The Literature of War —A New Perspective
Case Study: Romanian War Diaries (1914–1916)

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"You have scolded us enough, Lord! May you give our earthly rulers good thoughts and have them make peace, and not be heedless of our lives..."
(Nicolae Avram)

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Research on the complex phenomenon represented by the Great War —as World War I was called by its contemporaries—is quite comprehensive today, one century after the events that decisively and irrevocably marked the history of Europe and of the world at large. For a long time, research was focused primarily on the description and analysis of military operations, on the involvement of the main combatants, on the diplomatic efforts of the period and the consequences of the war, all of these aspects being addressed extensively in large-scale syntheses. Over the past few decades, Western historiography has witnessed the development of a new research direction, which has shifted the focus towards less frequently investigated aspects of World War I. This new historiographic trend lays special emphasis on sources that retrace the collective memory of the Great War. The literature of the war (memoirs, journals, marginal notes, letters, postcards, etc.) is

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explored today, more than ever, from a wide array of innovative perspectives. The contribution of war literature to shaping as complete and truthful an image of this event is essential. Nowadays, Romanian historiography is endeavoring to examine the other facets of the Great War by alligning its efforts to the new historiographic directions. In this sense, Romanian researchers have begun to exploit and capitalize on various types of unpublished and published sources, including the literature of the war. The new approaches and the discovery of ever more complex and varied historical sources have brought new topics to the forefront of Romanian historiographic debate, such as propaganda, message, mobilization, couple relationships, children and the war, food consumption during the war, the daily life of soldiers on the front, etc.

This study follows this new direction of research and aims to bring to the scholars' consideration certain perspectives on the war as it was seen and experienced by various protagonists, by those who were deployed to the frontline or in its immediate proximity. These perspectives are reflected in certain texts written by various soldiers or officers, who during brief moments of respite recorded their experiences, often making hasty notes, writing them down in the most inappropriate conditions, revealing their most sincere and intimate thoughts, sentiments or fears.[1] These written records may be generically called war diaries.

War diaries represent an important source for reconstructing various aspects relating to the Great War, which has been relatively little explored in Romanian historiography so far, primarily due to the fact that this kind of historical source is very rare. On the one hand, there are extremely few such documents in the archives; on the other hand, Romanian soldiers in general left behind few autobiographic writings, for easily understandable reasons. Whereas the spread of literacy had made great progress in the West until the outbreak of World War I, a situation that was reflected in the large number of letters or memoirs written by officers and soldiers during World War I, in the Romanian-speaking provinces, where the percentage of literate people was much lower, war correspondence, diaries and memoirs were relatively few.

War diaries represent an extremely important historical source not only because they provide details about some of the events, but also because they convey the soldiers' feelings and emotional states, familiarizing the reader with the daily life of those on the frontlines: their attitudes, behavior, food consumption patterns, discussions, rules of discipline, the way in which soldiers perceived the war propaganda and the extent to which they complied with the propaganda's requirements, their debates and comments on the decisions and measures imposed by the political and military authorities, the rumors that circulated among soldiers, etc.

From the outset, we should underline the truthfulness of these diaries. They were a means of capturing the moment, of accurately describing various events, moods or feelings, the level of sophistication depending, of course, on the cultural and educational background of each individual author. Written in the "heat of the

moment" (both literally and figuratively), right in the midst of events whose impact was still very strongly felt, these diaries were strewn with personal comments and observations regarding the progress of the war, the people the authors had met and the places through which they had been. Hence, the objective character of many of these diaries. In addition, the veracity or sincerity of these notes—by contrast with letters, for example—is attested precisely by the fact that they were not subject to political censorship or to self-censorship.

The objectivity, truthfulness and credibility of the information included in such war diaries individualize and distinguish this type of document in relation to memoirs, for instance, which were usually written by the participants in the war after the events had taken place, being thus prone to a higher degree of subjectivity.

As a category of war literature, war diaries can be explored and analyzed from many perspectives. These perspectives range from considerations on the diaries' authors to discourse and language analysis, or to identifying the central themes approached in these diaries, discussing the military-historical content, or conducting historical, sociological, anthropological, psychological and psychohistorical analyses, etc.

Our analysis is based on two such war diaries: we have identified one at the Sibiu County Branch of the National Archives and the other in the National Archives in Bistriţa, the latter recently published by Alexandru Dărăban in several issues of the review *Pisanii sângeorzene*.[2] The two diaries have several common features. For instance, both authors were teachers by profession. In terms of their discourse and register, the two diaries are different, reflecting the personality of their authors. Iustin Sohorca, for example, reported more pithily on the events on the front, while the diary Nicolae Avram kept is much richer in details.

It should be noted that these two war diaries were not singular cases. Clearly, such journals must still exist, but very few are known. Currently we know of the existence of some notes made on the battlefield by Horaţiu Deacu (12 August–21 October 1914, the date of his death), the son of the priest David Deacu from the commune of Săcălaia, Szolnoc-Doboka County, published in Gherla in 1930 and edited by Al. Lupean-Melin, under the title *Ziarul unui erou* (A hero's journal).[3] Horaţiu Deacu was also a primary school teacher and he also fought on the Eastern Front in Galicia. Not long ago was identified an "Autobiography" written by the elementary school teacher Isidor Todoran, the son of Vasile and Palaghia from Ibăneşti, Mureş County. He was a soldier on the Eastern Front, too, from 29 May 1916 (his enlistment date) until early 1918, when he was transferred to the Italian front. This "Autobiography," mentioned in a study published in the journal *Angustia* in 2004,[4] seems to belong to the genre of memories rather than to the category of diaries. Today it is owned by the heirs of the author.

Returning to the topic, we believe that an analysis of the message cannot start without a brief presentation of the authors of the two war diaries examined in this

study. Nicolae Avram was born in the village of Doştad in 1886, into a peasant's family, with five children. He attended the pedagogical high school in Blaj. After the outbreak of the war he was conscripted into the Austro-Hungarian Army and then was sent to the front, serving as an orderly in the 64th Infantry Regiment from 1914 to 1916 (August). In 1916 he deserted from the Austro-Hungarian Army, crossing the mountains into Romania. After 1 December 1918, he returned to his native places. In 1920 he married the daughter of the priest from Bogatu (Bogatu Român), Sibiu County. He had 2 children: Ion, an engineer who lived in Orăştie, and a daughter, Hortensia, who was a kindergarten teacher. As of 1921, he was a teacher in the village of Draşov, Şpring commune, Alba County. He retired in 1947 and died in 1968, at the age of 82, being buried in the village of Draşov.[5]

Iustin Sohorca was born in Sângeorgiu Român (Sângeorz-Băi), Bistriţa-Năsăud County, on 23 January 1881, as the son of the priest-cooperator Silviu Sohorca and of Laura Buduşan. He attended the pedagogical high school in Gherla. In 1902–1903 he did his military service in the 63rd Infantry Regiment of Bistriţa. In 1904 he married Cătălina Joja from the same town. They had no children. He was mobilized on 1 August 1914 and was sent to war. He fought in the Austro-Hungarian Army until the end of the war. He was part of the labor units called "arbaităr" (*Arbeiter* in German) which were used either behind the frontlines, for the construction of bridges, barracks and observation towers or for repairing the roads the army needed to travel by, or for digging trenches right on the frontline, at night. Even if they did not fight on the front, they were indeed exposed to danger.[6] On 1 February 1918 he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant junior grade. In 1919–1920 he was drafted into the Romanian Army, with which he participated in the campaign in Hungary. After the war he resumed his teaching position in his native village, serving, for a period, as headmaster of the elementary school in Sângeorz-Băi. He retired very early, at the age of 51 (we do not know the reasons), and died on 19 February 1966, at the age of 85.[7] As it can be seen, the biographical data of two teachers, who became, by force of circumstances, soldiers in the Great War, feature both similarities and differences. One of the essential differences might be the fact that Nicolae Avram decided to defect from the Austro-Hungarian Army and join the Romanian Army, while Iustin Sohorca, a descendant of the Năsăud border guards, remained in the Imperial Army until the end of hostilities.

Referring to the discourse on the war found in these diaries, we can assert that it is personal, that it has a narrative, emotional character, and that it reflects the official discourse only very rarely. The authors of the two war diaries we have analyzed belong to the category of village intellectuals, situated, in the social hierarchy, on an intermediate level between the top elite of the Transylvanian Romanians and the common people. In civilian life, before the war, the two teachers had been part of the local elite. During the war, considering the roles they played on the front, at least during the first two years of the war (one was an orderly, the other a sapper, or "arbaităr"), they were among the representatives of the "lower military ranks."

Consequently, the diaries they wrote can be seen to belong to the so-called "lower" memory of the war, as Doru Radosav calls it.[8] They provide precise perspectives, with a generous amount of details, reflecting their actual, immediate experience, rarely connected to the general events, which very often were little known among frontline soldiers.

What was the reason that drove the two teachers to keep such a diary? How did they manage to find the time and record, every day, the things they thought deserved to stay alive in their memory and in the memory of those who otherwise would have never had access to these events? The answers to these questions can only be subjective. It is quite possible that these thorough notes were grounded in the desire not to forget certain things, or simply because these men lacked and longed for communication and socialization, which they had been accustomed to while they were teachers. Supporting this claim is a note made by Iustin Sohorca, who confessed to the joy of meeting some fellow teachers on the front—"that's where I got together with the colleagues. Stroia, Roşală, Hanzu and Brătulescu, with whom I chatted a lot, helped me kill time and I missed the comments they had once made by the stove in the teachers' room at the school."[9]

The analysis of the message content of the two diaries has led the researcher to identify several central themes. In the pages that follow, we will present them briefly. One of the distinctive themes that are conveyed by the authors' most sincere confessions concerns the *moods they experienced in the trenches* and, above all, the states and feelings of the soldier who was fighting in the first line, ranging from anxiety, insecurity and fear to resignation in the face of imminent death.

The soldier who was sent to war, having been brutally snatched away from his family, from his plot of land, from his shed or from his teaching position, in this case, experienced unexpected uprootedness, alienation, a sudden break-up of all the essential social ties, which generated "a profound moral disorder."[10] To a greater extent than letters (in which the sender attempted to tone down the horrors of the war, seeking to protect the loved ones), war diaries reflected faithfully the inner experiences, the emotional and spiritual ordeal of the soldier who was in the very midst of events, as well as the terrors of the war. "Waiting in the trenches is the warrior's confession and repentance,"[11] Tăslăuanu said in *Hora obuzelor* (A dance of shells), a different kind of war diary, slightly more embellished in literary terms. The state of expectation provided these soldier authors with an opportunity for spiritual introspection, for a cinematic retrieval of memories, but also for a projection of their thoughts and dreams, and with the desire to become reunited with their loved ones.

As soldiers in the trenches, in a state of extreme tension, uncertainty and fear, always faced with the possibility of imminent death, they were bound to reflect on the senselessly tragic situations they went through day by day: "Silence, like at a burial, but no less frightening. . . How many dead men, how many injured people, brought into a state where they were no longer able to work even to support themselves, fell prey to death in this swift, albeit violent and savage attack? How many

tears did this bring to the eyes of so many widows or parents and God knows how many orphans. . .”[12] At the end of another attack, Sohorca wrote down in his notebook: “We thought, at every gunshot, how many children would remain without parents. . .”[13] In addition to inner suffering, which the soldiers could not eschew in any way, they also endured many other physical hardships, including cold and hunger. In many of his notes, Sohorca complained that he had experienced a lot of hunger and biting cold.[14]

It should therefore come as no surprise to us that food appears to be the preferred topic in the two diaries. Clearly, references to this topic are the most numerous in diary of Nicolae Avram, who sometimes devoted entire pages to this subject. Food was very scarce on the front. Most often the meals were not sufficient for the soldiers and they had to make do with what they had. Starvation drove them to steal food, sometimes even at the risk of being punished, including by beating, as two teachers-soldiers confessed.[15] The deprivation and the ordeals the soldiers endured taught them to enjoy every little thing, however trivial, a good meal included. That is why the gifts received, for example, on the occasion of the “German” Christmas[16] of 1914 were highly appreciated: “Here’s why: 7 cigarettes, 5 ladyfingers, 3 lumps of white sugar and a chocolate bar. Try to enjoy that and that’s all there is to it.”[17]

On the other hand, diary entries relating to food provided important information about food consumption on the front. We can easily identify the “menu on the front,” so to say. For example, on 19 October 1914, orderlies on the front were given “bean mash with some meat.”[18] On the next day, October 20, the lunch menu included “boiled *grumpene* (potatoes), meat, bread, sweet bread, canned food and tobacco.” Nicolae Avram was also privileged to receive a few lumps of sugar, because he knew the soldier who fetched the food.[19] At other times, they had “cabbage and meat,” etc. Of course, examples could go on. The mere enumeration of the types of food referred to in the two war diaries shows that orderlies received better quality and, generally, more diverse food, while soldiers from the so-called “arbaităr” working units (sappers) were often starving, even though they performed hard labor, requiring much physical effort.

In general, tobacco and bread were mentioned on the same position, and sometimes tobacco seemed even more important or necessary than a loaf of bread. It was a sort of drug that appeased, in a way, the soldiers. Generally, their superiors made sure that soldiers always had a supply of tobacco in their haversacks. Smoking was certainly one of the soldiers’ most enjoyable pastimes. “What a blessed weed tobacco is under such circumstances. It makes you forget and it numbs your conscience. The warm smoke was seeping through my every fiber, like a narcotic fluid. I could feel it being distilled in my lungs, as it turned into morphine vapors and oozed in sluggish waves through my blood. My heart began to throb hastily, in syncopated motion, intoxicated with the poison I greedily breathed in.”[20]

Homesickness, longing to see their families and friends again, the desire to resume the household chores that had kept them busy during peacetime, the joy and

nostalgia experienced when they received, read and re-read a letter from home,[21] all of these gave them bittersweet comfort, providing them with an opportunity to escape from the inferno of the war into the normal world of life back home, from before their departure:[22] "You, my dear friends who have written to me, have transposed me from my current environment into your midst. May God bless you for the joy you gave me with your letters. May God give me good health so that I may thank you in person for the joy you gave me."[23]

At other times, the letters from home brought unsettling news. The pain experienced by the soldiers on the front was further compounded by the feeling of helplessness. Being far from their loved ones, they could not do anything for their families when the latter were sick or when toiling in the field exhausted them. This helplessness and the uncertainty as to whether they would ever see their families again often overwhelmed these soldiers. "These days I received several letters from home. I got upset and my heart cried in pain, because I found out that my good wife is sick. They say that she is better, but should I trust them? . . . Maybe they won't tell me. Ah! Lord, why won't you have mercy on us? Give people peace, oh, Lord, so that they may know and bring praise to you. If you decided that we should be apart, please let us see each other again and pray to You together . . . then, may Your will be done."[24]

A theme which appeared frequently in the soldiers' diaries concerned the hostility of the local population in parallel with the theme of alienation and deracination. On Easter Sunday, which in 1915 was celebrated on 4 April, Iustin Sohorca wrote down the following: "Easter Day was welcomed by the roar of cannons which are having no holiday even on this day, sparking rancor and grievance among the educated and the faithful. A Polish man has put me up. I can see on his face the bitterness and discontent that gnaws at him, since he cannot spend even Easter Day in his own home without a foreigner around. If he were a psychologist, he could also read my discontent in my eyes, for I am forced to spoil his holidays. I'm overcome with grief that I cannot be, like him, in the midst of my family at Easter time. There's nothing he or I can do. We must carry on. . ."[25] This diary entry reveals, on the one hand, the displeasure experienced by the local Pole, who was forced to quarter foreign troops in his own home, and on the other hand, the pain and the sorrow of the alienated soldier, who had been away from home for too long, becoming disconnected from the customs and traditions of daily life during peacetime. All these feelings were exacerbated during a religious holiday, being experienced as even more painful by the soldier, who, in addition to being burdened with profound solitude, was also forced to put up with the aversion of his host, a man who did not appear to empathize with the suffering of the estranged foreigner.

Another distinct theme, which is easily identifiable in the two war diaries and to which many pages are devoted, especially in Sohorca's text, refers to discipline on the battlefield. "Maintaining discipline among soldiers," demonstrating obedience to senior officers and prohibiting any action undertaken without the knowledge of

the superiors were some of the directives of the front. Here are, for instance, the testimonies of the teacher Iustin Sohorca, who spoke about the punishment inflicted on those who violated orders or did not comply with the internal discipline of the front: a soldier was sentenced to "25 strikes inflicted on his naked back because he dared eat a tin of meat without express orders to do so," while another, Todor Deac, was caned, receiving 10 strikes after being unjustly accused that he had stolen some potatoes." Sohorca himself was punished. On 1 December 1914, Sohorca wrote that "before our departure, early in the morning, a disciplinary session was held, where I was sentenced to have my hands tied to my legs for two hours. . . In the evening, from 8 to 10, I was tied, but was luckily taken into a house and not left outside in a cold of 8-9 degrees." He did not mention what he had been tried and punished for, but we may assume that he had probably disobeyed orders. Beating was seen as an extremely humiliating method by the soldiers, as revealed by Iustin Sohorca's notes.

Soldiers were often seized by a sense of revolt against the injustices committed by their superiors and the differential, generally humiliating treatment given to soldiers: officers could strike the soldiers, were better protected from danger, received better food, newer clothes and safer sleeping places.[26] In a very brief entry from 2 April 1915, Sohorca reported that "I went to the brigade, following the order of the day, where the general, a captain and the lieutenant junior grade were playing chess and listening to gramophone tunes. What difference between their lives and the lives of those outside!"[27] In his memoirs, Sextil Puşcariu confirmed that officers enjoyed a privileged status: "the dominating sense during the war is idleness," he said. "You feel too lazy to get up, you feel too lazy to work and, especially when it's hot, you feel too lazy to even talk."[28] This laziness was characteristic of all officers, the subjects of conversation were always the same and no one attempted to enliven or spark up conversations.

On another occasion, Sohorca recounted the punishment of some sappers ("arbaitări") who had allegedly feigned sickness and had been sentenced to 10 cane strikes and to be kept tethered for two hours. Moreover. some of the sappers sent to hospital because they really were sick had been brought back to the unit without having been cured.[29] The series of injustices and undeserved punishments continuously inflicted on the soldiers sparked their disgruntlement and disapproval. This kind of unfair treatment on the part of their superiors was denounced by the teacher Sohorca in his diary. He has remained, over time, an unquestionable witness and, at the same time, an indisputable judge.[30]

These are, therefore, some of the central themes approached in the two war diaries analyzed in this study. Besides these, we have also identified other equally interesting topics, including the one relating to rumors. All sorts of rumors circulated freely among the soldiers on the frontline, many of them announcing the end of the war, the possibility of a ceasefire or even of definitive peace. The war had

barely begun when the news that the political power holders were negotiating a peace circulated among soldiers. Some argued that peace could be concluded at the end of November, while other soldiers were of the opinion that an agreement on the cessation of hostilities could be reached by springtime.[31] Shortly after the installation of the new King of Romania, Ferdinand, there had been rumors that he was bent on adopting the policy of neutrality imposed by King Charles I and that he had discharged the mobilized soldiers, or that Serbia had requested the intervention of Italy for peace.[32] However, on the same day, 25 October 1914, which was a Sunday, Nicolae Avram noted with irony: "Today it appears that rifles and cannons are firing more intensely, perhaps in honor of our Lord."[33] Rumors about peace or, perhaps, just the soldiers' most intimate wishes and desires as they were stationed on the battlefield continued to circulate. In his turn, Iustin Sohorca noted on 15 December 1915: "How we're all awaiting Holy Christmas. The sappers hope to celebrate it at home. If only God would allow this to happen, but I don't think He will. It's nice to listen to them vividly talking about peace and about how people sing carols back home in the evening, praising them and recounting funny stories about them."[34] One month later, on 11 January 1915, he wrote again about the end of the war: "Work continues in the trenches. Both joyful and troublesome news is reaching us. Like so. The war will last until early March."[35] Such rumors circulated throughout the military hostilities, being reflected in the literature of the war.

There are many other themes that can be identified in the Romanian war diaries and subjected to analysis. In future we intend to examine other such diaries and to further develop this research. Among these other possible themes, mention should be made of: the theme relating to *what was read on the front*, and the theme of propaganda and misinformation, and the theme of "flying machines," with the fear and panic that their appearance instilled in soldiers. A special topic that deserves to be analyzed concerns the dependability and the spirit of sacrifice evinced by the Romanian soldiers within the Austro-Hungarian Army, as highlighted even by the Hungarian gazettes; or the theme of duty to the homeland and the emperor. As regards this sense of duty, we would like to present two situations that illustrate how soldiers perceived this feeling. The first case was that of a soldier wounded on the battlefront, about whom Nicolae Avram said that he could have very well stayed in Romania, where he was stationed at the onset of the war, but since his wife and daughter were in Transylvania, he reported back for duty, but later was severely wounded in the back.[36] This is the example of a citizen who considered that he had to serve his country even if it cost him his life. Iustin Sohorca was also a devoted citizen of the homeland and the emperor, to which he remained faithful to the very end of the war. However, after three months on the front, he admitted that his role as a soldier, as a defender of the interests of a state that was ultimately foreign to him, was by no means the role he had envisaged: "For in truth my thought, my entire soul is not in Russia, nor did I bring it into the war, but I left it at home, among the ones I desire and love. . . . My only comfort is that I'm not alone in this fate, but

there are 24 generations involved and, in particular, my fellow teachers Lang, Barna, Rednic and Mihalca, who, like me, with aching hearts, bear the brunt of the war with the resignation of the ox that pulls at a yoke without understanding the good or evil purposes of its master. . ."[37]

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(Translated by Carmen-Veronica Borbély)

Notes

1. "I'm writing these lines in a forest where we are gathering twigs." This is what the elementary school teacher Iustin Sohorca wrote in his diary on 30 November 1914. See Iustin Sohorca, "Jurnal de front 1914–1915," *Pisanii sângeorzene*: *Spiritualitate, tradiţie şi istorie locală* (Sângeroz-Băi) 9 (37) (4/2015): 42.
2. Ibid., 9 (37)–12 (40) (4/2015); 1 (41)–2 (42) (5/2016). Iustin Sohorca's war diary is preserved in the personal collection of Dr. George Uza, at the Bistriţa-Năsăud County Branch of the National Archives.
3. Horaţiu C. Deacu, *Ziarul unui erou: Însemnări făcute pe câmpul de luptă din Galiţia între 12 august–21 octombrie 1914, ziua în care autorul a fost ucis de un glonte duşman*, text revised and edited by Alexandru Lupeanu-Melin (Gherla, 1930).
4. Dorin-Ioan Rus, Etelka Szábo, and Arthur Szábo, "Lista soldaţilor din Regimentul 22 Târgu Mureş decoraţi după bătălia de la Asiago," *Angustia: Istorie Etnografie-Sociologie* (Sfântu Gheorghe) 8 (2004): 151–166.
5. According to the presentation made by Gh. Bichigean at the Session of Communications organized by Astra, on 24 November 1993. See the Sibiu County Branch of the National Archive (hereafter cited as ANSB), coll. ASTRA, fol. 131.
6. Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 1 (41) (5/2016): 35.
7. Teodor Tanco, *Virtus Romana Rediviva*, vol. 6 (Bistriţa, 1987), 357.
8. Doru Radosav, "Memoria de jos a războiului: Câteva consideraţii," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Orală* (Cluj-Napoca), 14 (2014): 5–8.
9. Iustin Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 11 (39) (4/2015): 42.
10. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *Războiul redescoperit, 1914-1918*, trans. Cristina Popescu, and Elena-Tudora Duţă, ed. Florin Ţurcanu (Bucharest: Corint, 2014), 75.
11. Octavian C. Tăslăuanu, *Hora obuzelor. Scene şi icoane din război* (Bucharest, 1916), 140.
12. Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 12 (40) (4/2015): 39.
13. Ibid., 41.
14. Ibid., 9 (37) (4/2015): 39–43.
15. ANSB, Fascicle documents coll., file 171, *Jurnale zilnice ale lui Nicolae Avram*, fols 4 v, 5v., 6v, 7v. In his turn, Iustin Sohorca recorded, on 24 November 1914, that: "We dug many trenches in a cold of at least 8 degrees, famished, because they gave us lunch only at 7 o'clock in the evening." The next day he wrote succinctly in his notebook: "We prepared wire fences on a stretch of at least 4 km, which is as long as our trenches are. Freezing cold, hunger as big as yesterday." On 26 November 1914, he noted down again: "Cold

and hunger," and the examples could continue. See Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 9 (37) (4/2015): 41–43.
16. The "German" Christmas, as Sohorca referred to it, was Christmas celebrated in Western Europe, on 25 December, after the Gregorian calendar (new style). The Orthodox celebrated Christmas 13 days later, after the Julian calendar (old style).
17. Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 9 (37) (4/2015): 46.
18. Avram, *Jurnale*, fol. 9v.
19. Ibid., fol. 11r.
20. Tăslăuanu, 35–36. Having been injured and, in fact, suffering from frostbite, Tăslăuanu was transported to the nearest train station, in Eperjes, in a cart. He was covered in straw, lest he should freeze to death. He was very listless and sad, thinking about the impending end which he deemed to be very close, when someone offered him a cigarette. That was the moment that occasioned the reflection quoted above.
21. Avram, *Jurnale*, fol. 10v.
22. Ibid., fols. 6v., 9r.
23. Ibid., fol. 11r.
24. Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 2 (42) (5/2016): 39.
25. Ibid., 43.
26. See Avram, *Jurnale*, fol. 7r. and Sohorca, "Jurnal," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 12 (40) (4/2015): 38: "Work continued on the tower. Every man was asked to make a list of the cans they had received as a reserve when they were conscripted, then these were taken away from each of them. Every man had to show six cans, but because today at noon there was no meat, they exempted us from one, so that each man was supposed to have only five. It is rumored that all those who will not be able to give account of all the cans will be sentenced to five cane strikes, so for 5 = 25. The poor men have been excessively starved, but now they must also endure the shameful punishment of having their bottoms caned."
27. Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 12 (40) (4/2015): 42.
28. Sextil Puşcariu, *Memorii*, ed. Magdalena Vulpe (Bucharest: Minerva, 1978), 80.
29. Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 11 (39) (4/2015): 40.
30. Ibid., 39. On 18 March 1915, Sohorca wrote the following in his diary: "As the situation went, just like the treatment meted out by petty tyrants to the masses proves and shows the rottenness at the heart of the governing system, so also, in smaller societies, for example in our unit, the behaviour of the non-commissioned officers, in particular of the seargeants and corporals, towards the poor people proves the corruption, immorality and faulty leadership of this unit..."
31. Avram, *Jurnale*, fol. 11r.
32. Ibid., fols. 11v–12r.
33. Ibid., fol. 12r.
34. Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 9 (37) (4/2015): 44.
35. Ibid., 10 (38) (4/2015): 36.
36. Avram, *Jurnale*, fol. 10v.
37. Sohorca, "Jurnal de front," *Pisanii sângeorzene* 9 (37) (5/2016): 44.

Abstract

The Literature of War—A New Perspective:
Case Study: Romanian War Diaries (1914–1916)

War diaries represent a particularly important source for reconstructing various aspects relating to the Great War, a source that has been relatively little explored in Romanian historiography so far. This study focuses on two such war diaries preserved in the National Archives of Sibiu and Bistriţa, respectively. The two authors were elementary school teachers. In terms of their discourse and register, the two diaries are different, reflecting the personality of their authors, but their analysis reveals a few central themes, equally present in both texts, such as the atmosphere in the trenches, the soldiers' moods and inner feelings on the frontline, the hostility of the local population, the theme of alienation and deracination, the methods of maintaining discipline among soldiers, the rumors which circulated among them, propaganda and misinformation, the topic of the so-called "flying machines," the reliability and spirit of sacrifice of the Romanian soldiers or their duty to their homeland and the emperor, etc.

Keywords

First World War, Austro-Hungarian army, war diary, soldiers, teachers, propaganda, rumors