

**About Courage in the Romanian Military Press - *Săptămâna Războiului/The Week of the War* (2 November 1914 - 14 August 1916)**

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**Abstract:** Courage is one of the virtues that cannot be missed at a soldier. Where it does not exist, courage must be formed. An important role *in the process of forming courage is the woman*. In this paper, our focus is on *Săptămâna Războiului/The Week of the War*. In all the 95 issues of the journal, one can easily see the admiration of the editors of the *Săptămâna Războiului/The Week of the War* for the French army. The German combatants, on the other hand, were put in a totally different light. Despite the efforts made by some publications to form and strengthen the courage of the Romanian soldiers, Romania entered into the World War I without being *prepared* for it.

**Keywords:** World War I; media history; media; military press; national interest

## **1. Introduction**

Courage is one of the virtues<sup>2</sup> that cannot be missed at a soldier. This virtue must be present both in peacetime and in time of war. Where it does not exist, courage must be formed. It can be acquired by “skill and perseverance.” (Arifeanu, 1921, p. 95)

An important role in this *process of courage formation is the woman*. In a paper published in 1915, the Romanian woman was recommended the model of the *modern Japanese woman*, who was not terrified of the thought that one day she would have to “cry the death of her children on the battlefield, for the country” (Negru, 1915, p. 21). The idea that Romanians admired the way of life of the Japanese people is confirmed by the fact that in 1929, *Bușido sau sufletul*

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<sup>2</sup> The 6 Heritage and Citizenship virtues: faith, discipline, honor, fellowship, courage and warfare. (Arifeanu, 1921, p. 68)

*japonezului/Bushido: The Soul of Japan* by Inazo Nitobé was published in Romanian. As the translator of this work even explained, at that time, *the Japanese people stirred up the admiration of all Europeans because of their superior qualities in both wars and social life*. Among the main beneficiaries of the translator's activity were, of course, the Romanian military:

“They all know the brilliant achievements of this admirable people. But the moral and spiritual springs are not known, especially by the Romanians, which explains the prosperity of the Japanese people.

That is why I thought I would satisfy the curiosity of the people of our country, especially of the military and professors, translating in Romanian the “**Bușido**” of Professor Inazo Nitobé from the University of Tokyo after the English edition, which was written by the author himself, explaining clearly and in a scholarly way the superiority of the Japanese race.” (Georgescu, 1929, p. 5)

In the years when the Romanian edition of Inazo Nitobé's book was published, the press of the time brought to the attention of readers the difficult conditions in which the Romanian soldiers were forced to carry out their missions. The poor equipment of the Romanian Army caused the deaths, in terrible circumstances, of young soldiers, even in peacetime: “Three soldiers in the guard of a train station died of frost in one night. Different fact. Since then, others have frozen, but their number is silent, of course, out of patriotism.”<sup>1</sup> The text we refer to was called *Why we hate them* and occupied columns 1 and 2, the top half, on the front page of *Curentul/The Current Newspaper*<sup>2</sup>. The issue dealt with by the author of the cited article is one that requires particular attention. As shown in a *national education manual for citizens and soldiers* in a war, the most shameful defeat “is that of an army composed of people without courage, unprepared, where fear without reason causes disaster.” (Arifeanu, 1921, p. 68) In another source it is shown that a good military leader “sets in motion pedagogical factors of reaction against the lack of courage, sexual neglect, vanity, envy, shyness, lying, for the discipline to catch a deep root.”<sup>3</sup> The articles written in a sharp tone to those who were responsible for the fate of the Romanian army were always on the pages of *Curentul/The Current newspaper*. Although it is irrelevant, we will turn to this issue on another occasion.

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<sup>1</sup> Cezar Petrescu, „De ce-i urâm/Why we hate them”, în *Curentul/The Current*, year I, no. 1, 11 Jan. 1928, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For more details see (Teodorascu, 2014, pp. 182-183).

<sup>3</sup> Lieutenant colonel A.D. Sturdza (1914) *Arta de a ordona/The art to order*. *Revista infanteriei/Infantry magazine*, year XVIII, no. 209, April, Bucharest, Tipografia „Universala”, Iancu Ionescu, p. 17.

## 2. The Military Newspaper

Details of the process of emergence and development of the Romanian military press can be found in the *History of the Military Press* (2 volumes), which is signed by Dan Gîju. Regarding the moment of the appearance of the *military journalist*, the stated author brings some clarifications:

“Who was the first, front reporter or the military journalist? In fact, there was neither. Leaving aside the situation in Egypt of the pharaohs Djoser, Horemheb, Ramses the Great and others, the appearance of reporters will be recorded only hundreds of years after the First Messenian War (743 BC) or the Medieval Wars (499 -480 BC), a time when information came to us through historians and, in particular, of traveling troubadours. So first was the troubadour. Respectively, the historian. But once seen on the stage of world history, trade reporters will become the most ... frenetic ministers, and even its makers. With the pen, of course. Not once with the sword as well. But it is certain that since their emergence, the life of the fortress has become quite different. That is, much more vivid, more colorful and, last but not least, more persistent over time. And relatively controllable. And above all, much harder - if not impossible - to forget.” (Gîju, 2012, p. 9)

Concerns about the reasons for the emergence of news came to Tobias Peucer as early as 1690, when he held his first doctoral thesis dedicated to journalism. (Munteanu, 2008, p. 8) According to Peucer, the reasons for the emergence of news “are, on the one hand, the curiosity of the people, on the other hand, the desire to win, both on the behalf of those who write them and on the hand those who sell them.” (Peucer, 2008, p. 89)

In the present paper, our attention is focused on the War Week publication, “Anti-War Guidance”. (Gîju, p. 275) The first issue of the weekly publication (published every Sunday) will be released on November 2, 1914, in Bucharest. The Week of the War had the mission to bring information to the Romanian reader about the course of the World War:

“Themes: Warfare news, illustrated (sketches, photographs, maps), war correspondence, weapons deeds, appropriate literature, political commentaries, fighting techniques. Drawings by Ary Murnu, Crotta, etc. A4 format, printed on coated paper, color cover or black and white, the photographs and graphics of great effect belong in part to the well-known war painters and photojournalists from both camps evoked here, especially the English and German, although they are not

signed. Disbanded on August 14, 1916, on the eve of Romania's entry into this conflict, *the Week of the War* remains in the history of the Romanian press as one of the most luxurious magazines of the genre in Europe, the owner of which is Ig. Herts.” (Giju, p. 275)

It must be said that, between 1914 and 1916, the atmosphere in which the Romanian press operated was tense. After Pamfil Șeicaru, Romania, since it declared its neutrality, “became extremely important from the political point of view, and the propaganda officers of the two groups of fighting forces mobilized important financial resources in order to conquer the public opinion.” (Teodorașcu, 2014, p. 27) The same Pamfil Șeicaru explains this situation by pointing out that a country cannot enter into a war if its government “does not enjoy the support of the masses.” (Șeicaru, 1994, p. 70)

Ioan Dafin also showed that “the public gatherings, within which he supported the idea that it was best for the country to join the Antante, and the pessimistic news announcing the German military successes brought the press to an unknown situation by then. Some newspapers supported the entry of the Romanian army into the war alongside France and Russia, and others claimed that our country should stay with the Central Powers. In the same situation were the political people, who were divided into two camps. A camp argued that Romania would join the Antente in order to achieve national unity, while the other believed that the most appropriate country would be to provide support to Germany and Austria-Hungary, a move that should have resulted in a possible escape by an invasion of Russia. [...] Among those who support the cause of the Central Powers, Ioan Dafin also points out, there were many spies, paid with considerable sums of money, of Germany and of Austria-Hungary.” (Teodorașcu, 2014, p. 28)

An unusual situation was also reported by N. Iorga, in September 1914, in the article “How does German newspapers respect Romania's feelings of the country”:

“There are two German newspapers in Romania: *Rumänischer Lloyd* and *Bukarester Tageblatt*.

I have been following them for a long time, and it's not the first time I show my opinion on them.

Although they have earthly editors, they edited without any consideration for the interests and susceptibilities of the country in which they are published. For things in Romania, some insights are coming up; the rest could print at Teschen or Mannheim. For our culture no interest, for our soul, no love, although we have so

much interest and love for German culture.” (Iorga, p. 41) This attitude, as the author quoted, was even more evident after the outbreak of the First World War. In 1918, General Alexandru Averescu even demanded the sanction, in one form or another, of those who contributed, both before Romania's entry into the war and during the military operations, to dividing the country into two camps. (Averescu, 1918, p. 47)

### 3. An “Impartial” Publication: The Week of the War

In the program article in its first issue, the publication set itself up a goal, to impartially present “the course of the war on all fronts”<sup>1</sup>. Despite the declared impartiality, the front page was occupied entirely by an image in which the General Castelnau, accompanied by a few comrades, was crying the death of one of his sons on the battlefield<sup>2</sup>. The picture was accompanied by the following text: “Go my son! You died of the most beautiful death one can ever want.” In all 95 numbers, one can easily see the admiration that the editors of the Week of the War had to the French army. The explanation is that Romania, spiritually, “was modeled under the influence of French culture.” (Șeicaru, 1994, p. 70)

On many occasions, the French soldier was portrayed as the human face of *courage*. In this sense, we will be looking at a fragment from an article taken over by the *Week of the War* from *Le Temps*:

“Indeed, it is not a town or a village, be it small, where you will not meet soldiers, with your forehead and banded arms, supported in a cane or in crutches.

All these people are the living icon of the courage of our people and the glorious personification of the sacrifice offered willingly. All due respect for these brave ones! [...]

The war in which they resolutely resurrected was the most terrible war that history has ever known. The old battles, compared to the formidable struggles that took place in entire regions, were only short actions.

To resist for weeks a fearsome foe, to reject his desperate attacks, the strength and courage of the French needed to be at the height of new needs. This bravery and resistance, which made the world admire, had our soldiers. But how many losses!

<sup>1</sup> M.S., „Săptămâna Războiului/The week of the war”, in *Săptămâna Războiului/The week of the war*, year I, no. 1, 2 Nov. 1914, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> It is about Gerald de Castelnau.

How many heroic deaths! How many, alas! They will no longer see the country where they were born, their village, their home, their parents, all they loved!

Kids, greet those who are alive, salute the wounded!”<sup>1</sup>

In the same tone there are also written the articles describing the courageous acts of the French troops committed during the *Battle of Verdun*<sup>2</sup>.

They were courageous, but also the soldiers of the other armies that were part of the *anti-German alliance*. In support of this statement, we will reproduce a fragment from an article taken by the *Week of the War* reporters from the pages of the Daily Mail Newspaper:

“The terror that the Cossacks inspire among the Austrian army is unbelievable. The Austrian soldiers are less afraid of the artillery and the machine guns than the Cossacks.

The way of fighting and, in particular, the attack of the Cossacks does not follow any rule. They throw themselves upon the enemy as a torrent of lava, destroy everything in their path, causing an undeniable panic.

In a fight near Przemysl, a battalion of Hungarian hunters flew horrified in the face of a Cossack attack, throwing their rifles, sacks, mantles, cans, all machine guns and ammunition. [...]

Cossacks are good triggers, but as the Russian infantry, the real fight for them is wrestling.”<sup>3</sup>

In the pages of the same publication it is referred to the case of the Russian nurse who, while walking on the battlefield, without fear of the danger to which she was exposed, to support the wounded, it was applauded by the Turkish soldiers<sup>4</sup>. The courage of Belgian printers was also brought to the attention of the Romanian reader:

"The [La] Libre Belgique newspaper always appears in Brussels, despite the Germans.

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<sup>1</sup> \*\*\*Copii, salutați pe răniți!/Kids, greet the wounded!, in *Săptămâna Războiului/The week of the war*, year I, no. 6,7 December 1914, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> \*\*\* Înaintea Verdunului/Before Verdun, in *Săptămâna Războiului/The week of the war*, year III, no 78, 17 April, 1916, p. 639.

<sup>3</sup> \*\*\*Cazacii inspiră groaza/Cossacks inspire horror, in *Săptămâna Războiului/The week of the war*, year I, no 2, 9 Nov., 1914, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Bravo soră/Our admiration, nurse! in *Săptămâna Războiului/The week of the war*, year II, no 39, 26 July 1915, p. 314.

The tenacious boldness of the enigmatic Belgian patriots, who stealthily and against all, continues to weekly publish their revenge pamphlet, it will remain in the anecdotal history of the war.

It is known that the Germans, entering Brussels, got their hands on the entire press. The alleged Belgian journals that the Command authorizes are not in fact only German sheets written in French, destined to demoralize the wretched Belgian people. This is *Le Bruxellois*, which is for the Belgians close to what is *Gazette des Ardennes* for the population of northern France.

Then it came [*La*] *Libre Belgique*. Who was redirecting? Where does it print? Unsearchable mystery! What the nipple press could not say, it shouted loudly. It is easy to guess what the newspaper was publishing: irrefutable documents about the crimes committed by the Germans, criticism of “victory bulletins”, unintentional assaults, ruthless mischiefs, preaching courage, etc. *La Libre Belgique* follows the opponent, stimulates the Belgians, reveals all the gossip that the Bruxelles nurses play for the German heroes, threaten the emperor, persecute the governor, the generals, the officers, all the shouts of the invaders.”<sup>1</sup>

The German combatants, on the other hand, were put in a totally different light. Here is, for example, a fragment of an article published in the first issue of the Week of the War journal:

“In *Frankfurter Zeitung*, a note was published in the past few days that the Russians, when evicting the German city of Insterburg, made use of all the amount of bread left in the city, pouring oil over them. When he learned this, General von Hindenburg ordered that all this bread to be given as food to Russian prisoners.

And this German gazette called the General's deed “a deserved punishment.”<sup>2</sup>

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* text had the role, showed the reporters of *The week of the war*, quoted *Le Temps*, to emphasize *the decline of the German mentality*.

#### 4. Conclusions

Some military authors considered the *woman* to have one of the most important roles in the courageous training of a soldier. In this sense, the Romanian woman

<sup>1</sup> Curajul tipografilor în Belgia/The courage of printers in Belgium, in *Săptămâna Războiului/The week of the war*, year III, no 71, 28 February 1916, p. 575.

<sup>2</sup> Mentalitatea germană/The German Mentality, in *Săptămâna Războiului/The week of the war*, Year I, no 1, 2 Nov. 1914, p. 9.

was recommended to follow the *model of the modern Japanese woman*, who was not afraid of the thought that her sons might die on the front, fighting for the country. The Romanian soldier was offered as a model, as we saw in the War Week, the French soldier. This situation was also explained by the fact that Romania, spiritually speaking, *was modeled under the influence of French culture*. Despite the efforts made by some publications to form and strengthen the courage of the Romanian soldiers, Romania entered the war, as general Alexandru Averescu showed, without being prepared for it.

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