

# **The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation**

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## **Abstract:**

The history of our nation gives testimony of good cooperation between the Army and the Church as one knows that God is of the Army as well. The present study aims to remind nowadays generations of valiant clergy in the Orthodox Church who have played an important role in the history of our nation through their active participation in the battles that took place along time. These parish priests, who involved in the fights of the time, or chaplains in service beside the Romanian Army were not only meek servants dedicated to the wounded or the dead (to whom they officiated funeral services) but also brave martyrs protecting the borders, the unity and the national and spiritual values, the life of their brethren with their own life, thus becoming a spiritual symbol to follow even nowadays. We feel responsible to remember them as they stand at the foundations of peace and freedom our nation enjoys nowadays and are a good model to follow in spirit by all generations.

## **Keywords:**

army, chaplains, parish priests, revolt, first world war, second world war, battlefield, service officiators, prayers, spiritual health, healthcare etc.

Throughout the history of our nation, the Orthodox Church has sustained its believers, sharing with them both joy, and especially troubles. There existed the assumption that some parish priests will be with the soldiers of Ștefan cel Mare or other Romanian princes who stood with their armies against invading foreign armies. Later, the name of "Popa (Reverend) Stoica from Fărcaș", in Oltenia, became known as fighter in the army of Mihai Viteazul (the Brave). Much later,

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on August 4, 1717, Reverend Lupu Șandru in Borșa Maramureș, led peasants from neighboring villages to destroying - in Strâmtura Borșii (Borșa Strait) - an army of Tartars preying Maramureș, freeing from their hands several thousand slaves<sup>2</sup>.

A massive participation of priests against oppressors is recorded in the revolt led by Horia, Cloșca and Crișan in the Autumn of 1784. Almost 80 priests were with the rebels. For example, in the third voyage of Horia to Vienna, he was accompanied by Reverend *Dumitru of Certege*, Alba County.

During the registration period for "frontier regiments" ("cătane"/"soldiers"), in the summer of 1784, priests had a very important role. At the meeting held in the village Mesteacăn, Hunedoara County, led by Crișan, when peasants decided to leave for Bălgrad (Alba Iulia), in order to register as border soldiers, Reverend *Ianăș Cazan* prayed for the decisive victory there.

After starting the revolt, among those who urged the serfs to stand up against the noble oppressors, there were many priests, including *Constantin Turciu* nicknamed *Costan* of Crișcior who rose against the peasantry of Zarand, Avram from Uibărești, who urged the rebels to attack the nobles in the village of Ribița, *Dănilă* from Crișcior in whose house nobles had to bring response to an ultimatum from peasantry, *Gheorghe* of Bucuresci, *Zaharia* from Bretea Mureșană, *Mihai* in Gelnar (villages in Hunedoara County), *Gheorghe Nicula* from Albac, one of Horia's captains, *Ioan Hagi Crișănuț* from Bistra, one of his trustworthy men, *Ioan Cocan* of Pâclișa who negotiated with an Austrian colonel, *Petru Iancu* in Lușșa, *Ilie* from Galda, *Petru* nicknamed *Rotogol* from Abrud (villages in Alba County), who baptized many noble and wealthy people since the rebels believed that through this, social and national differences will be removed, Vasile from Pintic, Cluj County, urging peasants to revolt in the area around Cluj, *Gheorghe* from Bedeleu, Cluj County, Ioan from Leheceni-Bihor and many others. Reverend *Nicolae Rațiu* from Alba Iulia-Maieri wrote Horia and Cloșca's will, he was their confessor and attended them to receive the Eucharist before their macabre execution. Almost all these priests were imprisoned, interrogated, kept in jail after the revolt was suppressed. Thus, Romanian priests stood next to their believers in their fight to eliminate serfdom and for a better life<sup>3</sup>.

Further on, the Romanian Orthodox clergy will always be present in the great events of the nineteenth century: The Revolt led by Tudor Vladimirescu, the Revolution of 1848/1849, the struggle for the unification of Principalities, the War of Independence and later on, during the First World War.

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<sup>2</sup> About him: Reverend Niculae M. Popescu, *Preoți de mir adormiți în Domnul (Parish Priests Passed Away to the Lord)*, Bucharest, 1942, p. 51-56 and 68-73.

<sup>3</sup> The participation of priests to the revolt presented by Ștefan Meteș, *Lămuriri noi privitoare la răscoala lui Horia (New Clarifications on Horia's Revolt)*, Sibiu, 1933, 62 p.

## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

Tudor Vladimirescu, the leader of the revolt of 1821, had close links with the Church, being also the founder of the wooden church in the village of Prejna, Mehedinți County, together with the faithful peasant Gheorghe Dunca and to which he made a donation of 100 talers (Austrian silver coins), a church where his face was painted. Other donations he made to Cioclovina, Gorj County, to churches in the villages of Tismana, Gorj County and Cerna-Vârf, Mehedinți County, to the monastery of Sămurcășești (Ciorogârla), near Bucharest, and in his will, he appointed to make donations to Mount Athos and to the Holy Sepulcher Church of Jerusalem.

A tradition recorded by a historian of the Revolt reported that when Tudor Vladimirescu entered Bucharest, as the head of his soldiers (“panduri”), he had a priest with the cross in his hand at his right. And a French teacher living in Bucharest, wrote - in a book printed in Paris – that at his entry into Bucharest “Tudor’s officers, followed by priests, roamed throughout the city; stopped at every crossroads and after reading a proclamation of their captain, who sought to appease the spirits, the priests were performing prayers that ended up by disarming and calling people to freedom, with loud cries”.

After Tudor and his “panduri” settled at Cotroceni monastery, Metropolitan Dionisie Lupu visited him, urging him to make peace with the nobility. But on March 23, 1821, the Metropolitan with some of his leading bishops and some landowners signed a “letter of confirmation!”, declaring that “his urge, of the servant”, Theodor Vladimirescu, is not bad and harmful neither to each of them, nor to the country, but useful and redeeming and is easiness to people”.

It should also be noted that Tudor was closely related to Bishop Ilarion Gheorghiadis of Argeș. Documents of the time posed the latter as Tudor’s advisor after Tudor’s entry into Bucharest. Bishop Ilarion was then sent on a mission to Ljubljana (then Laybach), but he only got to Brașov, for, in the meantime, Tudor was killed by the Greek Philiki Hetairia.

No doubt that if Tudor hadn’t had the tragic end we know, the clergy would have understood the superior ideals he was inspired with and would have followed him in his action to achieve social justice and national liberation. Also, we note, in conclusion, that Tudor’s actions were recorded, among others, by Reverend Ilie from the village of Butoi, Dambovița County, in 1836, and a few years after the suppression of the movement, a deacon (later Archimandrite), Ghenadie Pârvolescu from Sinaia monastery (a native of Brașov County), expressed himself in verse, admiration and sympathy towards the patriot of Oltenia<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Alexandru Elian, *Clerul ortodox român și răscoala lui Tudor Vladimirescu (The Orthodox Romanian Clergy and Tudor Vladimirescu’s Revolt)*, in *Glasul Bisericii* 29 (1970), no. 7-8, p. 734-748 (and in his volume *Bizanțul, Biserica și Cultura românească*

During the Revolution of 1848 in the Romanian Principality, one cannot talk about the armed participation of the clergy. Reverend *Radu Șapcă* of Celei, with two other priests, have officiated a service of blessing the flags of the revolutionaries during the meeting held on June 9, 1848 at Izlaz; the Provisional Government established at the time included Reverend Radu. Several monks are known, that the "transient" government, established on June 14, decided to send to the 17 Counties as "commissioners" showing people the Polity aims of the new leaders in the country. It should also be noted that, in the so-called "Property Commission" established then, there was one priest, *Neagu Benescu*, of the village Domnița, Râmnicu Sărat County, who raised his voice against the oppressing nobility. Hieromonk *Iosafat Snagoveanul*, a ruler of the revolutionary movement, worked in the committee for the liberation of Gypsies<sup>5</sup>.

Instead, in Transylvania of 1848/1849, the Romanian army of Avram Iancu had in it so many priests, theology graduates and even youth who were then theology students at Blaj and Sibiu. Since the Autumn of 1848 the army began to form under the "prefects" Avram Iancu, Axente Sever, Constantin Romanul Vivul, Vasile Moldovan, Reverend Simion Balint and others. As the leaders of the Hungarian revolution, led by Lajos Kossuth, refused to grant national and social rights to Romanians, defense for the Apuseni Mountains was organized against Hungarian and Székely forces. In fierce fighting, peasant-soldiers of Avram Iancu managed to defeat the Hungarian nobility troops in Mărișel, Abrud, Fântânele and elsewhere in the Apuseni Mountains, during the first half of 1849. From Avram Iancu's revolutionary army numerous Church officiators were also a part, Orthodox or Catholic Greek, some holding leading functions: prefects, vice-prefects, tribunes, vice-tribunes, centurions and decurions. A leader was Reverend-prefect *Simion Balint* (1810-1880) of Roșia Montană, Alba County, who has defeated the forces of the Hungarian several times at Iara, then Abrud; in 1850 he accompanied Avram Iancu on his journey to Vienna, and in July 1852 he received the Emperor Franz Joseph in the Apuseni Mountains. Another priest noted, especially fighting in Abrud, was *Simion Groza* from Rovina near Brad, Ioan Buteanu's vice-prefect (buried alongside Iancu and Buteanu at Țebea). Also

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(*Byzantium, the Church and Romanian Culture*), Iași, 2003); Alexandru CIUREA, *Tudor Vladimirescu, ctitor și ajutor de lăcașuri sfinte (T.V., A Founder and Holy Sits Charity Doer)*, in *Mitropolia Olteniei* 33 (1981), no. 4-6, p. 186-196 (other studies in *Mitropolia Olteniei* 33 [1981], no. 7-9, pp. 354-419), Sergiu POPESCU, *Tudor Vladimirescu și Biserica neamului (T.V. and the Church of Our Nation)*, in *Revista Teologică* 17(89), (2007), no. 3, p. 287-303.

<sup>5</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church)*, vol. III, ed. III, Iași, 2008, p. 307-310 with bibliography – p. 320-321.

## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

fighting in Abrud, Reverend-prefect *Nicolae Vlăduțiu* from Bogata Mureșului had an important role, whom Iancu himself said about that "the glory of the day is especially accomplished due to prefect Vlăduțiu who decided victory"; prefect *Vasile Moldovan*, a theology graduate in Blaj, whose interesting memories about the events of those years remained; Reverend-tribunes *Simion Prodan* of Măgina, *Bucur* of Galda, *Ioan Gomboș* of Vidra de Sus, *Ioan Fodorean* of Cărpiniș, *Nicolae Repede* of Geoagiu (villages in Alba County). Reverend *Ioachim Băcilă* in Alba Iulia, a former vice-prefect, dealt with supplying the army with food and animal feed. Avram Iancu himself, in a report about fighting in the Apuseni Mountains, established in Vienna in 1850, had words of appreciation about these priests, popular Romanian army commanders<sup>6</sup>.

But, besides these "popular Romanian army" leaders, we also know some Church ministers who gave their lives in battle. Among them, we mention *Vasile Moraru* of Bicălatu, near Huedin, the young theologians from Blaj *Eliseiu Todoran* and *Florian Lăscudean*. Others were sentenced to death - by hanging or shooting - by the so-called "blood tribunals" or by Hungarian or Székely military commanders. Among them, we may include a theologian in Sibiu, *Vasile Pop*, hanged near Târgu Mureș, Reverends *Vasile Turcu* in Cătina, Cluj County, hanged in Cluj, *Ioan Papiu* of Budiu de Câmpie (father to the scholar Alexandru Papiu Ilarian), hung in Turda, *Ioan Mitrofan* in Finișel-Cluj, tortured and then killed on Saint John's feast day in 1849, *Isac Oprea* from Crăciunelul de Sus, Alba County, extruded from the church while officiating the Easter Sunday service of 1849, tortured and then killed at the order of a Hungarian clerk ("solgăbirău"), *Toader Lupu* from Hodac, Mureș County, tortured and then killed together with several believers within his parish, *Leon Cornea* from Glodeni, *Dumitru Anghel* from Gurghiu, *Simion Precup* from Săușa, *Petru Raț* from *Filpișu Mic* (all in Mureș County), *Mihail Țârlea* from Teiuș, *Ioan Alpini* from Mănărade, *Alexie Molnar* from Alecuș, *Ioan Moldovan* from Uioara (all in Alba County), *Nistor Moldovan* from Ghiriș, near Turda, all shot, and others.

Other priests were victims of Hungarian atrocities in the areas of Zarand and Hălmagiu, especially during the robbery "expeditions" of troops coming from Hungary and a few in Arad and Bihor. Over 40 Romanian churches were burnt and over 100 were looted by Hungarian troops, hundreds of villages burnt down, among which 230 were only partially burned<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Details in Mircea Păcurariu, *Revoluția românească din Transilvania și Banat din anii 1848-1849. Contribuția Bisericii (The Romanian Revolution in Transylvania and Banat during 1848-1849. Church Contribution)*, Sibiu, 1995, especially p. 170-192.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

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From "priest soldiers", in need to fight with a gun in their hands defending their native land, as happened in 1848/1849, we got in the second half of the nineteenth century to "preoții de polc" (Regiment Chaplains in the Romanian Principate) of 1850 in the Romanian Principate then to the "priest confessor" or "military confessor" in 1862 in the United Principalities.

It is known that in 1830 the "national militia" was created in both Principalities from which our permanent army was about to develop itself. During the reign of Barbu Știrbei in the Romanian Principate (1849-1856), Metropolitan Nifon (1850-1875) made the first steps to appoint priests in the young national army. Contemporary documents record the priests in Bucharest *Radu, Ștefan* and *Gheorghe* appointed for military units in Bucharest, Craiova and Braila. Metropolitan Nifon gave a pall, vestments and liturgical vessels to each of them.

In the same year the Metropolitan and "Soldierly Works Department" drafted the first instructions concerning *Chaplain Duties*, which were used until 1870. During the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866), other spiritual fathers were active, be they myrrh clergy or monks, reflecting the increased number of regiments. In 1870 the first *Regulation for Army Clergy* came into force, which stipulated the right for each regiment to have its own priest.

In 1877, unit priests were replaced with garrison priests serving all military units in the same locality. In the period 1877-1878, namely, during the War of Independence, ten priests were military active in Bucharest, Craiova, Galați and Iași garrisons. In addition, some other chaplains were enrolled at their own request.

During the same war, numerous monks and nuns came in support of Romanian army, enrolling into the health services as nurses or stretchers. For example, over one hundred monks and nuns from Cernica and Căldărușani, Pasărea and Țigănești answered the call of Primate Metropolitan Calinic Miclescu; from Râmnic Diocese, there were 10 monks and 20 nuns. Also, at the call of Iosif Naniescu Moldavian Metropolitan, about 40 nuns and sisters from Agapia, Varatec and Agafton worked as nurses in various hospitals in Moldavia. Some nuns from the convent Adam, Galați County, worked in the hospital in Bârlad. The Central Committee of the Red Cross sent, then, other calls by requesting hierarchs in the country and other monastic servants for health services; therefore, other nuns from Hurezi convent and monks from monasteries Neamț and Secu were sent.

We note here that many young people in Transylvania and Banat enlisted as volunteers in the Romanian army or in its sanitary services. We are particularly

## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

interested in *Vincent Grama* from Râușor-Făgăraș, a graduate of the Theological Institute of Sibiu, enrolled in Division III Infantry, who took part in the heroic battles of Plevna<sup>8</sup>.

Chaplains continued their work in the Romanian army further on, in a corresponding number, until the First World War outburst. During this great conflagration that Romania was involved in beginning with 14/27 August 1916, when war was declared to Austro-Hungary, over 250 Orthodox priests who accompanied our troops on the battlefield were mustered in, some of them even sacrificing their lives for the freedom and unity of the country. Unfortunately, a few Romanian priests in Transylvania and Banat were incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian army, and those in Bukovina in the Austrian army (Habsburg) and sent to the front in Italy and Galicia, against the interests of their nation. Some Romanian priests in Bessarabia were incorporated next to Romanian soldiers who fought in the Russian army (tsarist), such as the young priest-poet *Alexie Mateevici* (1886-1917) who had died succumbed of typhus.

We first presented the situation of chaplains in Old Romania. Since the session of the Holy Synod of May 16, 1915, at the proposal of Moldavian Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu, a few decisions were taken on active chaplains or those who would be mustered in when Romania would enter the war. An archpriest was appointed for these chaplains in the person of Professor *Constantin Nazarie* from the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. In his new capacity he published the same year, in a booklet (52 pages), with ten model speeches that could be used for chaplains and a number of prayers for times of war (taken from a Te-Deum service printed in Neamț monastery in 1862). At the same time, he also prepared *Instructions regarding Chaplains's tasks*. In the summer of 1916 he held several conferences with parish priests, giving them the necessary guidance on the role they will have in case of war. On August 15, 1916, Reverend Professor Constantin Nazarie was appointed head of the Religious Service attached to the General Staff of the Romanian Army in the rank of colonel. On the same date, Reverend *Vasile Pocitan* (1870-1955), professor of Religion in Bucharest, later assistant bishop named Veniamin, was appointed as his deputy. Both have held these positions until after the war, including during the campaign in Hungary in 1919.

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<sup>8</sup> Widely, the problem was discussed by Mircea Păcurariu, *Atitudinea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române față de Războiul de Independență (Attitude of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards the Independence War)*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 75 (1967), p. 602-617 (also included in his volume *Studii de istorie a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (Historical Studies of the Romanian Orthodox Church)*, I, Bucharest, 2005, p. 433, p. 380-396.

As denoted above, during the war, about 250 priests throughout the Romanian country were mustered in then, for a shorter or longer period, being assimilated to the degree of lieutenant, although many were promoted to the rank of a captain; also, several Transylvanian refugee priests in Old Romania were employed. Most of them accompanied troops on the battlefield.

Of the many reports they have submitted to Father Constantin Nazarie, head of the Religious Service, the conclusion was drawn that chaplains honorably officiated different services, but also other specific duties of their military pastoral mission: the officiation of the Holy Liturgy whenever possible, usually in parishes, where a military unit was located, the blessing of water and splashing soldiers with holy water, Te Deums, the funeral service for the fallen to duty, services for the sick or wounded, confession and giving the Holy communion to soldiers, preaching sermons within the services listed or the funeral of the fallen, the permanent encouraging of soldiers, aid given to the nursing care of the wounded, courses of reading and writing to illiterate soldiers (when appropriate), organizing cultural sittings (with recitations and soldierly choirs) care for orphans in the villages where military units were located and many more<sup>9</sup>.

Some of these priests gave their lives to defend the country, for the completion of its natural boundaries. Prominently, we need to mention the old priest *Ștefan Ionescu-Cazacu* from Poiana, Olt County, enrolled in Infantry Regiment 3, Olt. He died of wounds received in the fights of Mărășești; his remains rest in a mausoleum there. Reverend *Nicolae Armășescu* of Tomșani, Valcea County, from Regiment 2, Chasers was mortally wounded on the battlefield – at the very beginning of the campaign; He died at Hospital Colțea in Bucharest and was buried with military honors. Reverend *Nicolae Furnică* from Urziceni, Ialomița County, Infantry Regiment 75, fought valiantly in Turtucaia but was pierced by the bayonets of foreign soldiers. Also priests like *Ioan Rătescu* from Brigade 2 Roșiori, *Dumitru Berlogeanu* from Infantry Regiment 51/52 and *Ioan Cerbulescu* from Infantry Division I ambulance also lost their lives. Some priests were injured, including *Constantin Buzescu* of Vitănești, Olt County, who left an interesting "front diary"; he died in the spring of 1919 infected on the front with "chickenpox".

Some chaplains were captured and deported abroad as *Ion Florescu-Dâmbovița* from Church "Sf. Ștefan" in Bucharest, a teacher of religion and

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<sup>9</sup> According to Rev. Constantin Nazarie, *Activitatea preoților de armată în campania 1916-1918 (Chaplains Activity during the Campaign of 1916-1918)*, Bucharest, 1921, 108 p., and Rev. Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea română și Războiul pentru întregirea neamului (Romanian Priests and the War for Nation Unity), 1916-1919*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 428-463 (ed. I, 1943).



## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

spiritual father at the Faculty of Theology boarding school and Reverend *Constantin Sădeanu*, both deported to Bulgaria. Also, Reverends *Vasile Ionescu* from Groșerea, Gorj County, *Gheorghe Jugureanu* in Mizil-Dâmbovița, *Emanuil Mărculescu* from Corabia and others were deported to Germany. Reports about sufferings they experienced after their release are downright terrible.

All chaplains accomplished their duty on the battlefield completely, being unanimously praised by their commanders, many of them being decorated or promoted. First, we mention: protosingelos *Iustin Șerbănescu*, a former "troop infant" in Regiment 21 Ilfov, where he performed his military service, reaching the rank of sergeant and then became a monk at Cernica monastery. Since 1912 he engaged as military confessor, and then he was sent to the front in 1916 and 1919. From a very laudatory report published in the "Official Gazette", no. 36 of 1919, it is shown that he took part in all struggles, going with the holy cross in hand ahead fighters in the regiment. After many officers of his regiment were killed, he took over the battalion "fighting like a hero one day and one night and repulsed the enemy". After a week of fighting he was captured, but in the summer of 1917, he escaped, wandering through the mountains until he managed to get to the Romanian lines. In 1919 he accompanied Romanian troops in Hungary.

Words of praise have also been written about Reverend *Ion Gheroghiu* from Sulina (Infantry Regiment 73), who "was performing his duty under the rain of bullets" and at Mărășești "he pursued the troop in the trenches, being always with soldiers and in the army recovery period in Moldavia, he helped to care for the sick and wounded".

About chaplain *Cicerone Iordodrescu*, later professor at the Faculty of Theology in Chișinău, a senior officer wrote that "he took part in all battles, being always at the forefront in caring for the wounded and encouraging people by his example"<sup>10</sup>.

There were also written words about Reverend *Nicolae Marinescu* from Bucharest (74/80 Infantry Regiment) that "during various battles, personally, gun in hand, he fought beside the troop giving proof of courage. He spent whole nights in the trenches encouraging the troop during the harshest nights".

Laudatory words were written about Reverend *Gheorghe Tudorache* from Targu Ocna (Infantry Regiment 55/69): "he went to the front line of battle, to encourage officers and the troop ... such a spiritual connection has been established between the priest and the soldiers, that they would call him 'our

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<sup>10</sup> After the war he published a book entitled *Însemnări din anii 1916-1919. Din primul an al Războiului de reîntregire, 1916-1919 (Notes of 1916-1919. From the First Year of the War for Unity...)*, Iași, 1937.

daddy', because he was always among them in the infirmary, he took care of them, he gave them the Eucharist, he encouraged them”.

About Reverend *Nicolae Oniceanu* of Heci, Iași County (Regiment 32 Mircea), there was a note in an official report: "in the big fights of Mărășești, cross in hand, he gathered and encouraged the scattered divisions of various units, pushing them out new to fighting, into which he was present all the time”.

A colonel wrote about Reverend *Iordache Tudorache* from Gologanu, Vrancea County (Regiment 10 Chasseurs): “He did not leave the regiment a single moment; although old, he had always been tirelessly caring for the sick ... He took part in fights in Mărășești, sitting among soldiers forever”.

Words of praise have also been written about Reverend *Teodor Simedrea* (later Metropolitan Tit of Bukovina), Reverend *Gheorghe Leu* (later Bishop Grigorie of Huși) Reverend Toma Chiricuță, who studied in Germany, later a well-known priest in Bucharest and many others.

An activity just as patriotic and truly pastoral was also performed by hospital chaplains (mobile, escape, contagious hospitals) or by sanitary train chaplains, glowingly appreciated by their superiors. For example, about Reverend *Petre Petroșanu* from Mihăilești, Vâlcea County (Regiment 2 Border Guards) there is a mention that “he was a hand for doctors all the while the troop was haunted by typhus ... When both doctors had succumbed to the disease, the priest remained alone, and he used the knowledge that he had acquired from doctors to care for the sick”. Reverend *Alexandru Popescu* from Hăbeni, Dâmbovița County, “founded in Adjutul Nou a canteen for 150 orphans, teaching them prayers, patriotic songs and rules of good behavior ... In Ploiești, Sinaia, Câmpulung, he helped very actively in the making of bandages. In Ploiești, he assisted the doctor at Movila Hospital for contagious, and in Dorohoi, he worked as an assistant doctor for four months in hospitals for cholera and typhus, being an example of labor and contempt in front of death” (from the report of a military doctor)<sup>11</sup>.

For the exemplary manner in which they performed their duty, some priests had been promoted to captain and awarded orders like the “Romanian Crown”, “Country Upsurge”, “Faithful Service”, “Reward of Work for the Church” or “Sanitary Merit”.

Next to these priests, who acted among soldiers on the battlefield or gave care in hospitals, one cannot overlook monks and nuns - especially in the monasteries of Moldavia - who worked with dedication to care for wounded or ill soldiers. A special merit is to be given to Metropolitan *Pimen Georgescu* of Moldavia, who insisted on their being included in the health services of the

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<sup>11</sup> The above appreciations presented according to the two works mentioned in footnote 8, passim.

## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

Romanian army. It should also be noted that he provided the military with buildings in the monastery for the reception and care of the wounded and sick. At the urge of the Metropolitan, more than 200 monks and nuns enrolled themselves, thus organizing the "Mission of Steward Monks", placed under the leadership of Archimandrite *Teoctist Stupcanu*. All had fully performed their duty, working in different hospitals; those who were ordained priests functioned as confessors (Spiritual Fathers) in those hospitals. Some of them got sick - especially with typhus - and died on duty<sup>12</sup>.

Many nuns - guided by Nun *Eupraxia Macri* - made special courses for nursing at the hospital in Târgu Neamț, wherefrom they were distributed to hospitals in Moldavia. Others - under the guidance of Nun *Ana Ghenovici* - attended special courses at the Institute of Charity Nurses in Bucharest, being then distributed to various hospitals. Some nuns made nursing courses even in their monasteries, working then in the army medical services. Some of these nurse-nuns even lost their lives, dying of typhus.

Words written later by one of the nuns, Sister *Marina-Mina Hociotă*, from Vărătic monastery, originating in Săliștea Sibiului, are significant: "We nuns and monks, we put our lives to uncertainty ... for the country and served faithfully and went to war with all consciousness, to help the wounded, for which we worked with a holy sense, to help the suffering ... we fully performed our duty not as people, but as soldiers of God and of our country, obeying to the end, until the war ended"<sup>13</sup>.

Apart from these parish priests and monks in the active service of the Romanian army, those in the temporarily occupied territories have endured the same suffering. About 20 priests died, either shot by soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army or as a pursue of torturing endured. Some lost their lives in camps in Germany, where they were deported. Hundreds of other priests were robbed of their possessions, beaten or interrogated, or cast away from their parish.

Another approximately 20 priests from Constanța, Tulcea and Ialomița were shot by soldiers in the Bulgarian army of occupation, or died after endured

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<sup>12</sup> Rev. Grigore N. Popescu, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 71-90 and Archim. Teoctist Stupcanu, *Activitatea călugărilor din eparhia Moldovei în timpul războiului (The Activity of Monks in the Moldavian Diocese during the War)*, in *Viața monahală* 1 (1934), p. 315-327.

<sup>13</sup> Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală, *Marina Hociotă – maica Mina din Săliștea Sibiului*, "O nouă Ecaterina Teodoroiu" (*M. H. – Nun Mina from Săliștea Sibiului*, „A New E. T.”), in his volume: *Dascăli de cuget și de simțire românească (Scholars of Romanian Feeling and Thought)*, Bucharest, 1981, p. 464.

suffering. Several priests in Tulcea and monks from Cocoș Monastery were deported to southern Bulgaria<sup>14</sup>.

A similar fate had priests in Transylvania, which then was within the boundaries of the Habsburg Empire. Over one hundred priests from Sibiu County, Brașov, and areas around Făgăraș were forced to leave their native places, together with Romanian troops, during the second half of September 1916. Approximately other 150 priests were thrown into Hungarian prisons - many without trial - from Cluj, Târgu-Mureș, Odorhei, Oradea, Timișoara, Caransebeș and Sighet. Some were sentenced to death but the sentence was not executed. Another 220 priests, about 15 priest wives and several theology students were deported - even in August 1916 - in the county of Sopron in western Hungary, where they were imposed house arrest, some even until the summer of 1918. Seven priests and two theology graduates - especially in the western parts of Transylvania - were killed by Bolshevik units of the Hungarian army during the first months of 1919<sup>15</sup>.

Some Transylvanian priests, old Romania refugees, have joined the Romanian Army: *Iosif Comănescu sr* and *Iosif Comănescu jr* from Codlea, *Ioan Nan* from Râșnov, *Zenovie Popovici* from Satulung, *Ioan Rafiroiu* from Poiana Sărată (localities in Brașov County). Two others, *Ion Agârbiceanu*, the famous writer, then a priest in Orlat-Sibiu, and *Andrei Gâlea* from Turnu Roșu-Sibiu, later archbishop advisor in Sibiu, were enlisted in the regiments of Transylvanian volunteers "Turda" and "Alba Iulia", organized in 1918 in old Romania<sup>16</sup>.

Some priests from Transylvania, having lain some time in Hungarian prisons were released, but enrolled immediately in the Austro-Hungarian army and were sent to the front lines - in Italy and Galicia as chaplains, assisting religious Romanian soldiers who fought for a cause completely foreign to the aspirations of their nation (for the soldiers in Vienna, until then, there was only one Romanian priest in the Habsburg army). Among them we may mention *Sebastian Rusan* from Vulcan-Hunedoara (towards the end of his life he became bishop, archbishop and then Metropolitan of Moldavia), *Pompei Morușca* of Șeica Mare-Sibiu, later bishop of America under the name of Polycarp, *Andrei Moldovan* from Hendorf (today Brădeni)-Sibiu, later priest and bishop in America, *Ioan Dăncilă* from Râpa Râmețului-Alba, being a Romanian army priest after the year 1919, *Constantin*

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<sup>14</sup> Grigorie N. Popescu, *op. cit.*, vol. I, passim.

<sup>15</sup> Details in Mircea Păcurariu, *Politica statului ungar față de Biserica românească din Transilvania în perioada dualismului (1867-1918) (Hungarian Politics towards the Romanian Church in Transylvania within the Dualism Period...)*, Sibiu, 1986, especially p. 179-209 and 260-282.

<sup>16</sup> Rev. Grigore N. Popescu, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 117-142, passim.

## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

Moldovan from Cristian-Sibiu, *Silviu Andrica* from Sârbi-Hunedoara, *Coriolan Buracu* from Mehadia-Banat later chaplain in the Romanian army<sup>17</sup>.

Professor *Aurel Crăciunescu*, PhD, from the Theological Pedagogical Institute of Sibiu, later patriarchal counselor was also enlisted. The same thing happened with Reverend *Ioan Felea*, PhD, in Pecica-Arad, who was a professor at the Theological Pedagogical Institute of Sibiu. He was sent to the Russian front, then to the Italian one. After December 1, 1918, the Directing Council sent him in front of a delegation to Italy to make registration among Romanian prisoner volunteers of the former Austro-Hungarian army. Later, he was appointed by the Romanian Government as a Romanian Red Cross representative, responsible for bringing the remains of the Romanian soldiers to Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina, who, due to harsh circumstances of history, fought against Italian troops in the Austro-Hungarian army.

An important role in the events of the autumn of 1918 belonged to Reverend *Gheorghe Oprean*, later dean in Târnăveni, who was elected secretary of the so-called Central Senate of Romanian officers and soldiers, based in Vienna.

Reverend *Laurențiu Curea* from Deva also organized, then, a unit of Romanian volunteers in Prague.

Another priest, *Virgil Ciobanu*, PhD, born in Roșia Montană in the Apuseni Mountains was, in 1906, chaplain in Vienna for Romanian soldiers. In 1914 he was sent to the front, and in 1918, being in Prague, he also contributed to the organization of Romanian volunteer units (after the war he was a lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj, for he had studied medicine when he was in Vienna)<sup>18</sup>.

So, during World War I, many priests fulfilled their duty to the country, serving in the army as "military confessors". They also contributed - some by offering their own lives - to achieve our national unity.

It is applicable to note here that during 1918, several chaplains – from old Romania, but also from Transylvania - worked in various military units in Bessarabia. Through the Church services, but especially through their sermons, they brought a modest contribution to the Romanization of this ancient Romanian land. Although they were subordinates of the Religious Service attached to the General Staff of the Romanian Army, they worked there, in Bessarabia, under the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, I, passim.

<sup>18</sup> The activity of these priests was presented according to various documents in the Archive of Sibiu Archdiocese, according to our works: *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române R.O.C. History*), vol. III, ed. II, Bucharest, 1994, p. 380-382 and *Dicționarul teologilor români (Dictionary of Romanian Theologians)*, Sibiu, 2015 (for A. Crăciunescu, I. Felea, S. Rusan and P. Morușca).

direction of *Constantin Partenie*, confessor to Chişinău Garrison, who had served in the tsarist army before. Among military priests from Bessarabia we mention *Gheorghe Creţu*, *Ioan Gheorghiu*, *Teodor Simedrea* (the future Bishop Tit in Bălţi, then, Metropolitan of Bukovina), *Grigorie Prejbeanu*, *Petru Pieptu* and others<sup>19</sup>.

Finally, we cannot pass in silence over the fact that a number of priests were active in the Romanian army even during the famous "campaign in Tisa" (March-August 1919), when the Romanian armies entered Hungary, to Budapest, to destroy the Bolshevik armies of Bela Kun. Among the priests who accompanied our troops, few had been active in the former Austro-Hungarian army (as *Ioan Dăncilă*) or in the army of old Romania as Archimandrite *Iustin Şerbănescu* from Cernica or as *Ioan Partenie* from Bukovina (taken captive by the Hungarians for 56 days) or they were Transylvanian refugees to Romania (as *Iosif Comănescu jr*), etc.<sup>20</sup>.

In August 1921 the Army Diocese was created (Military Clergy Inspectorate), based in Bucharest, then in Alba-Iulia, inside the new church "of Coronation". Although Father Constantin Nazarie had served many years in the Romanian army, now others were preferred for the position of "military clergy Inspector" with the rank of bishop (the priest was a widower, so he could have been appointed). The Army Diocese was led by bishops *Iustinian Teculescu* (1923-1924), chosen at Ismail, after that, *Ioan Stroia*, PhD (1925-1937), both from Transylvania, and *Partenie Ciopron*, PhD, a native from Dorohoi (1937-1948), later bishop of Roman<sup>21</sup>. Several dedicated priests activated in the interwar period within the army, as *Constantin Nişescu*, PhD, teacher at the Military Highschool of Dealu Monastery, *Dimitrie Lungulescu* in Craiova, *Ioan Dăncilă* in Sibiu, *Coriolan Buracu* in Făgăraş and many others. However, Romanian priests everywhere had fully accomplished their duty to the nation and country during the stormy war years for country unity.

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Further on, we briefly expose some aspects from the work of chaplains during the Second World War. During the great world wars, Romanian priests -

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<sup>19</sup> Gheorghe Nicolescu, Gheorghe Dobrescu and Andrei Nicolescu, *Preoţi în tranşee* (*Trench Priests*), Bucharest, 2000, p. 154 and the following.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, for the year 1919.

<sup>21</sup> Commander Aurel Pentelescu, PhD, "Înfiinţarea Episcopiei Armatei. Episcopii militari" (*The Foundation of the Army Diocese. Military Bishops*), in *Armata şi Biserica* (The Army and The Church), Bucharest, 1996, p. 172-185.

## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

especially the Orthodox - played an important role in religious-moral and patriotic education on both the front and in garrisons located in the country (in which older chaplains were active) in cheering up frontline soldiers, in officiating services, especially the funeral service to the fallen on the battle field. In the first phase of the war, on the eastern front, chaplains, with those who voluntarily went to Transnistria, had an important role in the act of "Christian revival" of Ukrainian villages and towns, where the Romanian troops passed through, as we report below.

So far, chaplain work in the first phase of the war, the eastern one was known only from the pages of "The Word as Weapon" magazine, which appeared in Alba Iulia from 1940 until the beginning of 1944 (19 issues). Of course, their pastoral and social activities had passed into undeserved oblivion from easy-to-understand reasons. Only in 2000, 258 documents from the archives of the former Inspectorate of military clergy in Alba-Iulia were published in a volume entitled *Priests in Trenches. 1941-1945* (400 p), written by researchers - col. Gheorghe Nicolescu, Gheorghe Dobrescu and Andrei Nicolescu – from the Center for Research and Preservation of Historical Military Archives "Radu Rosetti" in Bucharest<sup>22</sup>.

Articles published in "The Word as Weapon" magazine, like the original documents from the volume specified, highlight in the first place the personality of Deputy Bishop General *Partenie Ciopron*, PhD (1896-1980), spiritual father of the Romanian army for 11 years (1937 -1948). Between 1941 and 1944 he also had the status of "deputy bishop" in Bălți and he was always very close to the front, where he used to go several times. He was assisted in his work by Archpriest Colonel *Ioan Dăncilă* (1889-1983), who also served as a chaplain in World War I (but in the Habsburg army), then he employed as an active chaplain in Sibiu Garrison; in the years of World War II he was a colonel and had the quality of "sub-inspector" or "head of the Chancellery", namely, a vicar of the Army Diocese based in Alba Iulia. We believe that this worthy chaplain had the initiative of publishing the "Word as Weapon" magazine, himself being the author of dozens of articles, reports, etc.

Bishop Partenie - most often accompanied by Archpriest Colonel Dăncilă - made several inspections on the front; it is estimated that he actually stood on the

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<sup>22</sup> Based on this, we wrote the paper *Preoți militari români în Al doilea Război Mondial (Romanian Chaplains during the Second World War)*, in the vol. *Logos* paying homage to Archbishop Bartolomeu of Cluj, Cluj, 2001, p. 376-385, republished in his work *Studii de istorie a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (Historical Studies of R.O.C.)*, I, Bucharest, 2005, p. 443-455.

eastern front for five months<sup>23</sup>. The first visit to the front was made on June 30, 1941, soon after the outbreak of hostilities, accompanied by Reverend Colonel Ioan Dăncilă. There followed other "pastoral visits" and inspections in Transnistria, up to Crimea, inspecting troops on the battlefield, hospitals with wounded and paying visits to garrisons in the country and even in the camps of Soviet prisoners (for example, in Tiraspol, at Budești-Ilfov). In 1943, the Bishop was again in Transnistria and in Crimea, again with Reverend Colonel Ioan Dăncilă; the Easter Sunday Service, with the Liturgy were performed by them in a church in Simferopol, and the second Easter day, they officiated the Liturgy in Topli monastery, restored by the Romanian military units. In May 1944 they were both back on the frontline around Chișinău-Iași. During those inspections they officiated services (Liturgy, Te-Deum services, etc), and the bishop uttered speeches of encouragement to the troop, had talks with senior officers.

Meanwhile, Bishop Partenie took interest in publishing books of prayers for soldiers (for example, on August 13, 1941 he asked the Ministry of National Defense to print 500,000 such books) and the wall calendar of the regiment. Purchasing and sending to the front hundreds of thousands of crosses and icons was also not neglected.

On June 22, 1941, under the guidance of Deputy Bishop General Partenie Ciopron, the number of military clergy was as follows: a dean colonel, Ioan Dăncilă, who was "assistant inspector to military clergy", 18 chaplains with the rank of lieutenant-colonel or major and 88 garrison chaplains, in the rank of major or captain, so a force of 108 clerical staff. To these, about other 200 parish priests were added, mustered for shorter periods of time, assimilated all the same as captains. The oldest were working in different garrisons in the country (Coriolan Buracu in Făgăraș, Veron Mușătescu in Târgoviște etc.); the youngest, however, accompanied the troops on the battlefield and reached Crimea, Northern Caucasus, Stalingrad (now Volgograd).

It should be noted that Bishop General Partenie Ciopron had as subordinates some priests belonging to other religions: Captain Vasile Bondrea, Greek-Catholic, after 1948 returned to Orthodoxy and became a professor at the Theological Seminary in Cluj; later - on the Western Front – the Greek-Catholic reverend Ștefan Berinde; two Lutheran evangelical pastors, sent by Bishop Wilhelm Stäedel from Sibiu (Ekkehart Lebouton and Erhard Brandesh, for short periods) and even a Muslim imam: a true ecumenical brotherhood. We must not forget, then, that our priests also performed the funeral to some soldiers in the German army when Roman-Catholic priests or Evangelical-Lutheran were not present. Chaplains sent to the front included a wide varied spectrum of pastoral

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Armata și Biserica*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 234.



## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

problems: officiating, especially Te-Deums, blessing of water, the blessing of troops, of houses used and even of trenches, flags and crucifixes raised by soldiers, sometimes the Holy Liturgy, even on the battlefield (every priest having with him a pall, that was absolutely necessary), plus confession and giving the Holy Communion to some officers, sub-officers and soldiers, funeral services to the fallen, with sermons, later, officiating memorial services and sanctification of cemeteries dedicated to heroes. In officiating services, priests were assisted by chanters, recruited from the soldiers. It is necessary to specify that among those sent to the front there were many theological students and seminary graduates who often officiated as chanters; some of these young theologians have died on duty, others were injured.

The same priests were involved – with the help of soldiers, of course - with the arrangement of cemeteries for fallen officers and soldiers, with their embellishment, with working grave-crosses and some crucifixes, with preparing burial documents and even sending letters of condolence to the families of heroes; because some soldiers were illiterate, priests also wrote letters addressed to the ones at home. At times, especially in the recovery of the troop after heavy fighting, some priests organized - especially on the Western Front - small soldierly choirs. Daily conversations with soldiers (individual pastoral care) was very effective, cheering up many soldiers, especially those injured. In many cases, priests helped to the performing of health services, gathering the wounded on the battlefield or giving them first aid. Others accompanied the soldiers to the front line, encouraging them, as we report below.

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After August 23, 1944, when Romania turned arms against Germany, chaplains continued their work among Romanian army soldiers. From researching documents archived at the Military Clergy Inspectorate, it was determined that many young priests who accompanied our troops on the battlefields of Hungary and Czechoslovakia were mustered. Their work was perhaps even more difficult than in the war in the East, on the one hand, because most soldiers were tired and discouraged after four years of war, ending with territorial losses, but especially with the loss of so many lives, and on the other hand, at the time, peasant soldiers had to be explained why the "holy war" did not continue, why we turned weapons against our former ally and what the point of their presence was in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Military pastoral care in this new phase of the war included - mostly - the same issues: the care for the wounded, personal discussions with soldiers, officiation of Christmas services – in 1944, New Year, Epiphany and Easter – in 1945, liturgies, and when possible, confessions and giving the Holy

Communion, Te-Deums, blessing of water, funeral services to soldiers dead on the battlefield, memorial services, funeral sermons, liturgical or occasional and especially planning and beautifying the graves of more than 170,000 soldiers dead there; current administrative issues were also added: preparing burial documents, personal activity reports.

After the end of hostilities in May 1945, when Romanian troops remained on the territory of Czechoslovakia and Hungary until June 12, 1945, some priests even organized choirs, with artistic programs, uttered conferences of moral and civic education. In their long and tiring march to the country, which lasted from 12 June until mid-August (!), priests, as well as officers were forced to cheer up soldiers, demoralized and especially appalled by the treatment of the “great ally of the East” to the Romanian army, but also because they did not find means of transport for getting these soldiers home. There were death casualties even during these reversions to the country, because of fatigue, which is clear from priest reports who have performed their funeral services. During their long march, soldiers attend services officiated in the localities through which they passed, usually on Sunday.

Bishop General Partenie Ciopron, PhD, was on duty in this new phase of the war, through the presence on the front, inspecting troops and inquiring about the work of priests, organizing competitions to fill active chaplain vacancies and retired chaplain appointments by sending news and Christmas and Easter encyclicals. He was helped in his work by the same enthusiastic priest, Colonel Ioan Dăncilă, and Reverend Captain Pantelimon Birău as “heads of chancery”. Bishop Nicolae Popovici of Oradea was again on the frontline in May 1945, as he had been in the first phase of the war.

Despite so many shortcomings, chaplains fully accomplished their mission, a thing resulting from reports of their superiors, being proposed for decoration either with the "Star of Romania" with Swords or with the "Romanian Crown" with Swords. From archived documents still existing today, more than 20 priests were awarded, some of them with both decorations. Absolutely all were mentioned for their devotion shown to the wounded, conscientiousness for officiating services, help given to soldiers to raise the bodies of the dead and bury them, the way they encouraged soldiers, but especially for the care they always manifested for the development and beautification of hero cemeteries or erecting crucifixes in their memory. We only depicted some aspects of work performed by some of them.

Among those awarded with the “Star of Romania” and the “Romanian Crown” we mention Reverend *Nicholae C. Buzescu*, a retired captain from the Infantry Regiment 10 (son of First World War hero priest *Constantin Buzescu* from Vitănești-Argeș), future theology PhD, professor and principal of the Theological Seminary in Bucharest (1907-1992), appreciated for having picked up

## *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

the wounded on the battlefield and bringing them to the first-aid station, but also because he “always was in the frontline”, encouraging his comrades; once, he even managed to regroup soldiers who had lost their commander and to surmount an objective<sup>24</sup>. The same decorations were also received by Reverend *Nicholae Floroiu*, active captain in Dorobanți Regiment 10 (p. 267), *Ernest Sârbu* from Dorobanți Regiment 26 (p. 319), *Ioan Năstase* from the Infantry Regiment 16 (p. 328), *Cornel Sava*, Army IV (p. 335), *Ioan Grosu* from Ambulance 132 (p. 336), *Constantin Ionescu* from Dorobanți Regiment 4, an active captain (p. 337), *Ion Boeru*, Chaplain Major in Division 6 Infantry (p. 345), *Gheorghe Anghelescu*, active captain in the Infantry Regiment 23, also decorated on the East front (p. 346), *Mihai Popescu*, active chaplain captain from the Infantry Regiment 36 (p. 347).

The number of those decorated once with the "Romanian Star", the "Romanian Crown", the "Cross of Queen Maria" or the "Medical Merit Cross" was much higher.

Some chaplains died on duty alongside their spiritual sons. So was Protosingelos *Nicodim Ioniță* (volunteer in Artillery Reg. 38), fallen in battle at Pavlograd<sup>25</sup> or Dean Major Alexander Soroceanu<sup>26</sup>.

Little is known about military priests who were taken prisoners by the Soviet army. One of them was Chaplain Major Dimitrie Bejan (1909-1995), a native of Hârlău, theology and history graduate. He was taken prisoner and held in Oranki, Manastârka camps and others; released in 1948, he returned to the country, but was arrested and sentenced by the Bucharest Military Court to seven years in prison, followed by a deportation to a village in Bărăgan, again arrested and sentenced by Constanța Military Court to 8 years of prison; released in 1964, after 20 years of suffering<sup>27</sup>.

Another one was Father *Gheorghe Beșchea*, a prisoner in the fighting at Cotul Donului, detained for 6 years in the camp at Oranki; and in 1958 he was arrested and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor on charges of "crime machinations against social order"; released in 1964<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> *Preoți în tranșee*, p. 289 și 317.

<sup>25</sup> *Arma Cuvântului* 3 (1942), no. 4-6, 1942, p. 119-121; Boris Buzilă, *Din istoria vieții bisericești din Basarabia (From the History of Church Life in Bessarabia)*, Bucharest/Chișinău, 1996, p. 189.

<sup>26</sup> *Arma Cuvântului* 3 (1942), no. 7-9, p. 181.

<sup>27</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, ed. a III-a, Sibiu, 201, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Caravia, Virgiliu Constantinescu and Florin Stănescu, *Biserica întemnițată (The Imprisoned Church)*, Bucharest, 1998.

These are only a few fragments of the work of Romanian army chaplains during the Second World War. From the very brief findings reported herewith, one may understand that these military confessors were really "cross-beheaded priests, for the army is Christian", who put their souls for their peers.

They have accomplished a real "military apostolate" in word and deed in the midst of the army, always keeping awake confidence in final victory.

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Unfortunately, there were not "times mastered by man, but the poor man was mastered by time" for, after 1945, there was a dark age of almost half a century, with the abolition of the Army Diocese and of military clergy in August 1948, with all its chain of suffering that followed. Many of the great army commanders of the Second World War, as well as a huge number of officers were "purged" from the army, some even imprisoned.

The same unhappy fate also belonged to many chaplains. We mention only a few names of former chaplains who were convicted by military courts in the country: *Ștefan Berinde*, imprisoned for several years in Sighet, Bucharest, Timișoara and Gherla; *Gheorghe Coman*, Ana Blandiana's father (from 1957 until 1964)<sup>29</sup>, *Dumitru Bălașa*, a native from Vâlcea County, sentenced to 6 years in prison by the Military Court in Craiova, *Petru Roșu*, originating in Sebeș-Alba, having the rank of lieutenant colonel, arrested three times, and in 1959, sentenced by the Military Court in Deva to 9 years in prison († in 1964 in the Danube Delta).

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There was a sad period in our nation's history, the Communist one, from 1945/1948 until 1989. There was no more collaboration between the Church and the new "popular army". Only after the political changes in December 1989, there began a gradual return to the situation before 1948. Soon, the first positions of chaplains were created, attached to the great Romanian army units. Military chapels have been arranged inside some barracks or churches have been built with a special military purpose, which officiate services - usually the Holy Liturgy - weddings, christenings or funeral services for military families. That is why, at the beginning of 2017, 77 chaplains were active in military units (19 others in units of the Ministry of Interior). One chaplain only is sent with a Romanian troop, even in military operations abroad, as is the case in Afghanistan. Absolutely all hierarchs, but also parish priests are invited to major festivals of the country and the army:

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 84, 133.

### *The Army and The Church in the Past of Our Nation*

December 1, January 24, Remembrance Day. They are also invited to be present at the Military Oath. Soldiers of the Army, Police and Gendarmerie are present to maintain public order at various church celebrations involving large masses of people: at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest on May 21 (Patron feast day) and on October 27, when it celebrates St. Dimitrie Basarabov, whose relics are here; the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iași on October 14, when it celebrates Saint Parascheva with relics here; and in Sibiu on November 30, the feast day of the Holy Hierarch Andrei Șaguna, whose relics are here. Also, many soldiers are sent by their commanders to various cities which organize processions with relics of saints, during the feast of the Resurrection and other religious celebrations.

All the facts presented here very briefly show that between the National Church and the Country Army there were reports of past good cooperation throughout the history of our nation, in the interests of all citizens. Such cooperation should continue in future in the interest of both institutions.