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THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MONASTERIES IN THE COUNTIES OF NEAMŢ AND ROMAN TO THE GREAT UNION^{†**}

Abstract: This article is presenting the perspectives regarding the contribution of the monasteries, priests and monks from de counties of Neamţ and Roman to the Great Union in 1918. We note the contribution of monasteries where there was military hospital and orphanage for war orphans. Dozens of nuns from this monastery functioned as nurses in hospitals in Moldova. The contribution of nuns from the monastery who have worked in the front or in military hospitals should also not be forgotten. The Romanian Orthodox Church was an active participant, within its competences, in the War of National Unification.

Keywords: First World War; Romanian Orthodox Church; monastery, orphans; nuns

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A remarkable but often forgotten page in our history is the role of Moldavian monasteries in world conflagrations. One contribution, which has remained unknown until today, was that of participating in the economic war effort, as many monks and nuns worked the land or worked in workshops that produced clothing for soldiers. During the First World War, the nuns and monks in the Moldavian monasteries were at the forefront of saving the lives of the wounded, caring for orphaned children, sheltering and receiving refugees¹. The church, along with other state institutions, tried to support a pacifist and constructive policy.

Prior to Romania's entry into the First World War, the Romanian Orthodox Church helped to support the state's military actions, such as the 1877-1878 Russian-

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¹ Constantin Kirişescu, *History of the war for the reunification of Romania, 1916-1919*, vol. II, 2nd edition (Bucharest: Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1989), 6.

Turkish War for independence, as well as the military's involvement of Romania's in Balkan wars. The military priests, as well as the whole clergy and the faithful, supported the army not only spiritually, but also physically (medically).

According to a statistic², written in Bucharest, we find that in 1903 in our country there were 68 hermitages, small monasteries (chinovii) and big monasteries (lavre), of which 45 were popular (21 were with monks, 24 with nuns). There were 1730 nuns and 653 monks in the whole country. In Moldova, the most popular were two monasteries, the Văratec Monastery with 400 nuns and the Neamț-Secu Monastery with 189 monks.

Immediately after the outbreak of the First World War, the goal of national unification absorbed political life, with diplomatic activity being the main concern of the state leadership and public opinion. At that time, the entire Romanian society, both the royal family and the political class, was deeply divided into groups that supported either neutrality or entering the war on the side of one or the other of the two conflicting alliances. In 1914, King Carol I immediately convened a Crown Council in Sinaia.

During this council, the neutrality of Romania towards the war is decided, thus it was highlighted the fact that Romania could not enter the war, at that moment there were moral and material reasons. With the exception of the politician P.P.Carp, a friend of King Carol I and close friend of Alexandru Marghiloman, who gave a lecture for Romania's entry into the war, the plea being on the part of the Central Powers, the other participants in the Crown Council agreed with position of neutrality.

Romania's neutrality was also influenced by Italy's declaration of neutrality, the two countries came to an agreement on September 10/23, 1914, an agreement that was renewed on January 24 / February 6, 1915, in Bucharest. The agreement was that the two states should act jointly for common defense, in the event of an attack by Austria-Hungary. The position of neutrality of our country lasted until August 15/28, 1916, when the Romanian troops, together with the Entente, crossed the mountains in Transylvania, in order to achieve „the unification of the Romanians on both sides of the Carpathians”.

August 14/27, 1916 is the day when a Crown Council was convened in Cotroceni, where, following the discussions, the adhesion of all the participants was

² Marcu Petcu, Adrian Pintilie, Nicolae Lihănceanu, Ramona-Anca Crețu, *Pages from the history of Orthodox monasticism in theological journals in Romania*, vol. II, „Monastic settlements” (Bucharest: National Library of Romania Publishing House, Metropolitan Iacov Putneanu Publishing House, 2011), 206.

obtained. At the council, it was decided that Romania would enter the First World War, together with the Entente. The bells of Neamț Monastery announced for three days the mobilization of the Army and Romania's entry into the war.

It is something that we must say with all sincerity and not hide this fact only for the sake of the project of national unity. The project of national unity is one and Romania's preparation for war is another. Romania was unprepared materially, in terms of equipment for the army, and also unprepared for the decisions taken by military or political leaders.

The Romanian Orthodox Church was an active participant, within its competences, in the War of National Unification. After the loss of the southern regions of the country and the withdrawal of the Romanian administration to Iasi, the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Suceava had a special position on behalf of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The events that took place at the end of 1916 brought at that time to the priest Pimen Georgescu, the metropolitan of Moldova, the main position in the hierarchy of the National Church, because the metropolitan from Bucharest remained in the occupied territory.

The capital of Moldavia thus became the capital of war for Romania. In addition to central authorities, much of the capital's high-ranking people (protipendada), meaning many people of culture, journalists, bankers and landowners from the occupied provinces, set off for the former capital of Moldova, and many common people, fleeing from the consequences of the war.

Panicked, the population of Oltenia, Muntenia and Dobrogea went into exile. Thousands of Romanians, whether women, children, old and healthy or sick people, all set off by cart or on foot, so as not to fall into the hands of the invaders. Everyone was heading to Moldova, not knowing which town to go to. A new government was formed in refuge on December 11/24, 1916.

Moldova had become a huge, isolated shelter, with all the schools turned into hospitals and infirmaries, with the roads drowned by the endless rows of carts with refugees moaning in pain and hunger, with the railways blocked by the crowds of wagons and trains, turned into warehouses on wheels, full of machinery, materials and machines taken in a hurry, from abandoned factories. Roads and highways were full of endless convoys of carts, carriages and broughams.

In the period preceding Romania's entry into the First World War, the nuns from the monasteries in the Neamț area took nursing courses at the hospital in Tg. Neamț³, being guided by Mother Eupraxia Macri⁴. Other nuns attended the"

³ During the First World War, the hospital functioned as a military hospital, being run by doctor Constantin Petroniu. The hospital was intended to be a point of support for the army, but also for the civilian population in the area. The harsh winter of 1917, famine, poverty, and the general state of society added to the problems the hospital was facing. The problems

Queen Elisabeta” Institute -Sisters of Charity in Bucharest in 1914-1915⁵. The election of the intended nuns to attend the courses belonged to the Metropolitan, and their financial support, during their stay in Bucharest, was the responsibility of the monastery⁶. Some of the nuns from the monasteries Agapia and Văratec⁷, trained through the Red Cross courses, were assigned to the Red Cross hospital in Piatra Neamț, led by Lucia Bogdan.

The nuns of Agapia and Văratec monasteries complied with the call made by Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu of Moldavia (1909-1934)⁸, fulfilling both the spiritual sacrifice, the permanent prayer for the victory of the Romanian army, and the physical one, to take care of the wounded soldiers. Thus, several nuns were summoned to various field or fixed hospitals in Moldova, to care for the wounded and disabled in the war, as they had minimal medical training. According to the

of the hospital, during the war, meant the lack of medicines, sanitary materials, food that could not be provided to all patients, insufficient medical staff. The hospital suffered during that period due to medical shortages, but also due to the war. In order to provide food for the patients, the food was purchased on loan from various local producers. However, many of the foods were scarce and of poor quality. The hospital operated with a number of 250-300 beds, to provide medical care to the wounded soldiers brought from the front. The lighting of the hospital was done with candles, lamps, rushlights. Medical procedures were hampered by a lack of electricity in the hospital. From a septic point of view, medical interventions were done manually and with very few safe means. The medical treatments applied in the hospital were done with medicines purchased from the pharmacy.

⁴ In this sense, we mention the telegrams of notification of the priest Constantin Nazarie, who set up the Religious Service of the Army, addressed to Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu. We also mention the pastoral letters of the metropolitan that were addressed to the archdioceses and monasteries of Moldova - Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Bucovina (A.M.M.B.), *Chancellery Fund*, File no. 81/1916, *The 1916-1918 War*, vol. I-III;

⁵ Grigore N. Popescu, *The Romanian Clergy and the Unification of the Nation*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Vremea Printing House, 1940), 86.

⁶ Popescu, *The Romanian Clergy*, 86-88.

⁷ It's about the nuns: Agnia Popovici, Agafia Velase, Agapia Goroi, Agripina Apostol, Iulia Chirilă, from the Agapia Monastery and the Ionescu Olympics, Epraxia Ghiță, Miropia Zugrăvescu, Petrina Dascălu Ilie and Veronica Petrei from the Văratec N. Monastery, cf. Popescu, *The Romanian Clergy*, 87.

⁸ The appeal of Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu is addressed to all the servants of the altar and to the pastors of the soul, who „whatever happens to our nation(...)we must remain in our places, in the midst of the people, caring for their spiritual needs and praying to God for world peace and the good of our nation”. The request of the Metropolitan is part of the correspondence of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova to the Văratec Monastery, no. 36/7 January 1917. - S.J.N.A.N, *Văratec Monastery Fund*, file 20/1917, p. 7.

available documents⁹, at least 15 nuns from Vărativ monastery were assigned by the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Suceava, during this period, to various medical centers in cities such as Piatra Neamț¹⁰, Roman, Iași, etc., following the requests of the management of these centers¹¹.

From Neamț Monastery, 18 nurse monks left for the Red Cross hospitals. A few days later, the monastery sent nine more monks to military hospitals. Four monks from Neamț Monastery worked in hospitals in Piatra Neamț. As an example of patriotism, the monk Filotei Moroșanu, from Neamț Monastery, asked Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu for approval to fight on the front as a soldier¹².

For example, a document from April 22, 1916, shows that at that time, 15 hospitals were being prepared, of which 4 were category I, 7 were category II and 4 were for the convalescent. For convalescents, hospitals were created at Vărativ Monastery¹³, Neamț Monastery and in Bălțătești. In this sense, on May 20, 1916, restoration works were ordered at the hospitals of Vărativ and Neamț Monasteries¹⁴. These works were entrusted to the Neamț Bridges and Roads Service. In August

⁹ A.M.M.B., *Chancellery Fund*, File no. 81/1916, *The War of 1916-1918*, vol. I-III; Daniel Isai, Ionel Moldovan, *The struggle of the Moldovan Orthodox Church for the Great Union. Reports of archdioceses and monasteries from the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Suceava (1916-1918)* (Iași: Doxology Publishing House, 2018), 238-250.

¹⁰ At the beginning of 1915, a number of 5 nuns were assigned to the fixed hospital of the "Red Cross", Piatra Neamț branch. The hospital was organized to care for the wounded in the war.

¹¹ The distribution was approved by the metropolis and took into account the nuns Meropia Zugrăvescu, Olimpiada Ionescu, Epraxia Ghiață and Petrina Dascălu Ilie, selected by the abbess of the monastery, Mother Zenaida Racliș (1909-1926), together with Mother Ana Ghenovici, the head of the monks' team. from the Charity Institute and the "Red Cross" service - according to the address no. 476/9 February 1915 of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Suceava to the Văratec Monastery - S.J.N.A.N, *Văratec Monastery Fund*, file 15/1914, page 51.

¹² A.M.M.B., file no. 81/1916, vol. II, *The 1916-1918 War*.

¹³ Significant are the words written later by one of these nuns-nurse, Mother Marina-Mina Hociotă from Vărativ Monastery, native of Sălișteța Sibiului: *We, nuns and monks, have put our lives at risk(...) for the country and we served with faith and we went to war with all our conscience, to help the wounded, for whom we worked with a holy feeling, to help them in suffering (...). We have fulfilled our duty not as men, but as soldiers of the Lord and of our country, taking the "obedience" to the end, to the end of the war. May God help us according to the conscience we served the country with the love of a Romanian and Transylvanian citizen.* - Daniel Isai, Ionel Moldovan, *The Struggle of the Moldovan Orthodox Church for the Great Union* (Iasi: Doxology Publishing House, 2018), 212-215.

¹⁴ According to the report of Neamț Monastery no. 104/12 April 1918, by the abbot of the monastery Meletie Nicuță, abbot during 1916-1920. Archimandrite Meletie Nicuță between 1931-1933, was abbot at Secu Monastery. He wrote the work *"History of the Holy Monastery of Neamțu during the Great War (1916-1918)*, according to A.M.M.B., *Chancellery fund*, file 81/1916, vol. VIII, p. 136-137, 150-151.

1916, the Ministry of War gave these hospitals sums of money for the arrangement, 3948.75 lei for Văratec and 2809.88 lei for Neamț.

Neamț and Agapia monasteries, where the nuns and monks opened field hospitals and orphanages, also sent materials and clothing to the front. From Neamț Monastery, 23 monks who had military training, were sent to the front, only 6 remained at the field hospital inside the monastery. In all the territories of Neamț Monastery, during the First World War, there were 1500 beds to serve all the wounded on the front in this area.

Another aspect by which Văratec Monastery contributed significantly to the course of the war, is the fact that it organized the field hospital with the largest number of wounded housed, its capacity being about 600 beds. This field hospital was installed in August 1916, operating under the name of Hospital 32-Neamț and being run by the reserve major Dr. N. Penescu and the administrator C. Lepădatu.

The circumstances of the decision to install a field hospital at Văratec Monastery belonged to the Ministry of War, through the General Directorate of Health Service, a decision communicated to the Ministry of Cults, which in turn sent it through an address to the Metropolitan Church of Moldova, which eventually, announced the management of the monastery, in order to comply in time and adopt the necessary measures¹⁵. Then followed a series of provisions of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Suceava. The Metropolitan Church soon sent another order to the management of Văratec Monastery, which included the proposal made by the Central Sanitary Committee to establish a hospital for 700 wounded or convalescent soldiers, as well as a list of measures to be taken by abbess Zenaida Racliș, along with Economic Council of the monastery¹⁶. These measures mainly concerned the choice of the houses of the monastery, meaning between the houses of the nuns and the workshops, in which the wounded were to be installed, and then providing the necessary equipment, especially beds and the necessary objects. Another measure required the transfer of nuns younger than 45, not enrolled in the service of the „Red Cross”, to the monastery of Agapia, and those older than 45 years to remain in the monastery to care for the church, household and the wounded.

¹⁵ The measures required in the case of setting up a field hospital can be found in the address of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Suceava to Văratec Monastery no. 3227/9 October 1915, S.J.N.A.N, *Văratec Monastery* Fund, file 17/1915, page 15.

¹⁶ It was expected that the arrangement would take place under the leadership of the regional technical committees, in agreement with the Văratec monastery. According to the address of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Suceava to Văratec Monastery, no. 2530/10 August 1915. - S.J.N.A.N, *Văratec Monastery* Fund, file 17/1915, f. 2.

Immediately, a few days after receiving this address, the abbess of the monastery, together with the members of the Economic Council¹⁷ met to analyze the required measures and the situation in the monastery. Regarding the number of the wounded taken care of in the hospital, this experienced very large variations due to the evolution of the situation on the front. The first wounded arrived here in late August 1916¹⁸. The hospital continued to operate until the end of the war, in 1918.

The report no. 98 of abbot Meletie, of April 11, 1917, informed Pimen that 20 cases of typhoid fever had been reported in the monastery among the wounded soldiers and that the Public Health Directorate was being asked to take severe measures to prevent the epidemic from spreading. On July 13, 1917, the monastery's hospital came under the administration of the Society of the Disabled, and abbot Meletie resigned, not without some conflicts with the state authorities. On March 26, 1918, the last invalids were evacuated.

Neamț Monastery reported on how it responded throughout the war to helping the army, refugees and the sick. The report of Neamț Monastery stated that all the monastery cells were made available to the army and refugees, that a military hospital was set up in the monks' houses, and that a hospital for convalescents was installed in the old infirmary.

On the other hand, during these difficult times, orphanages were organized for war orphans in the monastery. At the beginning of August 1917, Văratec Monastery was visited by Princess Olga Sturdza, President of the Orthodox Women's Society, and the possibility of setting up two orphanages for war orphans was discussed, one at Văratec Monastery and the other at Agapia. The two orphanages were known as „the orphanages in Filioara”, and during the war they were run by univ. prof. Boroianu, assisted by the priest Bălănescu. Mother Evpraxia Macri in Agapia and Mother Natalia Bolberi in Văratec took care of the education of these children, the young girls learning about household chores, and the older ones learning to weave carpets, spin the wool or to make shoes.

The two orphanages were repeatedly inspected by delegates of the National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women - Orphans Section, the first of which took place on September 30, 1917, when it was found that Mother Elpida Petrișor had taken 12 orphans under her care. A new inspection took place in November, with the desire to increase the capacity of the two orphanages and to receive 1,200 orphans. The results of the inspection were excellent, noting the

¹⁷ The Members of the Economic Council of the Văratec Monastery were the nuns Fevronia Vasian, Evghenia Bâja, Antonina Gr. Moallea.

¹⁸ S.J.N.A.N, Fond *Mănăstirea Văratec*, dosar 17/1915, f. 1-34.

efforts made by the two monasteries and the Prefecture of Neamț County for the education and feeding of these children.

The main concern of the administrator of the 2 orphanages was to provide food, clothes, shoes and firewood. According to the documents from the Chancellery Fund of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova¹⁹, it supported as much as it could the supply, but support also came from the inhabitants of some communes and towns that provided the necessary things. Thus, the inhabitants of Vânători-Neamț village donated 400 kg of beans, 80 kg of hemp seed and 40 kg of potatoes. Ordinary people also donated money. On November 12, the Subsistence Warehouse Târgu Frumos (Pașcani Station) announced the orphanages that it offers 300 pairs of peasant's shoes (opinci) of different sizes, 500 kg of wool for making clothes, 100 liters of gas for lighting, two horses for transport and that it guards the orphanages by deploying 10 militiamen. On November 17, 129 sheep are bought from Pipirig, for which the sum of 3360 lei was offered. However, the two orphanages were facing the problem of taking²⁰ the products received from the stations, which led to shortages in feeding children.

For the education of these orphans, there were opened two primary schools at the orphanages, with the approval of Minister I.G. Duca, since January 1918. Thus, the nun Eupraxia Macri, a teacher for adults, returned to Agapia Monastery, and Natalia Bolberită, who was also a teacher²¹, remained at Văratec Monastery for the education of orphans. The teachers Popescu Ioan, Dragomirescu Constantin, Predescu Ilie, Maria Capriș and Elena Vasilescu worked at the school in Agapia. From the two nuns' monasteries, over a hundred nuns worked in different military hospitals, 23 nuns were assigned to the hospitals in Iași, and another 7 nuns to the hospital from Neamț Monastery. The nuns of Văratec Monastery also worked at the hospitals, in Bârlad 7 were assigned and 4 nuns each were sent to the hospitals in Vaslui, Tecuci, Bacău and Târgu-Ocna²².

¹⁹ A.M.M.B., *Chancellery Fund*, File 16/1922, *Society of War Orphans and the Disabled*.

²⁰ During the war, the horses of the monasteries in the area were requisitioned, as a result the transport, and also the agricultural work suffered. In the case of Văratec Monastery, "4 horses and a carriage for the needs of the field hospital and 4 carts (harabale) with 8 oxen" were requisitioned. Harabalele are large carts that were used to transport grain. The goods of the monastery were borrowed on one condition, when "when the monastery needs them, it uses them." - Iosefina Giosanu, abbess, *Spirituality - philanthropy*, 142.

²¹ Daniel Isai, „The Involvement of Moldovan Monasticism in Relieving the Sufferings of the First World War (1916-1918)”, *Theology and Life*, Year XIII (LXXIX), no. 7-12 (2003): 243.

²² Ioan Ivan, „Organizational forms of medical assistance”, *Văratec Monastery*, Iași (1986): 147.

The panic in the country had grown higher. The thought that it would be a lasting war determined the Council of Ministers to take some decisions related to the inventory of raw materials, including that of metals found in monasteries or churches. The political situation in which our country was at that time, endangered the country's heritage, and it was decided that for the good preservation of the church odors to gather them all. This was done by an order of the General Headquarters, no. 30 of October 11, 1916, which stipulated „*the inventory and transportation of all monastic treasures*”. Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș, director of the Carol I National Art Museum in Bucharest, was delegated to fulfill this order.

Under the pressure of the events, the authorities took refuge in Moldova, the country's capital being moved to Iasi, and by decree no. 3120 it was decided to move the B.N.R headquarters to Iasi. The issue of heritage assets in the monasteries in the Neamț area remained in the form of stories shrouded in mystery for a long period of time. The difficult situation in the area of occupation called into question the relocation of the Romanian treasury to Moscow. For most Romanians, the treasure means the gold of the National Bank of Romania. And yet it represented less than a tenth of the value of goods evacuated to Russia in 1916 and 1917.

Romanians then sent the treasures of the National Bank and the House of Deposits and Consignments, of private banks and public institutions, the Crown jewelry, the most important art objects in museums and private collections, monastic odors, numismatic collections, state archives, diplomatic archives, manuscripts, rare books, finally, everything that represents, as heritage, the identity of the Romanian nation, starting with the 16th century, and many private collections. To this treasure were added the most important and valuable church objects collected from the important monasteries and churches in Moldova, Oltenia and Muntenia.

The task entrusted to Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș was the inventory and safe transport of the works of art and valuable objects of the churches and monasteries from the Muntenia and Moldova regions. On October 12, 1916, after getting in possession of the permits written in Romanian and Russian, and after being assigned a soldier who knew the language of the enemies, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș set off, being in charge of inventorying the church objects that were found in monasteries and churches in order to be saved from war and not to be destroyed or stolen.

The first place inventoried was Slatina Monastery, in Suceava County, this is one of the largest and oldest Orthodox monasteries in the northeast of our country. At the Slatina monastery, he took out the treasure from the hiding place built in the chapel of the church St. Nicholas, where the monks had hidden it, because „the traces of the new plaster could be seen perfectly”. For taking these church odors delivery and receiving documents were drawn up.

Regarding the patrimony objects collected from the monasteries in the Neamț region, goods that became part of the treasury, we can mention a few episodes spent at the monasteries in the area. In fact, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș also mentions his mission in his memoirs, remembering the difficulties encountered.

On October 14, 1916, he arrived at Văratie Monastery, where all the odors and ornaments had been put in two hiding places built in the church tower. Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș finds that the goods are perfectly concealed and „have the required guarantees”, so they are not touched. According to his report, it is stated that the objects were not older than 1785 anyway, so their artistic and historical value was reduced. Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș also drew up a report following his visit at Agapia Monastery. There are several misunderstandings between the abbess of Agapia Monastery, Mother Epraxia Demi and Alexandru Tzigara Samurcaș during the visit.

The management of Agapia Monastery sends to Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu an information regarding the visit of Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș. The abbess of the monastery reminds of the inventory of the patrimony objects and their picking up to be sent to Iași. Although, „for the first time I objected by saying that I do not have the High Order from Your Holiness”²³, the abbess recalls in her informing that Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș did not hesitate to remind that he would pick up the objects by force and that he was in charge of transporting those objects from the monasteries to Iași, and then to hand them over to the Metropolitan Church.

On the same day, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș arrives at Neamț Monastery. At that time, Archimandrite Mitrofor Meletie Nicuță was abbot, a pious and peaceful monk, who remained in history as a devoted monk to the Church and faithful to the canonical provisions, and who states that the abbot is the keeper of the monastic fortunes together with the other monks appointed in administration and cannot alienate anything from the monastery's fortune. The Metropolitan Church of Iași had asked the monasteries by order no. 2287 of July 13, 1916²⁴, that the sacred objects, documents and manuscripts of the monastery should not be alienated in any form, regardless of the person who made such a request. Metropolitan Pimen specified in his order that only after an agreement between the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, the House of the Church and the Holy Metropolitan Church, communicated to the monasteries, would it be possible to take the valuables they held. Taking into account that order, abbot Meletie Niculiță from Neamț Monastery

²³ A.M.M.B., *Chancellery Fund*, File no. 81/1916, *The 1916-1918 War*, vol. I-III.

opposed the action coordinated by Tzigara-Samurçaş. The abbot refused to comply with the order, claiming that he needed a release from Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu of Moldova.

During all this time, the abbot presented the Metropolitan's order of July 13, 1916²⁴, which forbade him to cede valuables held by the monastery. Seeing the abbot's ferocity for preserving the monastery's treasury, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurçaş telegraphed to the Great Headquarters of the North, in Bacău, communicating about the opposition encountered and asking for instructions. Not being used with refusals, especially from some monks, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurçaş went to meet General Constantin Prezan, who sent the commander of the company of rural gendarmery from Neamţ County to the monastery. The purpose of the visit was to protect the monastery's treasury, for the protection of which it seems that several soldiers were sent by the Piatra Neamţ Garrison Command. The abbot Archimandrite Mitrofot Meletie Nicuţă tried to obtain the consent of the Metropolitan Church of Iaşi, but in the absence of such approval, under the threat of his arrest, he ceded the treasure of the monastery²⁵.

Each time, in order to justify his actions and not to violate the fulfillment of the High Order, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurçaş draws up reports in the presence of the abbot. The abbot complained to Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu about the tense situation he experienced at the Neamţ Monastery, when on October 14, 1916, Samurçaş asked him to hand over the monastery's treasury²⁵.

After the episode from Neamţ Monastery, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurçaş then leaves for Secu Monastery, where he has a new surprise. Here, the abbot of the monastery, Archimandrite Ilarion Bălăiţă, had sent "the most precious objects" in three boxes to the Metropolitan Church, but without a receipt, which makes Alexandru Tzigara-Samurçaş suspicious. However, he raised two old carpets.

Irritated by the authoritarian attitude shown by Tzigara-Samurçaşi at the monasteries in the Neamţ region, Metropolitan Pimen addressed the following protest to I. G. Duca, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction: „*In connection with*

²⁴ A.M.M.B., *Chancellery* Fund, File no. 81/1916, vol. I-III;

²⁵ The treasure of Neamţ monastery had been taken out of its vestments and hidden in one of the locked rooms of the library, in a hiding place. The value of the objects that were taken by Alexandru Tzigara-Samurçaş is invaluable, considering both their origin, antiquity and their historical and artistic importance. Suffice it to mention a few objects taken by Samurçaş: a Gospel, Slavonic manuscript from 1436, a Gospel, Slavonic manuscript from 1512, a Gospel, Slavonic manuscript from 1555, several crosses with gilded filigree, two crosses covered with gilded silver, four founder discs two silver censers, a polished silver cup, five crosses from 1791, a spoon of Voivode Stephen Tomsa, an oriental rug, the handwritten Tetra-Gospel from 1429, written by the educated monk of the time Gavriil Uric and many other objects of great importance.

those shown by our telegram No. 3568 of October 20 c.y. we have the honor to submit the report no. 357 c.y. of the Right Reverend Abbot of Neamțu Monastery, from which it can be seen how he was treated and arrested for fulfilling his task as administrator and legal guardian of the monastery's property, because he did not want to give the church odors, kept in the monastery for centuries to a person who had no legal authority... ”²⁶.

Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș returned to Bucharest on October 17 and reported to the sovereign that the mission had been accomplished. He had been to the monasteries of Slatina, Vărătic, Agapia, Neamț and Secu. Three days later, he left for Oltenia. On October 30, 1916, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș was summoned by I.G. Duca, his boss, the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, who took care of the archives and museums. I.G. Duca reproached him that Pimen Georgescu, the Metropolitan of Moldova, had complained that he had not been notified of this requisition of the monastery's treasures, but also of the misunderstandings from the monasteries in Moldova. I.G. Duca ordered him to transport all the odors to Iasi until November 2, 1916, and to deposit them at the Metropolitan Church of Moldova.

Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș was upset that he could not document all the objects, due to the haste and the order received from I.G. Duca. He had set out to photograph and scientifically inventory all the objects²⁷. All odors were placed in seven crates, the heritage textiles were deposited in a special box. Then they were all deposited on November 3, 1916, at the Metropolitan Church of Iasi. Two boxes contained the goods from the monasteries of Moldova, four those from Oltenia, and one contained the vestments and the liturgical embroidery. The boxes were tied with iron circles and sealed with two seals (the wax seal of the National Art Museum and the C.F.R. lead seal). On December 12/25, 1916, the loading of the treasure in Iași station began and the operation was finished on December 14/27; 17 wagons were filled.

After only a month, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated on March 2, 1917, in favor of his brother Mikhail Alexandrovich Romanov, who refused to accept power until the decision of the Constituent Assembly. The world has never been the same.

²⁶ A.M.M.B., *Chancellery Fund*, File no. 81/1916, *The War of 1916-1918*, vol. I-III.

²⁷ On November 8, 1916, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș presented to the head of the General Headquarters a file with 35 pages containing all the reports drawn up at the monasteries, in original, to which he attached some photographs. A similar file had been submitted to the Ministry of Cults on November 6, but was not registered, after his repeated insistence, until “on April 22, 1917, under no. 45 853”.

In 1917 the second transport with values of the National Bank of Romania was sent; a train of 24 wagons, containing 188 cassettes with a total value of 1,594,336,721.09 lei, was sent to Moscow on July 27, 1917, although the Bolshevik revolution had already broken out. In the summer of 1917, amid fears that the Romanian army would be defeated on the Moldovian front, the Romanian authorities decided to send another train to Moscow. This time, we are talking about 24 wagons in which values of almost 1.6 billion lei of gold belonging to the National Bank were loaded and 7.5 billion lei of gold, jewelry, paintings and other various deposits of the House of Deposits and Consignments.

Therefore, following the efforts of Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș, numerous objects of cult, of great value, in danger of being affected by the conflagration, were sent to Iasi, where, unfortunately, paintings were included in the lot of odors, icons, documents, books and manuscripts, which set out for Moscow in 1917, in the hope that there they would be sheltered from possible destruction by invading troops.

Not being placed in the area of direct confrontations, the Roman County, however, was not bypassed by the procession of sufferings and horrors that any war brings. The people here have fully felt what death means, through the loss of the loved ones, disease, poverty, deprivation, misery and, like any Romanian in times of hardship, everyone has tried to contribute to the huge war effort of a whole country, from those who fought on the front, sacrificing their lives, to those behind the front who supported, as far as possible, those needs of war, whether it was donations, contributions, voluntary work, taking care of war orphans or providing shelter for refugees, etc. I found out, especially from the pages of the local press, about all those people from Roman, who brought their material and moral contribution to the general war effort, knowing that this conflict, unjust and unnatural, pursued a historically straight and natural finality for Romanians - the national unification.

All these difficulties and shortcomings also hit the city of Roman, the local authorities trying to deal with a new and unforeseen situation, which required prompt and quick solutions. The Red Cross of Roman, under the leadership of Mrs. Cornelia Morțun, worked tirelessly to organize and equip the hospitals. Also, volunteer nurses cared for the sick and wounded.

In these difficult times for the country, the clergy and the faithful of the Episcopate of Roman²⁸ have made a significant contribution to the fulfillment of this

²⁸ The diocese of Roman, the second hierarchical seat of Moldova, comprised four counties at the beginning of the twentieth century, namely Roman, Bacău, Putna and Tecuci, with their parishes and monasteries, so that the great battles caused by the first world conflagration took place on the territory found under the canonical jurisdiction of this Diocese.

great dream of unity under the same flag and the same faith. An important support for the Red Cross came, as it was natural, from the Episcopate and Archdiocese of Roman, from the Orthodox clergy. The bishop of Roman, Teodosie Atanasiu, sent pastoral letters from the first moments of the war asking the clergy to contribute to the moral health of the people, to make incessant prayers for the victory of our soldiers and to raise aid for our army (clothing, food) and so on.

In this regard, we will present some excerpts from pastoral letters issued by bishop Teodosie of Roman during the First World War. The first pastoral letter is dated April 20, 1916, in which the bishop appeals to the population to subscribe shares worth 100 lei / piece provided by the state for the preparation and equipping of the Romanian army, this representing the national loan opened by the Romanian state.

The following is the pastoral letter dated August 15, 1916, immediately after Romania declared war on the Central Powers (according to the agreement with the Entente), to the clergy and the faithful of the Diocese of Roman, calling on the priests to accompany the army „to the trenches” and encourage it, and the monks and nuns are called upon to provide first aid to the wounded, „to accompany ambulance trains” and to care for the sick in hospitals, and the priests left at home to care for widows, orphans, the disabled and poor families „whose husbands are in the trench fire”. On every holiday and Friday, all the priests of the Diocese of Roman will pray "for the victory of our soldiers."

The third pastoral letter addressed by the Bishop of Roman, Teodosie, is dated October 27, 1916, the bishop calls on his priests to donate a day's salary to feed the families of those mobilized in the war, and in each church in the Diocese to put a box for the Red Cross, where collections will be made for the wounded and the families of the dead on the front, „urging the faithful to give everything they can and what their hearts let them to help the wounded and the families of those dead for their country”. At the end of each three-month period - the order further states - the money will be forwarded to the Archdiocese of Roman, which in turn will hand it over to the Chancellery of the Holy Episcopate „according to a certain list, to be handed over to the Red Cross Society”.

The church did not forget the Transylvanian refugees and the families of those mobilized, in support of which the bishop asked in the order mentioned above, addressed to the archpriest of Roman county, to inform the entire non-mobilized clergy in the county as every month until the end of the war, to give the salary for a day in order to set up a fund to supply a canteen meant to feed the families of the mobilized and the Romanians from Transylvania.

During these confrontations, the Diocese of Roman organized hospitals for the care of the wounded at the monasteries in the adjacent area to the battlefields, but also at the Seminary „St. Gheorghe” in the vicinity of the Center Diocese of Roman or at the „Precista Mare” Hospital. In fact, Bishop Teodosie, along with Metropolitan Pimen of Moldavia and Suceava, became actively involved, asking priests to collect money and clothing for soldiers, inspecting hospitals to bring relief to the wounded, and circulating books of moral and religious guidance among them. At the Giurgeni Monastery, near Roman, bandages were made for the wounded, as well as clothing, and the priests who remained at home supplemented the teachers concentrated on the front at the village schools.

The church, as a whole, was considerably involved in this time of war, so its contribution must be known, valued and especially to be a model of cooperation for the prosperity of the nation for present and future generations.

The idea of patriotism is doomed to an unjust stigma, although, as Lucian Blaga said, „*no people is so fallen that it is not worth sacrificing for them, if you belong to them*”²⁹.

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