ DCAAMNR, Fond 1663-Corpul Grănicerilor, Dosar 46, ff. 380-383, Dosar 76, ff. 1, 4-8, 15, 17, 19, 25, 27, 31, 36, 41- 42, 45- 47, 49, 51- 52, 56, 58, 61- 62, 64, 66, 70, 73, 78-80, 83, 85, 88, 90- 92, 94, 98, 100- 101, 103, 108, 110- 112, 114- 115, 118, 121, 129, 131, 133, şi Dosar 82, ff. 5, 7, 9, 11-12, 15, 18, 19- 23, 27- 35, 38, 43- 44, 51, 55, 57, 59, 64, 67, 75, 80-87, 90, 101, 107, 110, 114, 116.

to reach Romania could be reconstructed. These maps highlighted crossing points, main roads, and access routes used by them in crossing the border. Thus, a more complete and concrete image of the paths these refugees undertook in their attempt to escape the front and reach safety in Romania was obtained.

This form of graphical data representation allowed me to observe patterns and trends regarding the preferred routes of deserters and the most frequented crossing points. Consequently, I gained a more tangible perspective on how abandonment was practiced and organized by those involved in this phenomenon. Creating these maps not only contributed to a clearer visualization of the abandonment phenomenon but also added an interactive and accessible dimension to the research. Readers and researchers consulting this work will have the opportunity to easily track the routes and crossing points I identified, enhancing their understanding of the migration flows generated by this complex phenomenon.

Another objective that, unfortunately, I was not able to achieve, was identifying documents related to the courts-martial that operated within the Romanian regiments of the Austro-Hungarian army. Despite initiating correspondence several times with the War Archives in Vienna, the pandemic and the evolving digitalization context, which necessitated fund reorganizations and limited access to research facilities, restricted the possibility of exploring this avenue in detail. However, this aspect only serves to open new perspectives for future research regarding the legal and official dimension of the abandonment phenomenon within the Austro-Hungarian army.

My hope is that this research endeavor has managed to add nuance to the domestic historiographical discourse concerning the motivations and experience of desertion, while also opening new subjects and perspectives on the abandonment phenomenon in World War I.

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