

ORTHODOX CLERGY OF OLTENIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

I TRIED TO PRESENT, IN THE PAGES OF THIS STUDY, THE MILITARY CLERGY OF OLTENIA APPOINTED TO THE DIVISIONS AND REGIMENTS OF ROMANIAN ARMY, THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE DIOCESE OF RAMNIC NEW SEVERIN PASSED THROUGHOUT DURING THE WAR, AS WELL AS THE HARDSHIPS THE PARISH PRIESTS SUFFERED DURING ALMOST TWO YEARS OF ENEMY OCCUPATION. BESIDES, I ADDED THE ROLE THE MONKS AND NUNS OF MONASTERIES OF OLTENIA PLAYED IN THE ASSISTANCE GRANTED TO THE WOUNDED PEOPLE IN HOSPITALS, AS WELL AS THE LOSS OF THE PRECIOUS CHURCH OBJECTS SENT TO MOSCOW TOGETHER WITH THE TREASURE OF ROMANIA, AND THE DESTRUCTIONS THE PLACE OF WORSHIP SUFFERED DURING THE FIGHTS AND OCCUPATION.

KEY WORDS: MONASTERIES, MONKS, PRIESTS, WAR, OCCUPATION, CAMP, DESTRUCTIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Orthodox clergy took part in all the events of the World War I. The soldiers had the military priests by their side, many father confessors were present in the military hospitals, and the monks and nuns helped the medical staff.

Romania's joining the war had been postponed in 1914, but the political and military events proved that the participation of the Romanians in the great conflagration was a must. After a series of negotiations, Romania joined the war at the side of the Entente, breaking the old alliance signed with the Central Powers. The military priests joined the front at the same time with the mobilisation of the Romanian Army. During the working session of 16 May 1915, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church organised the military clergy headed by archpriest Constantine Nazarie (1865 – 1926), moral theology professor at the Faculty of Theology of Bucharest. He organised the Religious Service of the Romanian army. When the war broke out, 252 military priests were appointed, out of whom 46 were soon demobilised and replaced, and two did not operate at all. The military priests were included in regiments, brigades, as well as in the sanitary ambulances of the mobile divisions of hospitals. Out of the 252 priests mobilised, 135 were graduates in theology, 10 of the Faculty of Theology, 70 of the eight forms theological seminary, 10 of four seminary forms, 11 of two or three secondary forms, and 6 with no identified studies.

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At the end of the war, out of the 204 priests mobilised on the front, 5 died, 6 were wounded, and 10 were unaccounted for. In 1918, 40 priests remained mobilised with the troops of Bessarabia, playing a very important role in contacting the soldiers with the local population. 147 priests were promoted as captains, followed by 5 other priests later on. Protosingel Justin Serbanescu distinguished himself at the time of great trial. He was a monk from Cernica Monastery, father confessor of Regiment 21 Infantry awarded, in 1918, the military order of “Michel the Brave”, 3rd rank, for his heroic deeds.

Archpriest Constantin Nazarie was assisted by iconom Veniamin Pocitan in his activity, as well as by secretaries Nicolae Georgescu-Edinet and Constantin V. Danau.² The moment they were enrolled the regiments priests were assimilated to the lieutenant position and could be promoted to captain degree for special merits. The disastrous campaign of 1916 obliged the leadership of the army to urge all priests not to limit only to celebrating the religious services, but also support the moral condition of the troops consisting mostly of peasants with thorough religious experience.

After signing the Peace of Bucharest, the Army passed to demobilisation, when 168 military father confessors were still active. After the union of Bessarabia with Romania, the Ministry of War set up a Commission for solving the military issues in this province. Constantin Partenie was appointed for the military priests of Bessarabia, assimilated to the colonel rank. There were only three Romanians out of all the military priests of Bessarabia, as most of them were Russians. The 32 military priests assigned for the Romanian troops in Bessarabia were ordered to meet the needs of the people. These priests unfolded an extensive pastoral – missionary activity, trying to promote feelings of unity and brotherhood. They have organised schools for liquidating illiteracy, choruses, social meetings, and religious services in the Romanian language with the participation of the local people and of the soldiers. They have supported the propagandistic activity of the teachers and professors transferred from Romania to the military units. In May 1918, the religious service of the army temporary ceased its activity, but it resumed it after the re-mobilisation of the Army on 28 October 1918, sending about 70 military priests to Transylvania. 61 military priests were rewarded with Romanian and foreign awards for their sacrifice and devotion.³

OLTENIA MILITARY PRIESTS DURING THE WORLD WAR I

An important number of military father confessors left from Oltenia together with the soldiers. We can mention: Ilie Rosoga – county of Gorj (Regiment 1 Hunters, prisoner; N. Armasescu – county of Valcea (Regiment 1 Hunters), deceased; Dimitrie Elian – county of Gorj (Regiment 5 Hunters), decorated with “Romania’s Crown”; Ilie Turcu – county of Dolj (Regiment 7 Hunters); D. Muraretu – county of Gorj (Regiment 7 Hunters), decorated with “Romania’s Crown”; I. Panaitescu – county of Valcea (Regiment 2 Infantry); Spiridon Mandescu – county of Dolj (Regiment 9 Infantry); Iacob Cureleanu – county of Gorj (Regiment 10 Infantry); St. Parligras – county of Mehedinti, prisoner; Ionescu Gh. Vasile – county of Gorj (Regiment 18 Infantry), prisoner in Germany; Vasile Cernaianu – county of Gorj (Regiment 18 Infantry); Gr. Lascu – county of Valcea (Regiment 18 Infantry); Aristide Popescu – county of Romanati (Regiment 19 Infantry), decorated with “Romania’s Crown”; D. Popescu – county of Valcea (Regiment 26

² Daniela Liliana-Pătrașcu, Dumitru-Valentin Pătrașcu, „Arhidiaconul și profesorul dr. Constantin V. Dănau (1889-1980)”, *Misiunea*, 1 (3), 2016, 99-104.

³ Radu Petrescu-Muscel, „Datorie și credință: preoți musceleni, făuritori ai României Mari”, *Misiunea*, 1 (3), 2016, 84-90.

Infantry); Procopie Nitescu – county of Dolj (Regiment 29 Infantry); Ion Stoicescu – county of Dolj (Regiment 41 Infantry); Dimitrie Ionescu – county of Valcea (Regiment 42 Infantry); D. Barlogeanu – county of Valcea (Regiment 51 Infantry); Vasile Ulescu – county of Mehedinti (Regiment 57 Infantry); St. Vasilescu – county of Dolj (Regiment 66 Infantry); Haralamb Baculescu – county of Gorj (Brigade I Calarasi); Victor Dobrescu – county of Gorj (Brigade I Artillery); P. Padureanu – county of Golj (Brigade II Artillery); Victor Popilian – county of Mehedinti (Brigade II Artillery); S. Gibescu – county of Valcea (Ambulance Division I); I. Diaconescu – county Valcea (Ambulance Division II); St. Bazilescu – county of Romanati (Ambulance Division VIII); P.I. Dumitrescu (Ambulance Division XI); D. Cunescu – county of Romanati (Ambulance Division XI); Gh. Sachelarie – county of Valcea (Mobile Hospital – Corps V Army); I. Cerbulescu – county of Romanati (Evacuation Hospital – Corps I Army); Ion Runcanu – county of Mehedinti (Semi-Hospital of Evacuation – Corps I Army); D. Barlogeanu – county of Valcea (Sanitary Train no 9); Ilie Popescu – county of Mehedinti (Sanitary Train no 11); Raut Meletie – county of Valcea (Hospital of Contagious Patients – Corps I Army); and St. Vasilescu – county of Dolj (Mobile Hospital no 11).⁴ All these priests have been transferred in the course of time to other military or sanitary units, where they continued to serve with the same devotion.

Priest Ionescu Gh. Vasile, from Groserea commune, county of Gorj, mobilised at Regiment 18 Infantry, was taken prisoner in Greci locality, county of Arges, during the retreat of 20 November 1916. He was imprisoned in the German camps of Stralsund, Fuchel, and Larusdorf. His behaviour in captivity was dignified and patriotic, succeeding, through the conferences delivered, to strengthen the soldiers against the Bolshevik propaganda which was very active in the camp. He returned to the country when the war ended. Military priest Ilie Rosoga from Turburea – county of Gorj, was taken prisoner at Tancabesti, and imprisoned at Pestera Ialomiciaorei because of his nationalist attitude, then at Caldarusani Monastery with bishop Sofronie Vulpescu of Ramnic, where he stayed till the arrival of the Romanian Army.

Priest Raut Meletie, from Ramnicu Valcea, transferred as father confessor to the Hospital for Contagious Patients no 1, did his duty with abnegation, serving in the hospitals and sanitary units where priests were assigned. He accomplished his mission with devotion taking all the deceased to the far off military and civil cemeteries, in rain and gale, many times on foot, his hearse overloaded with coffins. He built on his own expense, close to the Hospital for contagious patients no 1, a church of fir boards, endowed with vessels, vestments and books of rite. He asked to be sent to Bessarabia, where he distinguished himself through special pastoral services. Priest Dobrescu Victor, from Crestesti, county of Gorj, father confessor at Brigade I Artillery, accomplished his mission with great spirit of sacrifice. He moved from infirmary to infirmary, on great distances, each of them with 600 – 700 patients suffering from recurrent fever and typhus, where he distributed medicine and allayed the sufferance of the sick where ever there were no physicians. Colonel C. Tanasescu wrote about his devotion: *“He is loved and esteemed by all those around for his nice qualities as man and priest. Cultivated, modest, exemplary correctness. He has been an example for the officers and members of the troop in all circumstances. Fanatic patriot, admirer of the military institution. I love and I esteem him”*. Colonel Paselega from Brigade I Artillery mentioned, in his turn: *“I had only admiration for father Dobrescu. His nice feelings were a balsam for the troop and officers, speaking to them and having been strong support for*

⁴ Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea română și întregirea neamului. Chipuri, fapte, suferințe și pilde pentru viitor*, Bucharest, „Vremea” Publishing House, 1940, 117-142.

sustaining the moral condition of the troop".⁵ Priest N. Armasescu – county of Valcea, father confessor of Regiment 2 Hunters died wounded in a hospital of Bucharest, and was buried at Ghencea Military Cemetery.

DIOCESE OF RAMNIC NEW SEVERIN DURING THE WAR YEARS

During the war, the Diocese of Ramnic was headed by Sofronie Vulpescu (5 May 1913 – 8 June 1918; † 6 Sept. 1923), one of the hierarchs who passed through the trials and hardships of the World War I. His activity as bishop of Ramnic was short and difficult because of the dramatic events of the Great War. His pastoral preoccupations included the administrative field and a series of cultural actions. Sofronie succeeded in organising a good Episcopal publishing house.⁶ It was in this publishing house that the *Calendar of the Romanian Orthodox Church* was printed a few times, which Sofronie edited for 21 years, as well as other theological books.⁷

Sofronie was a good connoisseur of the religious situation of Romania and especially of the one of the Quadrilateral, a territory that our country got after the Peace of Bucharest, in 1913. When the Romanian Parliamentarians voted *The Bill for the administrative organisation in New Dobrudgea*, he asked for the setting up of a Metropolitanate at Tomis-Constanta. After war a diocese of Dobrudgea was needed. His great trial was the period from 1916-1918, when he had to leave the eparchy and settle in Bucharest, where, unfortunately, he was arrested and imprisoned, and then transferred with house arrest to Ialomicioara Cave, and then to Cheia Monastery. As a result of the intervention of field marshal Mackensen, he was allowed to settle at Caldarusani Monastery, and then in Bucharest, in a nephew's house, who was priest at Kretulescu parish. At the beginning of 1918, when peace was negotiated, Soronie was released. On the occasion of the exchange of prisoners he arrived in Moldova, where the Holy Synod was convened. He did not seem to have participated in the working sessions of the Holy Synod, but on 8 June 1918, he presented his resignation from the dignity of bishop of Ramnic, through a letter sent to the minister for religious affairs, Simion Mehedinti, motivating that he was too "weak" to be able to lead the eparchy after what he had suffered because of the German authorities.⁸ From now on he lived in Bucharest, where he died on 6 September 1923, having been buried at Cernica Monastery.⁹

The Holy Synod asked the new authorities that hierarch Valerian Stefanescu from Ramnic should be accepted as primate of the Eparchy of Ramnic. This appointment was declined because of his old age. At last, in the autumn of 1917, the German authorities accepted hierarch Meletie Dobrescu Galateanul (1917-3 June 1918) as bishop locum tenens. During the first months of 1914 Hierarch Meletie has also been administrator of the church affairs in Dobrudgea and Quadrilateral, having also been called "Constanteanul" (of Constanta) for a while. After his appointment as primate of the Diocese of Ramnic and agreement of the German authorities, he served for only a few months, till 3 June 1918, when he retired. Soon before, on 1 April 1918, he had also resigned from the position of vicar to the Diocese of Lower Danube. As a result of the application of the Holy Synod, in April 1922, Meletie was reintegrated as "hierarch locum tenens" of Lower Danube

⁵ See Constantin Nazarie, *Activitatea preoților de armata în campania din anii 1916-1919*, Bucharest, Church Books Publishing House, 1921.

⁶ Iuliu Scriban, „Moartea episcopului Sofronie”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 12 (1922-1923), 938.

⁷ Iuliu Scriban, „Moartea episcopului Sofronie”, 938.

⁸ Claudiu Cotan, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în timpul Primului Război Mondial*, Bucharest, University Publishing House, 2015, 84-87.

⁹ Iuliu Scriban, „Moartea Episcopului Sofronie”, 936.

and member of the Holy Synod. He lived for only one more year (†30 November 1923), having been buried at Bellu Cemetery of Bucharest.¹⁰

During the last months of the war, hierarch Antim Petrescu Botosaneanul came to lead the Diocese of Ramnic.¹¹ The new bishop was elected on 3 July 1918 by the Great Electoral College met in Iasi.¹² In fact, on this date several important decisions were taken for the church life of Romania.¹³ The priests who took refuge in Moldova asked the members of the Holy Synod to intervene to the Romanian and German authorities to allow them to come back to the parishes deserted. As a result of the discussions within the Holy Synod it was decided that hierarchs Valerian Ramniceanul, Evghenie Pitesteanul, Meletie Constanteanul, Teofil Ploiesteanul, and priest Ovidiu Musceleanu¹⁴, director of the Holy Synod Office should go back to their eparchies.

The pastoral service of Antim Petrescu was difficult as a result of the political and military changes occurred at the end of 1918, as a result of the retreat of the German troops. Given the new political situation, the leadership of the Romanian State returned to Bucharest, and on 6 November 1918, King Ferdinand issued a decree by which the decisions of the Parliament of Iasi were annulled. Soon, the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Public Instruction announced Antim that from 6 November 1918 he would no longer be Bishop of Ramnic. Although he submitted his resignation, which was accepted, bishop Antim continued to lead the eparchy till his death (†6 September 1919).¹⁵

SUFFERANCE OF THE PRIESTS OF OLTENIA DURING THE WAR

As a result of the defeats suffered in Olenia, many Romanian soldiers were taken prisoners and sent to war camps. In the county of Gorj, a special military phenomenon occurred, namely the organisation of the partisans' military Resistance headed by Lieutenant Victor Popescu, former teacher, mobilised in Regiment 18 Gorj. The actions of these partisans culminated with the attack against the German garrison of Targu Jiu, in the summer of 1917, when the Germans had to leave the city for a short time. Part of this group of partisans succeeded in passing to Moldova, where they participated in military actions in the autumn of 1918.

Afraid of the German occupation, in the autumn of 1916, priest Grigorie Popescu-Breasta from Craiova took the head of prince Michael the Brave from Dealu Monastery to the metropolitan cathedral of Iasi. This priest seemed to have arrived at Kerson, Russia, to protect the sacred relic. In the autumn of 1918, the head of the brave prince was brought back to Dealu, with a special ceremony.

Afraid of the German occupation, part of the priests took refuge to Moldova. Some of the priests who remained at their parishes had to suffer the persecutions of the occupiers who did not appreciate the servants of the Orthodox altars, accused of anti-German and anti-Bulgarian propaganda. In Dolj county, priest Marin Urziceanu from Bistret commune was arrested by the Bulgarian soldiers who occupied the locality and transported to a war camp in Bulgaria together

¹⁰ „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, 12 (1922-1923), 1060-1061.

¹¹ Iuliu Scriban, „Episcopii din vremea ocupației germane”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year XL 8 (1921-1922), 462.

¹² „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, Year XXXVI (1912-1913), 255-259.

¹³ Central National Historical Archives, Ministry for Religious Affairs and Public Instruction, Bookkeeping Department (Arhiva Națională Istorică Centrală, Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, fond Direcția Contabilității), File no 769/1918, f. 14.

¹⁴ Central National Historical Archives, Ministry for Religious Affairs and Public Instruction, Bookkeeping Department (Arhiva Națională Istorică Centrală, Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, fond Direcția Contabilității), File no 769/1918, f. 18.

¹⁵ NICOLAE Iorga, „Arhiereul Antim”, *Oameni care au fost*, III, Bucharest, 1936, 28-29.

with his son. When they learned he was the cashier of the people's bank he was brought back to show them the place where the money was hidden. Because he did not want to tell them, he was imprisoned again in the camp of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian soldiers found in the village part of the wheat the inhabitants had hidden, and sent it to Bulgaria. Then, the locality was occupied by the German troops who tortured the priest and his wife to oblige them to give them the copper objects they owned. Stefan Bailesteanu, priest of Negoiu, was maltreated by the Bulgarian soldiers, and Nicolae Barzeanu from Zavalu, locality occupied by the German troops after the battle of Targu-Jiu, of November 1916, was maltreated and imprisoned by the German soldiers seated in Sadova, and then by those from Segarcea. Priest Ioan Dumitrescu from Bratovoiesti was beaten by the German gendarmes because he refused to give them the church bell.¹⁶

Priest Ion Popisteanu from Negomir was imprisoned in the war camp of Carbonești, county of Gorj. Iordache Patrascioiu, priest in Schela commune, and other faithful of the village, accused of espionage was sent to Lamsdorf camp, in Germany, where he died. Priest Adam Beuran from Budieni was also imprisoned with other Romanian soldiers in a camp of Germany. Priest Gheorghe Popescu from Dobrita said prayers for King Ferdinand of Romania¹⁷ on all feasts, having suffered real persecution on behalf of the occupation authorities.

Priest Gavriil Mateescu has also suffered terrible persecution in Secu commune, county of Mehedinți. He was imprisoned for having hidden the church bell that was to be confiscated. Because during the requisition of his house weapons were found, he was judged and sentenced to death, but after several months of prison at Turnu Severin, he was released after his family paid ransom. Priest Iustin Iorgulescu from Scapau commune passed through similar trials, and priest Vasile Durak from Turnu Severin was exiled to Tismana Monastery, where a camp was organised. Ion Muchie from Ponoarele was beaten to show them where he had hidden the wine and wheat, and priest Haralambie Popescu from Cioroboreni was maltreated several times.¹⁸

In the county of Romanati, priest Dumitru Filip, from Dobrun commune, was imprisoned at Bals and Craiova for various notes on the situation in the commune that were found in his house. Priest Ion Predescu from Stiberiu was beaten for having defended the honour of his house, suffering terribly till his death (†16 May 1917). Priest Grigore Berbescu from the commune of Rusenestii de Jos could help his faithful suffer diminished requisitions because he could speak German very well. Haralambie Popescu from Deveselu, accused of sabotage, was arrested, but he succeeded in fleeing. Priests Vasile Constantinescu from Ceparu and Stefan Balanescu from Cioroiu were beaten and tortured to give them goods and aliments, as well as for having helped the Romanian soldiers in retreat.¹⁹

The Valcean priests have also suffered at the time: Nicolae Marinescu from Muereasca de Sus, Florea Plesanu from Malaia, Dumitru Andreescu from Maciuca, Gheorghe Popescu from Milostea, I. Radulescu from Prundeni, Dumitru Romana from Paraeni and Ion M. Popescu from Ramnicu-Valcea who was imprisoned because he refused to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord according to the Gregorian calendar imposed by the German authorities.²⁰ The authorities of occupation put in requisition the pigs, both at the Christmas of 1916, and at 1917, the wool and aliments produced in the houses of the Romanian peasants.

¹⁶ Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea română și întregirea neamului – temnițe și lagăre*, vol. II, Bucharest, Vremea Publishing House, 107-111.

¹⁷ Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea română*, 126-127.

¹⁸ Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea română*, 189-190.

¹⁹ Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea română*, 234-236.

²⁰ Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea română*, 348-349

THE MONASTERIES AND CHURCHES OF OLTENIA DURING THE GREAT WAR

The threat of the enemy occupation determined the Great General Headquarters of the Romanian Army to save the precious church goods preserved in monasteries and churches. The situation of Moldova and the fear of the Russian soldiers started this action in the Moldavian monasteries. After ending the action in Moldova, Alexandru Tzigara Samurcas, director of the Museum of Art of Bucharest started to inventory and transport in safe conditions the church objects from the monasteries of Oltenia and Muntenia. The precious objects of the Diocese of Ramnic and of the main monasteries of the eparchy were collected. Thus, a few old crosses, a silver shrine, a silver Holy Gospel dating from the time of prince Constantine Brancoveanu, a silver censor, a silver font, a big silver vessel for holy bread, two silvered hands from the holy relics, two silver gilded icon lamps, two silver candlesticks, two silver gilded candlesticks, and a silver chandelier were inventoried at Bistrita Monastery, county of Valcea and transported.²¹

Seven silver gilded icons lamps, a Brancovean gilded cup, a censor, a silver vessel, a gilded small star, two silver teaspoons, two silver gilded candlesticks, several old vestments, a Brasov chest, and two old carpets were collected from Horezu Monastery.²² As for the church objects collected from "Dintr-un lemn" (One Wood) Monastery we learn from the report drafted on 23 October 1916, that two Gospels with silver gilded covers, a silver gilded vessel, a silver censor, a pair of silver gilded buckles, and a few old fabrics were collected.²³ The report drafted at Arnota Monastery reads about a silver gilded cup, as well as about a cross, a discus and a censor, all of them of silver. A silver icon lamp, two old silver shrines, two silver candlesticks, a cross, a discus, and a censor, all of them of silver, were registered in the report drafted at Arnota Monastery. A silver icon lamp, two old silver shrines, two silver candlesticks, an epitrahilion, and a cloak dating from the time of Saint Nicodim, founder of the monastery, were registered and collected from Tismana Monastery. A silver vessel with the Cantacuzine eagle on it was collected from Surpatele Monastery. Several objects were transported from Cozia Monastery, the inventory mentioning four silver icon lamps, six silver crosses, two silver discuses, six pairs of silver buckles, three silver teaspoons, and two silver small stars. A silver cup with very interesting ornaments²⁴ was collected from the church of Saint Pious Parascheva of Ramnicu Valcea city. Seven locked up chests of the precious objects of the monasteries were taken to the Metropolitanate of Iasi, and then transported to Moscow together with the Treasure of Romania.

Besides these losses, the monasteries and churches of Oltenia had to suffer the hostilities of the war too. The enemies used the holy places of worship as camps for soldiers, as storehouses for aliments and ammunition, and even as stables. Some of the monasteries were hit by shells during the air raids. The Jiu Valley was a strategic place during the World War I and the witness of some terrible fights. During the offensive in the Jiu Valley, the German soldiers camped out for a while at Lainici Monastery, where they used the church as stable for horses and shelter for soldiers. The German soldiers burned the furniture and the archives of the monastery to get warm. The walls with beautiful paintings were scratched and darkened with smoke, and the bells were

²¹ Viorica Moisuc, *Românii și politica externă rusească. Un secol din istoria Tezaurului românesc „păstrat” la Moscova (Studiu și Documente)*, Iași, Demiurg Publishing House, 2013, 183.

²² Viorica Moisuc, *Românii și politica externă rusească*, 184.

²³ Viorica Moisuc, *Românii și politica externă rusească*, 186.

²⁴ Viorica Moisuc, *Românii și politica externă rusească*, 188.

confiscated. Some of the monks of this monastery were deported to Germany. At the end of the war the monastery was devastated and ruined. Turnu Monastery, hit by shells, had a similar fate.

Cozia Monastery too had to suffer the camping of the German soldiers.²⁵ On 2 November 1916, threatened by air raids, the civil population from Calinesti commune were evacuated, and the monks from Cozia Monastery had to leave the monastery, some of them integrated in the military service. Afraid of the German occupation, abbot Grigorie Stoenescu made an inventory of the precious objects of the monastery. Thus, the holy liturgical vessels, church vestments, silver ware, bells, church books, archives, plans and various documents that belonged to the monastery were inventoried. Forced by circumstances, archimandrite Grigorie took refuge to Bogdana Monastery in Bacau county, where he died during the war. A part of the objects inventoried were sent to the Diocese of Ramnic, and another part were collected by Al. Tzigara Samurcas.

During the retreat, the Romanian Army requisitioned the carts of the monastery which remained with no means of transport. Cozia was run by protosinghel Teodosie Ionescu who took up an attitude against the vandalism of the German soldiers. Monk Veniamin Canarau, who resisted for a few months at Cozia Monastery had to take refuge to Moldova at last.

A sad event occurred at Cozia. Protosinghel Teodosie Ionescu informed the Diocese of Ramnic that the monastery was ruined, and the stone of the tomb of prince Mircea the Old was damaged and broken by the German soldiers.²⁶ Rather indifferent, the German soldiers took a few icons and the royal doors and burned them. Several documents presented to the Romanian authorities the following years showed the damages caused to the monastery during the occupation.²⁷

During the air raids a series of churches of Călinești-Vâlcea, Cireșu-Argeș, Căineni-Vâlcea, Milcov of Valea-Olt, Ciofrângenii-Argeș and Matei skete were destroyed. Many goods of the churches were destroyed: vestments, tables, pews, icon lamps, books of rite, fences, floors, icons, chandeliers and candlesticks.²⁸ The cells of the monasteries were changed into military camps, hospitals and garrisons. The Tismana Monastery was turned into a camp for prisoners.

The greatest drama the Orthodox Church passed through was the confiscation of the bells. The order was applied with much diligence by the German authorities who sent specialised commandoes to all the churches and monasteries of the territory occupied who confiscated thousands of bells. The National Archives of Bucharest keep a file of all those bells, their weight and value, as well as the churches where from they were requisitioned. Metropolitan Conon tried to redeem the bells organising a national collect. The initiative was approved by the German authorities who said they did not need money, but the metal of the bells.²⁹ Besides bells their accessories were confiscated too (the clappers, metal rings, cramps, metal board, hammers and other metal objects).³⁰

²⁵ Emilian Lovișteanul, „Monahismul creștin din Mitropolia Moldovei și Primul Război Mondial” *Misiunea*, 1 (3), 2016, 144-146.

²⁶ Gamaliil Vaida, „Mănăstirea Cozia între anii 1916-1918 în lumina documentelor vremii”, *Mitropolia Olteniei*, 10-12, 1978, 795.

²⁷ Gamaliil Vaida, „Mănăstirea Cozia”, 796.

²⁸ Gherasim Piteșteanul, „Slujitori bisericești din Eparhia Râmnicului și Argeșului în timpul ocupației străine 1916-1918”, *Mitropolia Olteniei*, 10-12, 1978, 763.

²⁹ Gheorghe Vasilescu, „Din suferințele Bisericii noastre în teritoriul vremelnic ocupat (1916-1918)”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 11-12, 1978, 1292.

³⁰ Claudiu Cotan, „Clerul ortodox din București în timpul Primului Război Mondial”, *Studii Teologice*, 2, 2014, 49-65.

MONKS AND NUNS NURSES

The leader of the monks nurses during the Great War was archimandrite Teoctist Stupcaru, former participant in the military campaign of 1913, servant priest at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Iasi and music professor at “Veniamin Costachi” Seminary. The nuns nurses were headed by nun Ana Ghenovici. Thus, the Orthodox monks “*brought great benefits to the country, through their sacrifice, both during the campaign of 1913, and during that of 1916-1918*”.³¹

The monks and nurses from Tisman, Hurezi, Cozia, Polovragi and Bistrita Monasteries worked in military hospitals. Hospital no 4 Red Cross run by physician Gratoschi has also benefited of the help of 10 monks nurses headed by protosinghel Trifon Sturza. This hospital was moved from Bucharest to Targu Jiu on 10 September 1916. The hospital operated till Oltenia was occupied by enemies, when it retreated to Focsani, where it remained in winter time. During the second half of the war, the hospital operated in Botosani and in Targu-Bujor. More than 10,000 wounded and sick patients were treated in this hospital. The hospital passed through a hard time when it was conquered by enemy at Targu Jiu, but after a few days it was released by the Romanian soldiers after a terrible fight on the bridge over the Jiu River. At the beginning of the war, a field hospital operated in the building of the Theological Seminary of Ramnicu Valcea, coordinated by physician Odobescu. It was in this hospital that nuns Varvara Predescu, abbess of Surpatele Monastery, county of Valcea, Neonila Predescu, and Ecaterina Ionescu worked. The nuns nurses from Horezu Monastery have also activated in the hospitals for wounded. The monks from the monasteries of Oltenia have joined the medical orderlies of the field hospitals and military ambulances.

An orphanage was set up at Bistrita Monastery, county of Valcea, during the war. The chief of this orphanage was abbess Epiharia Moisescu (1870-1943) from Horezu Monastery, who was educator at “Saint Ecaterina” orphanage of Bucharest in 1900, where she worked for 10 years. From 1910-1916, she was the chief of a girls’ orphanage of Bucharest, helped by two other nuns, Olga and Teodosia Gologan, her nieces. Epiharia Moisescu set up the *Christian Philanthropic Association of the “Protection of the Mother of God”* for helping the orphans. Nearly the time Romania joined the war, the three nuns organised the Orphanage from Bistrita Monastery, where tens of orphan girls from all over the country were sheltered.³² The nuns from Pasarea Monastery have also taken care of the orphans. Close to the beginning of the war, Queen Mary asked the monasteries to send a number as large as possible of nuns to be trained as nurses, and the monasteries to take care of the war orphans.

CONCLUSIONS

The Orthodox clergy of Oltenia contributed to the moral and material support of the Romanian army. The monasteries of Oltenia prepared various materials for the needs of the Army, bedclothes for the military hospitals and for soldiers, and a large part of their monks and nuns went to hospitals to help with the wounded and convalescents. Some of the monasteries suffered because of the military battles fought close to them, the buildings having been ruined, and the churches defiled as they were turned into shelters for soldiers and horses. A great number of Oltenian priests accompanied the soldiers on the front. In the territories occupied by the German Army, the Orthodox clergy had to suffer the harshness of the occupation, some of the priests having been

³¹ Teoctist Stupcaru, „Activitatea călugărilor din eparhia Moldovei în timpul Războiului”, *Viața monahală*, 11-12, 1935, 315-327.

³² Ioanichie Bălan, *Patericul românesc*, Publishing House of Sihastria Monastery, 2011, 547-548.

imprisoned for various accusations, especially for the anti-German attitude or for remembering the Romanian royal family at the Divine Liturgy, or even for helping the Romanian soldiers. Some of the priests of Oltenia were sent to the camps of Hungary or Germany. The clergy of Oltenia contributed, through their sacrifice and attitude, to the formation of Great Romania.

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