

VIOLENCE VARIABLES IN THE BANAT AT THE END OF WORLD WAR I

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Within a universe still marked by conflict in the fall of 1918, the Banat was both in the war – the Balkans confrontations, those ones on the Italian front – and peace proximity – armistices that propagated from eastern to western Europe. The people there came within a peculiar world horizon in October, their life being punctuated by unusual events far from the daily limits. We shall watch within a limited chronological frame the impact of the war precarious end on the population. An end that assumes not the beginning of relaxation, of peace, but promotes the violent states. The war was not suddenly ended; it didn't dissolve the whole life experiences, and didn't put an end to straining and violence but redistributed them out of the front in a new shape and new appearances¹.

To paraphrase Philippe Braunstein, we could register the following dilemma: if violence could be an object of history², a coefficient to estimate war and its outcomes which were than the manifestations? The question of “war violence” or of this after a war is a notion to define the way that

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¹ Frédéric Gros, *États de violence. Essai sur la fin de la guerre*, Paris, 2008, p. 23.

² Octave Debary, Laurier Turgeon, *Objets & mémoires*, Quebec, 2007, p. 10, *apud* Philippe Braunstein, *Travail et entreprise au Moyen Âge*, Bruxelles, 2003, p. 10.

individuals, groups or nations went over, incited to or suffered situations of an extreme violence, which come within and as a result of a war state³. On the other hand, violence is taken into consideration like an unextinguished piece of coal, an inherited datum, and aggressiveness is seen as an embryo that is waiting for a favorable medium to develop and manifest⁴. That is way the process of a retrospective searching of symptoms, according to sources, so to understand the manifestation declining, the various factors crossing – to which an antidote might be found.

The target area of our approaching is represented by Nicolae Ilieșiu's questionnaire answers on which a bipolar analyzing grid was applied concerning: the content and the phenomenon structure. We pay a special attention to the 4th question: "How did the come back to civvy street Romanians manifest their enthusiasm in the fall of 1918? (to whom they produced burglaries, devastations, robberies, murders –, by name and detailed)".

The answer of priest Tiberiu Gherga from Coșava catches the general tonus of a larger context and becomes a brief summary of the end of year 1918. This reference material might be taken for a chronicle of many of the Banat localities. The scenario is a recurrent one for almost any village, the difference and specific features resulting from the way to interpret it. From such fragmental sources we would try to reconstitute all kinds of moods and attitudes. "Coșava commune having been out of the war area, didn't suffer excessively in the train of war, except for material damages which are inherent in wars time. So that the local population mood had been as quiet as possible till the Austria-Hungary army disintegration when the come back to civvy street ones brought the revolt embryos against the former dominators the cause of whom they had suffered so much along the fronts, especially for food and clothes lacking.

Such a behavior agitated then the population that had stayed at home, and after the different news that arrived until the farthest hamlets that great changes are to come, and then the intellectuals' propaganda to maintain the order by national guards forming, all of them goaded people to believe that better times would come. So that the population was ready for the changes

³ Annette Becker, Christian Ingrao, *D'une guerre à l'autre*, în *La violence de guerre 1914-1945: approches comparées des deux conflits mondiaux*, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, Christian Ingrao, Henri Rousseau, Bruxelles, 2002, p. 21.

⁴ Corneliu Sârbu, Lucian Stăncilă, Constantin Florea, *Stigmatul războiului*, Craiova, 2008, p. 9.

that were to happen”⁵. It is just a proof that the agitation and violence arose with the soldiers re-coming and the Austria-Hungary empire collapse. At an imaginative level the war ended, the domination ended so the all the feelings outburst has to come in full liberty. It is considered that the soldiers pervaded people with the spirit of insubordination, of revolt, that they are to put on the flame. The fire was ulterior nourished by the rumors spreading, by propaganda.

Violence inner sources

Before cataloguing the various attitudes, given the analyze logic we may identify the causes and locate the sources. Leaving the front after years or months of mobilization, violent battles, bitter expectations, pains and grieves, as well as the congruent experiences: captivity, hospitalization or desertions made the soldiers become callous. Here is the confession of Patrachie Miclăuș, priest at Bichingi: “The Romanian soldiers when coming home from battle, having been adjusted under color feared no colors...”⁶.

A situation of demobilization or liberation is tantamount to passing from an affective medium to another one⁷, from an aggressive and combative one – the front – to a private, protective and peaceful one – community, family. It is an abrupt passing as the front is left out of order, without any preliminary plan, so that we speak about a passing from a medium of military rigors to another compulsionless one, a medium of freedom and of personal will. It was a time of improvised decisions; the vision on the postwar time hardly sketched the whole, that one of the national future without catching a glimpse of private situations, the micro-social details, what means the soldier and his family.

Liberated from the confrontation or camp routine, in front of their coming home moment – behindhand due to transport disturbing or some restrictions persistence – the soldiers find their home as being changed during their absence, and their families being starved after the war privations. So they would stay under the same pressure of fear: from being afraid for their own life to tremble for their family surviving. Not only in battle they knew the panic large zone, they re-found it at home. Death,

⁵ Muzeul Banatului din Timișoara, fond *Nicolae Ilieșiu*, dosar 129 *Nădrag*, f. 1 (în continuare MBT).

⁶ Idem, dosar 15 *Bichingi*, f. 6.

⁷ Olivier Forcade, *Le temps militaire à l'époque contemporaine: pratiques et représentations*, în *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, 157, 1999, 2, p. 481.

destructions or the human being annihilation were the shock wave of war, the family poor state, food and indispensable produces lacking made the shock wave at home⁸. "This year autumn, the terrible massacre having ended, those who stayed at home greet the ones who come back from battle with open arms and an indescribable enthusiasm. In addition of their joy expressing, they also used to tell the newcomers about the troubles they had to endure as they needed food and clothes"⁹.

To the soldiers' frustration and immense inner tensions we may add the existence of fire arms. Many soldiers re-came with their fire arms, so that they could anytime turn to shot in order to solve the most trifling misunderstanding. On the fundamentals of the conflict end excitements, of instinctual reactions of self-defense, of remaining, latent strives the affective war mood is recreated at the individual and collective (all the soldiers got discharge) level. As the means were at hand, the front atmosphere was projected on the village lanes. So the soldiers' committed acts of violence upon certain civilians belonged to the state of emergency¹⁰.

Violence external sources and manifestations

Social tensions that had been accumulated within the rural world were also amplified the first days of November 1918 with the soldiers coming from battle. They are not the unique perpetrators or actors on the violence theatre, population itself being warmed up to the wheels of actions: burglaries, robberies, devastations and destructions. In a social order ensemble, violence as a provocative factor¹¹ induces threatening and ubiquitous peril. But where order is broken up, where the former structure basis decay violence becomes the guiding element in charge to make transit to a new world. Whether violence was imposed, aroused, endured or only noticed all the people belonged to the same scene of void of authority, of uncertainty, of total civil life disorganization¹².

The abuses in requisition or distribution of food or different goods may be identified as the main source. Notaries, of a Magyar origin most of them, and merchants, mainly Jews were the exponents of such facts. To

⁸ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, *14-18, retrouver la guerre*, Paris, 2003, p. 75.

⁹ MBT, *fond Nicolae Ilieșiu*, dosar 61 Curtea, f. 5.

¹⁰ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

¹¹ Pierre Chaunu, *Violence, guerre et paix*, in *Politique étrangère*, 61, 1996, 4, p. 887.

¹² Annette Becker, Christian Ingrao, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

whom the forestry experts may be add, as they incurred the villagers' rage given the taxes for fire or building wood. There are a few cases where mayors or any other civil servants were identified as accomplices of injustices. Such a case is that of Birchiș where the inhabitants focused their rage against the village chief and post magistrate by devastating their houses¹³. At Cornereva, the mayor escaped from people justice following the local priests 'intervention'¹⁴. At Coșteiu, the mayor was shot dead by night.

It is a boomerang effect in the phenomenon: the former ones who had exploited and wronged to people – especially the vulnerable categories as the alone women after their husbands' mobilization, widows and orphans, and old folk – became victims of the crowd at the end of war. Even it has more facets, o semantic of unorganized violence, within an improvised and unwonted frame may be stand out.

Unassuming the whole acts inventory, we enumerate certain localities where typical cases of violence emerged. So, the estate forests were devastated at: Bârna (for building wood), Bucovățiu (in addition with the forestry expert chasing), Cladova (made by Dobrești inhabitants), Feneș, Jupani, Luncani (in addition with forestry ward and documents setting on fire). Damages of different ranges on shops and inns at: Cliciova, Cladova, Căprioara, Cornea, Cornereva, Coșteiu, Curtea, Domașnea, Fârliug. The owners of those ones were of a Jewish, Magyar or Swabian origin, often with discrepant material means comparing with the main people majority. The war time speculation, as well as the complicity with the notary, that one who was in charge with food requisition and distribution and who transferred fraudulent part of goods to the local shop enriched many merchants. A testimony from Blajova is relevant: "That curried favor with authorities merchant was all-powerful in the commune by war time. Within his shop flour, crude oil, salt, sugar, matches etc. were shared out to orphans and paupers at the costs his enriching desire dictated. Feeling guilty and afraid of being hold responsible for his acts, he speculates the situation trying to fish in troubled waters. He leaves the village spreading the news that the Romanians want to kill him. He lets open his shop. The public commission after holding an inquiry there establishes that there were no goods of great worth. He had placed such goods at neighbors and

¹³ MBT, fond *Nicolae Ilieșiu*, dosar 15 *Birchiș*, chestionar.

¹⁴ Idem, dosar 50 *Cornereva*, chestionar.

acquaintances”¹⁵. Their welfare and the fact that they stocked important quantities of needed produces made them be the many robberies targets. “Coming back from battle in the 1918 fall, and noticing the poverty their families had so long lived in, the soldiers tried to satisfy their hungry by confiscating grains from the Jewish merchant Steiner Ludovic and from the owner Nagel”¹⁶.

Thefts are less explicit testimonies as they seem to be common, ordinary larcenies with of no great interest. Such certain acts are noted, having as object grains, food, fuel, at: Boldur, Dubești – the village shop, Cireșa (pigs from the local priest), Jena rail-station (oil), Bulci castle (cellar with wine and a barn with food), Iablanița rail-station (grains), Berini etc.

A particular case is that one of alcohol cause devastating. Alcohol drinking was seen as a mean to dezinhibit oneself and escape from fear and anxiety. It was a source to resist in the battle and a mean to forget the front once coming home back. O certain quantity of alcohol was daily put in the soldier’s ration, representing a conflict derivate¹⁷. For many of households, especially for the mountain ones the plum brandy was a revenue source. By sending it or by barter they obtained grains for cattle growing. Fruits from many orchards were requisitioned in order to make brandy in the estate distilleries. So mach of beverage took the way to towns. When coming back from battle, the soldiers tried to find means to secure drinks following their elation, their former daily consuming habit and what they considered to be a right of them. They devastated inns, stills and drinks storage locations at: Căprioara, Coșteiu, Dezești, Dragomirești, Feneș, Gladna Română (the villagers shared the fermented fruits there), Chizdia.

The facts and acts of violence are exculpated within a lot of memoirs products, especially in Ilieșiu’s questionnaire answers. The most different are the invoked justifications: war and its troubles, absence of authority, self-defense, and the initial good intention embezzlement by precipitate engaging in the crowd movement, alcohol¹⁸. In the case of Bârna robbers

¹⁵ Idem, *Caiet Timiș, Blajova*, f. 66-67.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, *Berini*, f. 54.

¹⁷ François Cochet, *1914-1918: L'alcool aux armées. Représentation et essai de typologie*, în *Guerre mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 222, 2006, p. 32.

¹⁸ Events from Jena, as related by Dimitrie Lupea: „When night was falling, all gang went to eating house where the publican gave them what they had asked for, even tobacco and cigarettes that otherways were totally lacking, and by 7 – 8 hour at night all of them went towards the owner’s house”. Idem, dosar 106 *Jena*, f. 11/b.

they asked for clemency: “because they suffered too much during the war”¹⁹, and the Braznic ones’ behavior has an excuse: “seeing that there was no mastery, they indulged in such an act”²⁰.

The acts of violence that degenerated into human lives losses are taken for exceptions; but even in such a case they have a strong motivation: self-defense as an answer to the feeling of uncertainty. Spontaneous conflicts were supposed to get at the root of misunderstandings by brawls; they end in wounds and goods destroying, but seldom in bringing to a dangerous end as murder. To keep cool, to be temperate somehow, to preserve the respect for life are put in the questionnaire answers down to the Romanians character, for whom the revenge ends with prey, with the requisitioned goods recovering. So, the Făget school principal registers: “...people set in motion to do their right. The endured pains and grief were to be rehabilitated up to their mind, but their heart streak is obviously proved by the fact that they didn’t applied <death sentence> but only compensation. This is the way to explain the devastations without murder. If by accident there was a murder here and there, that one was a brought about one and totally justified by the Romanians’ need to defense by themselves”²¹.

The newspaper *Drapelul* offers a testimony on the practices out of normal conditions. The ad-hoc meeting from “Concordia” Lugoj at the beginning of November 1918 proves that the stage of an extraordinary fact was surpassed the events having degenerated and developing as a generalized phenomenon. The important representatives: civilians and soldiers, clergy and intellectuals, villagers from neighborhood, and women demonstrate that the whole collectivity joining to find solutions.

“The favorable occasion to improvise that rally was given by news coming from different parts of the county on regrettable acts of violence that were committed by bands of armed soldiers, to whom villagers of ours joined here and there, being stirred up to thoughtless facts. In front of such a danger for public order, personal and wealth safety, it’s the case of urgent measures so that the danger should not spread away and amplify more and more”²².

¹⁹ Idem, dosar 12 *Bârna*, chestionar.

²⁰ Idem, dosar 27 *Bruznic*, chestionar

²¹ Idem, dosar 77 *Făget*, f. 7/b.

²² *Drapelul*, XVIII, nr. 113 /23 octombrie/5 noiembrie 1918, p. 1.

On the 6th of November 1918, the prefect of Caraș-Severin county registered in a confidential report: “An unleashed crowd that was at the beginning formed only by armed soldiers who had been given leave of absence from their cantonments, gained for their purposes the home stayed population too, and hadn’t been satisfied with devastating authorities and their locations, but turned to all the factors who were seen as enemies given their good wealth. We might not assert that such actions were against a nationality as robberies took places also in some clean Romanian localities”²³.

Those data truthfulness is proved by an official communiqué belonging to the commanders of national Romanian, Magyar and Swabian councils through which the population of no matter nationality was invited to stay calm and asked to observe the propriety. The appeal was published in newspapers:

“Ioan Hock in the name of Magyar National Council, dr. Teodor Mihali in the name of Romanian National Council, and Wilhelm Meltzer in the name of Swabian Dieta deputies has launched the following

Proclamation:

In the middle of bloody tempest of the world war the main of our insistence is to keep our people far from new pains and devastations, and whatever would follow in the forthcoming or far future, to baffle the useless bloodshed and belongings devastation.

We invite thus all the Magyar, Romanian and Swabian nations members to join together in order to guarantee by mutual confidence the mutual understanding, having to establish by common consent all the ways to better guarantee together personal and belongings safety in the middle of events that could possibly follow”²⁴.

How the question was made in Nicolae Ilieșiu’s questionnaire shows that the localities in the Banat were witnesses to two specific shapes of the demobilized soldiers’ manifestations, both of them being effervescent moods. A re-coming enthusing life experience on the one hand, with strong inspiring feelings, liberating rapture, and on the other hand, a violent reaction, a full ensemble of degraded/debased and non-civic behaviors²⁵.

²³ *Histoire de la Transylvanie*, coord. Béla Köpeczi, Budapest, 1992, p. 608; *1918 la români. Documentele Unirii: unirea Transilvaniei cu Romania, 1 Decembrie 1918*, VII, București, 1989, document 105, p. 138-139.

²⁴ *Drapelul*, XVIII, nr. 113 din 23 octombrie/5 noiembrie 1918, p. 2.

²⁵ Sébastien Roché, *Expliquer le sentiment d’insécurité: pression, exposition, vulnérabilité et acceptabilité*, in *Revue française de science politique*, 48, 1998, 2, p. 275.

The answers to the questionnaires might identify an intermediary behavior, this one of staying calm within which possible enthusiastic or violent reactions to have been kept unspoken inside peoples' soul. The answer simplicity or standardization might be due to information or details lacking, as they had been asked by Nicolae Ilieșiu, as well as to a difficult memory reactivation after 20 years since the events. In the same way they do prefer the general example, a generic one and the peculiar, exceptional cases are excluded: "...devastations, robberies did not take place, the population keeping cool"²⁶. The following examples are relevant in the matter: "The soldiers who had come back from the battle in the fall of 1918 had a dignified behavior keeping silence in the village. Only some irresponsible elements from the village took part in the neighbor villages' devastations..."²⁷. "After war the coming back inhabitants kept on the course, no one making trouble to them"²⁸. There were no devastations, burglaries in the village, the Romanians 'enthusiasm confining to the joy of happier future expectations"²⁹.

Another counter-example would be what priest of Fârda parish was spoken about, if we had to take into consideration the violent, aggressive behavior as a common rule: "For the beginning only joy and devoutness in the village. The quarrels ended, they used to help each other, gave assistance in more difficult problems. They were deeply faithful, went to churches to thank God for escaping safely and meeting their families again. There was no devastation in the village as they had nobody and nowhere to do it"³⁰.

Coming home, being together with the family in the middle of village and church community proved its therapeutic and regenerating force. Violence of the front was enough to forget the former resentments. Escaping safely proved to be beyond any provocation. The unique event that could have degenerated was obviated by the number force. So, the guards with the inhabitants' encouraging summoned the Hungarian gendarmes and the forestry expert to leave the locality without asking them to pay back the wood from the village forest³¹.

²⁶ MBT, fond Nicolae Ilieșiu, dosar 5 *Baloșești*, chestionar 1.

²⁷ Idem, dosar 8 *Bacăul de Mijloc*, f. 4-5.

²⁸ Idem, dosar 28 *Buchini*, chestionar 1.

²⁹ Idem, dosar 62 *Cutina*, chestionar.

³⁰ Idem, dosar 79 *Fârda*, chestionar.

³¹ *Ibidem*, f. 2.

The absence of such acts of vandalism was put to conjuncture, to occasion in some localities: "There was no case of revenge against the Magyar authorities as they all had run on time"³².

Squaring with the notary

The conflict end is symbolically equal to put Hungary among the vanquished and to go out from the long tradition of summing to a rapacious authority which was represented at the communities' level, by notaries, taxation system men and gendarmes. The soldiers' attitude in front of the notaries is expressed by a single word: fury; "against whom they had a real hate since the war time, just because they were to propose discharging of military service. We may say that the Magyar notaries on principle did not propose the Romanian soldiers to be discharged. The notaries also had been in charge with food – and in such a quality they had committed unprecedented abuses"³³. Thus, the Magyars office workers could not justify their place in the life of a community which might rise again. Those ones' abuses together with those of the Jewish or even certain Romanian merchants caused the need to solve disputes on the spot, on the ad-hoc popular tribunals or the law of compensation basis.

A Lex Talions appliance is offered by the questionnaire on the commune of Borlova. "The Romanians who had come back from battle knew to answer their oppressor the notary of evil memory Merner, by destroying all he had"³⁴. To go back to experience before the conflict was hard to be spoken about or described; it was a painful one so the incidents, examples or the possible endured ordeals were substituted at the memory level, by the resulting feelings. The informer stops on the brink of "of evil memory", and continues with the situation reverse. The oppression was answered with destroying, as the work, so the pay. The survived notary who was allowed to run away comes back in the village with a Serbian guard from Caransebeș. Sometimes the Serbians even proclaimed themselves as liberators, unknowing the relations net within the Banat villages, treated with the Magyar notaries and gendarmes, for revenge and reprimand acts as like in the case we are relating about. After reprisals, a soldier who had

³² Idem, dosar 22 *Botești*, chestionar.

³³ Ioan Rusu-Abrudeanu, *România și războiul mondial. Contribuții la studiul istoriei războiului nostru*, București, 1921, p. 8.

³⁴ MBT, fond Nicolae Ilieșiu, dosar 21 *Borlova*, chestionar.

come back from battle and a child died³⁵. The years passing did not dispel fear and frustration the inhabitants had felt then, and also didn't succeed to cure the wounds: "Painful that that enemy of [Romanian] people still lives in Romania"³⁶.

There were devastated the notary offices at: Bujor, Belobreșca, Berzeasca, Brebul, Moldova Nouă, Moldova Veche, Sichevita, Socol, Valeapai (Caraș), Jadani. The notary office of Ostrov devastation was put on the Bolshevik troubles. The windows of Alexandru Popovici's house (Broșteni) were broken down; the notary's house from Ciclova Montană was devastated as well as those of Iancu Petruț (Greoni) and of that one from Pojejena de Jos; furniture was destroyed in the notary's house from Radimna, and the household of that one from Sacoșul Turcesc was also destroyed. The notaries from Cărbunari and Ciortea (Caraș), and Breștea were driven away. The grains requisitioned by notary offices at Călnic and Prigor were distributed to the local population. Following the unsafe atmosphere the notaries from Căprioara, Coșteiu, Forotic, Pojejena de Sus, Șușca (Caraș), Beregsăul Mare left the villages for their life fear. The notary from Beba Veche took refuge in Szeged, that one from Secaș in Timișoara, being aware of their guilt. The notaries from Chizătău, Ferendia, Gătaia, Parța, Sacoșul Turcesc, Saravale running away was also registered.

The notary from Priciova could have nuisances because he had refused and made late the mothers' and mobilized ones' wives' support. The priest intervention to make up the conflict and the owned support distribution within two days got him under cover in front of the crowd dissatisfaction³⁷. On the same accusations basis, the soldiers from Giroc arrested the notary and the mayor, both of them being ulterior liberated by the Magyar guard³⁸. At Murani the notary took revenge against the soldiers who had dared to hold him responsible for grains distribution³⁹.

Grains brutally requisition at Cornereva by notary Vaya with the help of forestry expert Erdely, did not make the come home soldiers to be furious as the local priests calmed them. In exchange, the two ones were escorted till Holdea and delivered to the Romanian army in order to

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ Idem, dosar 44 *Cireșul*, chestionar.

³⁸ Idem, caiet *Timiș, Giroc*, p. 327-328.

³⁹ Idem, caiet *Timiș, Murani*, p. 445.

answer⁴⁰. The event is confirmed in Nădrag questionnaire, the Hungarian notary delivering to the Romanian army being taken for a justice action⁴¹.

At Curtea, the circle notary's yard was used for sugar and oil storage. Notary Ioan Balogh incurred the population rage as he refused to distribute such indispensable goods. Having been menaced to death he succeeded to escape leaving the village in shepherd's clothes⁴². A similar portion had also the notary from Naidăș. His house was devastated and the hundreds alcohol quarts found there became the source of other violent acts⁴³.

At Deta, the notary passed at the war end from social discriminations to pettifoggeries with a national hue. His actions belong to abuse perimeter, to force using, to blackmailing as he blamed publicly the locality intellectuals:

"In the 1918 fall, the notary Ungar Pal by beating the drum rallied the whole population of the commune (to) make them vote a declaration that they want to remain under Hungary. Atanasie Conciat, a candidate for priest leading the people rejects with the greatest indignation the notary's set trap. The people indignation against the notary is so great that that one runs away one night. Three days after he appears in the commune together with 30 Hungarian soldiers under 3 officers command. All of them were armed with machine guns and grenades. The Romanian movement leaders are rallied in front of the mayoralty and branded for being against Hungary, and that never Romania would own these lands"⁴⁴.

Such an attitude has a retort consisting in humbling or public ordeal. The people's pains are compensated by letting the notary feel death imminence, with a whole moods scale, from fear to imploration. "Notary Fekete Janos from Brebul, who was also a notary from Valeadeni, and who had got laugh of the inhabitants' pains was driven on the village lanes, and a man with a hatchet up to the notary's head followed him, and what is more to kill him. The notary is saved by some leaders from Brebul intervention"⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ Idem, dosar 50 *Cornereva*, f. 5.

⁴¹ Idem, dosar 129 *Nădrag*, f. 1/b.

⁴² Idem, dosar 61 *Curtea*, f. 5/b.

⁴³ Idem, Caiet *Caraș*, *Naidăș*, p. 255.

⁴⁴ Idem, Caiet *Timiș*, *Denta*, p. 224-225.

⁴⁵ Idem, Caiet *Caraș*, *Valeadeni*, p. 392.

The war times made also violence manifesting in excess, in a pure, absolute shape, which goes to murder⁴⁶. The whole community takes part in the notary punishment, demobilized soldiers and even women. A kind of indictment superposes the events relating within which the witness becomes the doers' accomplice by his neutral tune without giving the names of: "demobilized ones", "a woman". Once murder done, the ordeal didn't end as the family is refused to follow the burial rite. The testimony let us know that the corpse was ulterior recuperated and buried in other locality graveyard.

Such an extreme act witness was the locality Moldova Veche: "Notary Samuil Kugel, after being summoned by the demobilized ones to open the commune pay office was stricken with an iron bar in head. He falls down into a swoon, in a blood lack. The dying man is thrown in the Danube. Coming to himself again, he emerges at the bank. A woman strikes him with a hoe and kills him. The corpse is thrown in the Danube and 8 days after the family finds it near by Moldova Nouă and buries him in the graveyard of Zlatița"⁴⁷.

Remedies

Priests played an important role in tempering and calming down spirits and reproaches, in avoiding many of the incidents. As close to community villages' wise men and advisers, they kept the crowds' anger underfoot. Testimonies in such a matter were kept from many localities: in Bichingi "the priest called people in the church and they swore by cross not to kill and plunder; as all were Romanians, they didn't hurt each other"⁴⁸. At Glimboca, the priest's preparation and advice, together with the mayor's ones, who was moreover a war cripple, kept the community far from some dramatic inner conflicts.

Press also assumes part of keeping calm advices that come from leaders. An appeal of Ardeal Orthodox Archdiocese was published in *Drapelul*, after its first publication in *Telegraful Român*. The national cause is invoked in order to make people aware and sensible that some ones' excesses might expose it in danger. Individual or common misunderstandings are to be left away in the favor of the national general interest. On

⁴⁶ Michel Wieviorka, *La Cruauté*, în *Coq-héron*, 174, 2003, 3, p. 114-115.

⁴⁷ Idem, Caiet *Caraș*, *Moldova Veche*, p. 248.

⁴⁸ Idem, dosar 16 *Bichingi*, chestionar.

the eve of the Great National Assembly they might prove an irreproachable behavior so that not to menace the event well developing. The time tension is let in ambiguity, of pernicious time of change without any accuse or violence or aggressiveness types remembering.

“Let us mind!

Times are hard, full of gale. Events rush with an amazing celerity.

We might be sober-minded and considerate, so that not to pervert by our rashness our national cause. We do pray our honored clergy in towns at villages to advise the faithful to calmly behave, not to look for provocative occasions which would cause bloodshed of innocent persons.

Our destiny as a nation the national assembly would decide.

Till then each Romanian may listen to and follow the Romanian national committee voice, the unique one asked these decisive days to mend the ways”⁴⁹.

As the in almost all cases of violence and aggressions, the come back soldiers were the main actors the solution hat to be looked for and was found within them: the National Guards forming. Our approach did not intend to relate the whole process of those guards constituting. Different national and county archives keep protocols and reports on the subject, part of them having been published in the documents collections *1918 la români, Documentele Unirii: unirea Transilvaniei cu Romania, 1 Decembrie 1918*. A series of studies also resumes the constituting process in a pragmatic way. Following the testimonies and memories channel, the conduits and effects of the new authorities were far at our hand.

In the absence of an authority it was impossible to put an end to violence. For many times the Hungarian police authorities arbitrarily resorted to force so that to give an example, to demonstrate that they have the control, under an ended shape of violence to constrain the villages’ rebels to surrender down⁵⁰. The remedy could come just from such a schism between the daily realities of quarrels, aggressiveness, robberies and devastations that the soldiers took part in disorderly, and the attempt to stop them, to create an authority within the community able to respect the minimum individuals’ rights and the belongings. The demobilized or ready to be soldiers could easy be organized as they belong to a community and know it well, have arms and have been accustomed to rigor and military

⁴⁹ *Drapelul*, XVIII, nr. 114 din 25 octombrie/7 noiembrie 1918, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Pierre Chaunu, *op. cit.*, p. 887-888.

discipline during the war time. Such a calling up under colors in the population's interest and the order keeping becomes a public one. People are called by clarion, from the church pulpit, through the intellectuals' approaching, within the meetings and custom socials. Such a notice is published in *Drapelul*:

“You, Romanian Brethren!

Enlist urgently the Romanian battalion in Lugoj. Come faithfully and heartily! It is about our national honor defense and our Romanian estate saving! Come without a moment's hesitation all these who are able-bodied so that not to be too late because bands of plunders and drinkers cry shame upon us in front of the world. Come, brethren that the right and saint cause is calling us!⁵¹

The nation is once again invoked as being beyond any other interest. By that calling a verdict is launched. The alcohol is the chaos source, and the guilty ones are identified at an ethnic level: “tăciunari” [smutty ones]. It was not possible that the Romanians have such a label, as their aspirations were so great and tend to a right and saint cause. Honor as a national attribute, and the estate, the restraint frame as an innermost, individual attribute are invoked. The two elements, nation and estate proclaim the rising up in arms and justify their defense.

The constituting dates are different from a locality to another but they are within the first decade of November. The frame is the same: during a session or a leaders and soldiers from the village meeting, they decide on the need to constitute the local national council and a guard under the Romanian National Central Council from Arad. The commandants' voting is open “by acclaiming”. Enlisting the guard is voluntary with under no material benefits assuming. The patrolling and guarding (the first public order guards)⁵² day and night service on the whole locality territory is set up, as well as the vehicles control and roads watch, and the intervention in cases of individuals' rights and belongings non-observance. The guards stay active and contribute in a good measure to re-set order and pacify the communes, to stop the Magyar gendarmerie's abuses. Being created to cover the authority void, the Romanian guards seldom join violent conflicts with the Hungarian gendarmes. Part of them are abolished at the Serbians coming, the rest of them at the French troops installing.

⁵¹ *Drapelul*, nr 115 din 27 octombrie/9 noiembrie 1918, p. 2.

⁵² Coriolan Iosif Buracu, *Amintiri*, Timișoara, 2007, p. 133-135.

The guards did not change the law, did not contest the former order but that it was not applied. They did not wish to be rival forces but complementary ones, but their juxtaposition with the Magyar authorities made them divergent by the promoted interests.

“We have not approved any authority suspension, but we claimed that till other laws would be brought there and other authorities would be settled, the existent laws be respected without hesitation and the authorities be supported in their desires discharging. But naturally these authorities have to correctly understand their mission, as considered themselves to serve people and not to be the people’ masters. For that they have to let apart the political reasons from their work as not being called to solve the great question of the day, and to dedicate all their attention to the public interest service: to guarantee the legal order and the citizens’ belongings and life security without any exception. These times only in such a work the authorities could count on our support. But if this duty will be overlooked, we will stand face to face and only then it could become timely for us to take coercive measures for the good of people, in full agreement with all the citizens”⁵³. The conflicts between the Magyar gendarmes or guards and the Romanian guards, between a former and contested authority and a new one which was supported now by attacking, now by retreating seldom had the colors of guerrilla operations, of attrition. Some of them were in a shape of massacre, as it was at Făget fair, on St. Dumitru’s feast where 20 about were raked by bullets. It is about practices dislocated from their originate essence that were sharpened by war and its end circumstances.

Even if the 1918 fall will confirm, from the tactic viewpoint, the war end as pains, violence and death source, the fragile and long pacifying process will not deny such elements which will contaminate the new reality in the Banat.

⁵³ *Drapelul*, XVIII, nr. 113 din 23 octombrie/5 noiembrie 1918, p. 2.

VARIABLE ALE VIOLENȚEI ÎN BANAT LA SFÂRȘITUL PRIMULUI RĂZBOI MONDIAL

Rezumat

În toamna anului 1918 Banatul se afla în continuare într-un univers marcat de război. Viața cotidiană se confrunta cu o serie de evenimente neobișnuite, caracterizate prin stări de violență. Războiul nu era în acea perioadă pe deplin încheiat, stările de spirit tensionate se făceau încă simțite, violența fiind debordată în afara frontului în parametri diferiți și în forme inedite de manifestare.

În studiul nostru am înscris următoarea dilemă: dacă violența ar fi percepută drept un obiect al istoriei, un coeficient de evaluare a războiului și a consecințelor sale, care ar fi formele de manifestare? Demersul nostru se dorește a fi o căutare retrospectivă a simptomelor violenței mergând pe filonul mărturiilor, astfel încât să putem înțelege mai bine declinarea manifestărilor și a diversilor factori care intervin în contextul de după război.

Sursele acestor violențe pot fi reperate în demobilizarea dezorganizată ca urmare a prăbușirii frontului și a dezintegrării armatei austro-ungare, în privațiunile din spatele frontului, în abuzurile suferite de familiile soldaților din partea autorităților maghiare. Putem să mai adăugăm aici și sentimentul de frustrare, acumularea unei imense tensiuni interioare din timpul războiului și recurgerea frecventă la alcool. Cea mai mare parte a soldaților se reîntorc de pe front cu armele, astfel încât pot recurge foarte ușor la forță pentru rezolvarea diferitelor neînțelegeri. Pe fondul suprasolicitării de la finalul conflictului, a exercițiului reacțiilor instinctive în materie de auto-apărare, a diferendelor latente, starea afectivă de război se recrează atât la nivel individual, cât și colectiv. Astfel atmosfera frontului se proiectează pe străzile satului, actele de violență ale soldaților demobilizați comise asupra civililor (în principal asupra autorităților: primarului, notarului, secretarului, dar și asupra comercianților) pot fi încadrate în starea de asediu. Enumerăm o serie de acte de violență cum ar fi jafurile, violențele fizice, sechestrarea, uneori chiar crima.

Remediile împotriva acestor tensiuni au fost găsite în intervenția preoților, percepuți de către soldați ca înțelepți ai satelor și sfetnici de încredere și în constituirea gărzilor naționale, organisme create prin voluntariat pentru a putea acoperi vidul de autoritate și pentru a asigura siguranța bunurilor și a ordinii publice.