

## **A RECENTLY DISCOVERED TESTIMONY REGARDING THE REFUGEES IN MOLDAVIA, ON THE ROMANIAN FRONT OF THE GREAT WAR: THE MEMOIRS OF IOANA PERTICARI**

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### **Abstract**

The fate of the civilians on the Romanian Front of the Great War is reflected in a document hitherto unpublished in its entirety, the memoirs of Ioana Peticari. The text was found by Filip-Lucian Iorga in a private family archive in Paris, belonging to the author's daughter, Princess Irina Ghica-Cantacuzino.

Ioana Peticari (1908–2004) was the daughter of General Ion Peticari and Elena Davila (the daughter of Dr. Carol Davila, one of the main builders of the Romanian medical system). Ioana Peticari fled communist Romania and settled in Canada, where she wrote her memoirs, in 1950. The text is written in English and consists of 15 chapters, spanning 62 typewritten pages and 9 more manuscript pages. The author has a privileged perspective, as the daughter of a senior officer of the Romanian army, sent by King Ferdinand on a military mission to Italy and of a lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie of Romania. The experience described is that of the refuge in Moldavia (the north-eastern part of Romania), provoked by the advance of the troops of the Central Powers, that occupied the capital of Romania, Bucharest, at the end of 1916.

Ioana Peticari spent her refuge at the mansion of her uncle and aunt, Grigore Peticari and Maria Mavrogheni Peticari, from Stoicșești, near Bârlad and in Iași, the historical capital of Moldavia.

**Keywords:** Romanian aristocracy, World War I, war refugees, unpublished memoirs, private archives.

The fate of the civilians on the Romanian Front of the Great War is reflected in a document hitherto unpublished, the memoirs of Ioana Peticari. I discovered the text in a private family archive from Paris, belonging to the author's daughter, princess Irina Ghica Cantacuzino, during the research for my project, "The Memory of the Romanian elites", dedicated to the descendants of Romanian aristocracy (the boyars) and of the families belonging to the upper bourgeoisie. I will cite here several fragments from Ioana Peticari's memoirs, focusing on her experience during World War I and especially during the refuge to Moldavia.

In 1916, Romania decided to enter the war on the side of the Entente, with the objective of freeing Transylvania from the Austro-Hungarian rule. After some victories in Transylvania, the Romanian army was overwhelmed by the enemy and

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the capital, Bucharest, was lost. The Royal Family, the authorities, the army, and many civilians sought refuge in Moldavia.

At that moment, Ioana Peticari (1908, Izvoru, Argeş county – 2004, Calgary, Canada) was 8 years old. Her father was General Ion Peticari (1852–1919), son of boyar Gheorghe Peticari (1818–1882) and of Zoe (Zoiţa) Berindei (1824–1894). The first known Peticari ancestor, Dumitraşco Peticari, was a boyar of Greek origin mentioned in 1779.<sup>1</sup> According to the family legend, they had an Italian origin, in Florence. Indeed, there is an ancient Peticari family in Florence, but it cannot be linked with General Peticari's family. Ion Peticari studied at the École Polytechnique from Paris and at the Military Academy for Artillery Officers from Fontainebleau. He fought in Romania's War of Independence (1877–1878), he was an Adjutant of King Carol I (1878–1884) and the fencing teacher of Prince Carol, the future King Carol II. During World War I, he was sent in Italy, between 1916 and 1919, as a liaison between the general staffs of the Italian and Romanian armies. He built in Izvoru a manor and the first hospital from the Romanian countryside.

Ioana Peticari's mother was unknown, according to George D. Florescu, one of the most reliable Romanian genealogists. She was probably an extramarital relationship of Ion Peticari. In the unpublished genealogy of the Peticari, George D. Florescu mentions that Ioana was adopted by the General (her biological father) and by his wife, Elena Davila (1865–1954), the daughter of the physician Carol Davila, who had an essential role in the development of the medical system and of the medical education in Romania.

Elena Davila-Peticari, who became Ioana Peticari's true mother, was a close friend and confidante of Queen Marie of Romania, who mentions Elena a lot in her diary, especially during the refuge in Moldavia.<sup>2</sup> The Queen often ate alone with Elena Peticari, and they were always trying to help the sick and wounded. Even though Queen Marie writes sometimes ironically about Elena Peticari's constant bad mood and eternal pain, she admires her strong spirit and the courage of one's convictions. During the refuge in Iaşi, Elena Peticari and her daughter lived in a very modest house, they didn't even have a proper bed or wardrobe. As Queen Marie puts it in her diary, they had "a true refugee house". The Queen was very worried because of Elena Peticari's poor health, especially when she suffered from dysentery. Queen Marie also mentions Elena Peticari in her memoirs, *The Story of My Life*, praising her patriotism.

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<sup>1</sup> George D. Florescu, *Peticari* (genealogical tree), unpublished manuscript, George D. Florescu Fonds, Filip-Lucian Iorga Archive. The Peticari were related to several boyar families: Mavrogheni, Colfescu, Grecianu, Berindei, Trăsnea, Varlam, Juvara.

<sup>2</sup> Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1916–1917*, trans. Anca Bărbulescu (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2014), 69, 301, 304, 426, 445, 469, 479; Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1917–1918*, trans. Anca Bărbulescu (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2016), 36–37, 39, 46, 49, 83, 140, 199, 202–204, 208, 287, 344, 401, 424, 460; Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1918*, trans. Anca Bărbulescu (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2016), 67, 70, 159, 292, 345, 367.

Elena Peticari spoke Romanian, French, English, and German. She was very close to the peasants from Izvoru, and she helped them a lot. She wrote a book of childhood memories, *Amintiri din copilărie* (Editura Casa Școalelor, București, 1940).<sup>3</sup>

Ioana Peticari was married twice. Her first husband was prince Matei Ghica Cantacuzino (1906–1988), son of Irina Cantacuzino (the “Nabob” Gheorghe Grigore Cantacuzino’s daughter) and Nicolae Ghica (a direct descendant of several reigning princes of Wallachia, son of Ion Ghica, prime minister of Romania, prince of Samos, president of the Romanian Academy and a praised writer). He studied in England, he was an engineer, a fan of car racing, he took care of the family estate from Izvoru, Argeș, where he developed paddies for growing rice. He was a famous fighter pilot during World War II. In July 1944, he escaped with a plane to the Allies, and he was condemned by the Ion Antonescu regime. He had another 4 marriages.

The second husband of Ioana Peticari was, since 1937, prince Constantin Soutzo (1912–2004), who was also a pilot. Ioana Peticari had three children: two daughters from the first marriage, Ioana Ghica Cantacuzino, married to the Polish count Johann Tarnowski and Irina Ghica Cantacuzino, who lives in Paris and was married to Xavier Deniau, member of the French Parliament for 40 years, and a son from the second marriage, Alexandru Suțu, who lives in Canada.

During the refuge in Moldavia, in 1917, Ioana Peticari was close to Princess Ileana, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie’s youngest daughter. Queen Marie mentions Ioana several times in her diary,<sup>4</sup> as a close friend of Princess Ileana, as an intelligent girl who stimulates Ileana to read, to write and even create their own short stories.

Ioana Peticari escaped from communist Romania in 1948, together with her husband and their son, and she lived in Canada. She wrote in her *Souvenirs* that she lived in a “rambling house amid prairie, wheat fields and foothills, spreading from the foot of the Rockie Mountains”.

Her *Souvenirs* are made of 62 pages, typewritten in English and a few handwritten additions and corrections, another 10 pages. The text has 2 parts and 16 chapters. As I have already mentioned before, I found the text in 2015, in the family archive of princess Irina Ghica Cantacuzino (Deniau), in Paris.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Many interesting details about Ion and Elena Peticari can be found in the Elena Peticari Davila Fonds, at the Romanian National Archives – Argeș County. (SJAN Argeș, Fond familial Elena Peticari Davila, Inv. 2864, Fond 2202, 1848-1949, mapele 1-49). Details about the art collection of the Davila and Peticari families, in Lidia Trăușan-Matu, “Incursiune în colecția de tablouri a doctorului Carol Davila (1828–1884)”, *Revista de Artă și Istoria Artei*, no. 1 (2018): 120–137.

<sup>4</sup> Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1917–1918*, 18; Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1918*, 67, 345, 363–364.

<sup>5</sup> Recorded interview with princess Irina Ghica Cantacuzino (Deniau), Paris, June 16, 2015; *Memoria elitelor românești* Fonds, Filip-Lucian Iorga Archive.

In a short introduction, Ioana Perticari writes about the trigger for writing her memoirs: she heard on the radio, on June 25, 1950, about the invasion of South Korea by the communists. She was in Canada, but all her memories from her lost country came back and she started writing her memoirs.

In the text, we can find details about her experience during World War I, about the refuge to Moldavia, about managing the Izvoru estate, the charities of her family, the impoverishment of the Romanian aristocracy after the land reform, the dancing parties, and the travels abroad (especially to France), the boarding school she attended in France, World War II and the escape from the Soviet occupied Romania. The text also contains interesting reflections about the misery of war, about communism, democracy, politics, religion, rural traditions etc.

She evokes, at the beginning of her souvenirs, what almost all those who were children and lived in Bucharest in 1916 remember:

*“All the church bells in Bucharest were ringing. We could hear in the distance the sound of artillery and the long, shrill whistles of invisible policemen warning the population to take cover. Over our heads we felt the presence of the now legendary German Zeppelin.*

*It was August 1916, the year when Romania<sup>6</sup> entered World War I and the peaceful, agricultural country which was my home became suddenly the target and battleground of war in Eastern Europe. Our country was surrounded by longstanding enemies, Bulgaria in the South, Turkey on our South-East border, and the great, powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire, West and North of our frontiers. All these countries were Germany’s allies and Romania was becoming the second front of war in Europe. The Zeppelin’s visits came almost instantly and with them our blackouts, which, today, would resemble an innocent game of hide and seek in the dark.*

*Thus, it was, that as a child of eight I was introduced to war. I remember during the first German air raids going to bed by candlelight, the windows carefully blinded with thick blue paper and hermetically closed. The solemn descent to the safe and mysterious regions of a coal-cellar, led by our three cats, their tails held high, anticipating a rich mouse hunt in the dark. Mother and servants, their faces wearing strained expressions, would follow.*

*My father, the retired General Ion Perticari, who had graduated from Fontainebleau, one of the three top military academies in France, would take no part in this procession. Wearing a dressing gown over his pyjamas, he would stand outside, in the dark, deserted street, eying the sky where search lights clumsily followed enemy planes...”<sup>7</sup>*

Ioana Perticari had a new governess, a Swiss girl she loved a lot but who proved later to be a German spy who found out from the Perticari family a lot of details about the Romanian Royal Family.

<sup>6</sup> Ioana Perticari writes “Roumania”, “Roumanians” etc.

<sup>7</sup> Ioana Perticari, *Souvenirs* (1950), unpublished typewritten text, with 10 handwritten pages, Archive of princess Irina Ghica Cantacuzino (Deniau), 3.

*“During, perhaps, the third week of this new, uncertain life, my governess arrived. A charming, fair-haired girl, who presented the most excellent credentials...and a Swiss passport. Later she proved to have been a German spy and used to search my mother’s desk and open her letters. Our dinner table conversation must unwittingly have provided much information to the enemy, for example the where-abouts of the Royal Family, whose changes of residence were kept secret as a precaution against enemy attack. To me, this bogus Swiss miss was a delightful playmate.”<sup>8</sup>*

In September 1916, as the enemy approached Bucharest, Ioana Peticari left towards Moldavia.

*“Very quickly the situation became worse. The enemy drew nearer to Bucharest and women and children were evacuated. Priceless ancestral jewels and valuable collections of objets d’art were sent to Moscow, the temporary capital of our unreliable neighbor, the Russian Empire. At that time there was no thought of the Russian Revolution. Our Royal Family and the Romanian government trusted Russia with the Royal and National treasures. Nothing returned. The Bolsheviks robbed us of this handy booty in 1917–1918.*

*One day in September 1916, my governess and I were packed off to a safer region of the country, the province of Moldavia, yet untouched by war. We were accompanied by father, now on his way to Italy, one of the Western European allied countries, to which he had been sent on a special mission by His Majesty the King. Romania was now completely cut off from her allies in the west and it took him two months to reach his destination, slowly making his way through Russia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and France. While we were still within our frontiers he left me at a small village station, where I was met by my uncle.”<sup>9</sup>*

Ioana was trusted to his father’s brother, Grigore Peticari (1861–1931), married to Maria Mavrogheni<sup>10</sup> and who owned the estate of Stoişeşti, near the town of Bârlad.

*“Father handed me over to his brother, Grigore<sup>11</sup> Peticari, asking him to take care of me in his absence and in case he should never return. A few minutes later the train pulled out and we were left standing on the platform,*

<sup>8</sup> Peticari, *Souvenirs*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Peticari, *Souvenirs*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> George D. Florescu, *Peticari* (genealogical tree). General Ion Peticari and Grigore Peticari had a brother, Dumitru (married to Marguerite Mauté de Fleurville) and a sister, Elena. More details about Dumitru Peticari’s career as a diplomat, in Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, “Din scrisorile personale ale diplomatului Dumitru Peticari”, *Analele Ştiinţifice ale Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iaşi (serie nouă). Istorie*, tom 60 (2014): 509–519. The sister of Dumitru Peticari’s wife, Mathilde Mauté de Fleurville, was married to Paul Verlaine, the French poet.

<sup>11</sup> Ioana Peticari writes “Gregory”.

*staring at many clattering carriages until we could no longer distinguish Father's white head at his window. We drove to my uncle's country house, and I felt miserable, as one does in nightmares. Fortunately, it was so late when we reached his home that there was nothing else to do but go to bed and escape from sorrow into sleep.”<sup>12</sup>*

But Ioana learns to love her uncle's manor and her exile seems less sad. She writes charming portraits of her uncle (a typical old fashioned country aristocrat), aunt, and she doesn't forget their 40 dogs and their eagle. A very interesting character is Maria Mavrogheni-Perticari's mother, Eufrosina, the sister of Metropolit Calinic Miclescu, a lady of 93, with strong but obsolete convictions in the given context.

*“My uncle's estate was a sunny, patriarchal, and happy-go-lucky old Moldavian country place. The village lay at its feet with the houses of the peasants dotted over the land like hundreds of mushrooms.*

*The villagers referred to my uncle's house as the Squire's Court. This description became every year less in keeping with the amiably decrepit old walls staggering under their burden of uncontrolled virginia creeper, the wild garden, and the vanishing fences. One by one, every fence post had been carried away and burned in the peasants' fireplaces, until nothing separated the greedy village boys and the old rotting apple trees. An imaginary magic ring was said to keep trespassers out...but its spell worked only during the day.*

*Architecturally nondescript, built in the shape of several streetcars joined together, long, and low, with endless corridors, this Moldavian home was to me a place of enchantment.*

*There were no other children in my uncle's household, his own having grown up long ago and founded new homes. I spent days in the attic discovering their forgotten toys, remnants of past hobbies or vanished fancy ball dresses, left to the mercies of generations of mice and small owls, which had nested and frolicked among these shadows. I was like a miniature archeologist, who discovers a lost civilization, as I rummaged through the breezy, dim garret and brought sleeping treasures back to life for my personal use.*

*Uncle Grigore, my guardian, was usually away from his country home. I remember wistfully watching him depart in his carriage, accompanied by his favorite fox terrier, for a neighboring town where he said he had «business to attend to». He enlivened his life, that of a gentleman farmer, with these visits to surrounding provincial towns where his many friends waited for him. There in mellow, semi-oriental idleness he spent many hours at his club discussing politics and world affairs or gambling.*

*He was an intelligent, well-read man with a quick wit and a great love of living. To me he was a hero, but the kindly image I held of him became*

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<sup>12</sup> Perticari, *Souvenirs*, 4–5.

*somewhat marred in later years when I overheard conversations at home between my mother and her friends. It seems my Uncle Grigore was the family's «black sheep of mangy character». His education and up-bringing in Switzerland and France, was, the family whispered, all wasted on him. He never achieved anything «useful». He never achieved anything which benefited his country. His was a carefree, peaceful life of leisure and enjoyment. A great connoisseur of wines and French cooking he lavishly entertained a small crowd of «not too brights», as we used to call them. Fascinated by his worldliness they gathered about him as moths about a flame.*

*He always wore a goatee and a long stiff mustache which almost reached his high starched collar. With his high collar, broad tie, and redingote, he recreated the well-known image of Napoleon III. Pictures of the foreign Monarch could be found in many Romanian homes as he had done much to help achieve our country's independence since 1848, supporting the union of our two provinces, Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859. In the innocence of my eight years, I could scarcely tell the French Emperor from my carefree, jolly, Uncle Grigore.*

*He had forty dogs, who daily devoured a mountain of corn meal and were neither useful nor handsome, but like every other living thing around, they had personality and independent lives, each one according to his nature and atavism. The collie, whose mother had been a Russian Borzoi, stole away at night and killed lambs on the sly, but lay quietly all-day playing nursery dog to me.*

*In the middle of the back yard stood a great iron cage containing a captive eagle. He ate raw meat once a day and I would spend countless hours in front of his cage, perhaps trying to guess his thoughts.*

*My aunt Maria nee Mavrogheni lived a life of her own, between her piano and her sitting room in which she wrote endless letters to friends and relatives whom she had not seen for the last fifteen or twenty years. A chain smoker, she carried on this correspondence in a cloud of smoke from the self-rolled cigarettes which were never out of her hand. Old and very fat, she sat at her desk, singing, and whistling to herself between puffs. Sometimes she composed charming little fables or verses calling for 18th century musical accompaniment. These she wrote down neatly on the back of some answered letter and like a kind fairy put them on my plate at the dinner table.*

*The pale personalities which often represent «characters» today suffer poor comparison with the great uncles and aunts whose peculiarities haunted my childhood. Vividly individual eccentrics of a generation now relegated to dusty history.*

*Of this brigade was Aunt Maria's mother.<sup>13</sup> Ninety-four years old, crippled, and confined to her armchair, she never left her room. This small apartment was an incongruous mixture of a chapel and a pet-shop. Odors which revealed the presence of a discreetly hidden Chaise percée, blended*

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<sup>13</sup> Eufrosina Miclescu, married to Scarlat Mavrogheni, the sister of Calinic Miclescu, Metropolit of Moldavia and then Ungro-Vlahia.

*with the heavy fumes of burning incense. Under her bed stood an old hat box, the grave of discarded lace bonnets among which her German dachshund found refuge from her three cats.*

*Every Sunday the village Priest, having said Mass in church, came to repeat it in her room, undaunted by the fact that she was stone deaf. As he swung the silver censer towards the east, a ritual of the Greek Orthodox church, she bent her old lace capped head, crossing herself fervently. She knew every word of the service by heart and found great consolation to her solitude in the Holy Man's presence and the fumes of incense.*

*In this remote corner of Romania, events and political passions had halted two generations earlier. The dear, deaf great-grandmother, in whose heart the sympathies of her youth were still very green, suspected our Russian (though Imperial) allies and refused to believe that a civilized Western power could be our foe. She therefore offered thanks to God every time the German army drove back the Tzar's legions on our Romanian battlefields. Nobody could persuade her to pray for a victory in which Russia had her share. She has been dead for the last thirty years, but her convictions seem to have outlived her and today she would not be made fun of, as in 1916."<sup>14</sup>*

In November 1916, the war front got closer and Ioana Peticari could see countless refugees.

*"It was November, a crisp, cool month the days of which were spent on long country walks with my Governess. Close at our heels followed half a dozen dogs who came with us in the hope of chasing hares or stray pigs. The dull sound of artillery at a great distance was now always in the background as the reality of war drew closer. My uncle's estate was no longer remote from the battlefields.*

*Refugees from the Southern Provinces began to make their appearance closely packed into dilapidated horse drawn carriages, which staggered along like weary caravans. Often wearing their best clothes, furs or even gandy hats, now covered with mud, these tragic figures were mostly women with tired, crying children, accompanied by aging servants. They had fled from their homes in a hurry and in their bewilderment had chosen at random among their belongings the disparate valuables which they now carried or wore. They brought with them frightening news and a sense of imminent disaster."<sup>15</sup>*

Ioana's mother, Elena Peticari (who had been in Bucharest as a Red Cross voluntary nurse), decided to move with her daughter in Iași, the crowded war capital. Ioana Peticari recalls the horrors of refuge.

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<sup>14</sup> Peticari, *Souvenirs*, 5–8.

<sup>15</sup> Peticari, *Souvenirs*, 8–9.

*“My mother<sup>16</sup> arrived in one of the last over-crowded trains that came through. The Germans had now occupied Bucharest.*

*The Government and Royal Family, who for us all embodied the soul of our country, pitched a temporary tent in Iași.<sup>17</sup> This old city became the capital of free Romania whilst the war lasted. Mother fearing to be cut off from our only source of protection and from a vital centre, decided to take both my governess and me and move to Iași.*

*After a long journey we arrived, at last, during Christmas, only to find the town so overcrowded with refugees of every description, that we had to spend three days in a train carriage before finding a room and bed.*

*After great effort, at exaggerated cost we finally rented three empty rooms in an old-fashioned house without running water or the slightest modern improvement. Making use of old boxes and discarded pieces of broken-down furniture we managed to build four beds and a dining room table. As more relatives, escaping from the rapidly advancing Germans, joined us, we created two extra cots and thus, six persons lived for two years in three tiny rooms. Cousins who dropped in from the front, on a twenty-four-hour leave, slept on the floor or the dining room table and called it a restful change from the trenches.*

*My mother worked in one of the largest hospitals, a converted college. Although every large public building was used, there was insufficient space for the increasing arrivals of sick and wounded. Two or three patients shared the same bed.*

*Typhus and every brand of war poisoning ravaged the army and civilian population. Vermin was everywhere and epidemics rapidly spread. Even sitting on a bench in a park was unsafe, the town being full of Russian and Romanian soldiers who, weary and covered with lice, slept on benches, sidewalks, or doorsteps, leaving vermin where they had lain.*

*The cold, cruel blizzards of our first winter at war struck us and the snow piled high throughout Moldavia, cramping the vital arteries of transport and supply.*

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<sup>16</sup> Handwritten addition by Ioana Perticari to the typewritten text: *My mother had chosen to stay behind in Bucharest where she utterly dedicated herself to hospital work as a Red Cross voluntary nurse. The Army Hospital was overcrowded and under-staffed. Having however promised my Father that she would not allow herself to become cut off from me, should the German armies break through, she now reluctantly abandoned the Capital and her generous activities. (...) very downhearted, mother joined me at uncle's country place. (...) My mother was soon able to resume hospital work in Iași, under very difficult conditions. She even contracted dysentery, one of the ravaging plagues of World War I. We nearly lost her. My young cousin, a refugee from Bucharest, like ourselves, caught Typhus and caused panic in our ranks! But he recovered and, in our house, the two dreaded infections did not spread. (...) To my Father, separated from his Country and family by many lands at war, receiving official bulletins but hardly any news from us, the fate of Romania seemed completely hopeless, and he often believed that Mother and I had perished, one way or another. From a distance, things must have seemed even worse than they were... or were we (the adults I mean) clinging to unrealistic hopes of salvation even when the Russian front collapsed and Romania “went under” the German military occupation after fierce but absurdly uneven fighting.*

<sup>17</sup> Ioana Perticari writes “Iassy”.

*Trains were unpredictable, unheated, and often delayed for days. Soldiers and civilians crowded into them, on top of them or hung like clusters of ants along the steps of overflowing carriages. Passengers who had frozen to death during the long journey were unloaded at the station and piled up, like timber, on the platform. That winter thousands of human beings died of cold. Many just fell off those nightmare trains, unable to cling on with frozen hands.*

*By now nothing seemed incredible. Moldavia's food supply was too small for the great increase in population...army and refugees...and we seldom had bread. In this land of wheat and corn we ate a greenish loaf, moist and sour, made of peas, bitter corn flour, with now and then, an accidental addition of straw or shreds of sacks. For us children it seemed a great joke when we pulled bits of string out of this horrible mixture."<sup>18</sup>*

Ioana Peticari praises Queen Marie, General Berthelot, but also colonel Joe Boyle, who saved another group of Romanian refugees.

*"During those bleak years of refuge in Iași, the Royal Family played an important part in keeping up our country's faltering morale. Queen Marie, the unflinching granddaughter of Queen Victoria, refused to accept the possibility of a German victory and the enslavement of Romania. (...) From the beginning of the war until the armistice, Queen Marie could be seen wearing her white nurse uniform, her starched white veil framing her face. She was such a familiar figure in the hospitals and on the battlefields that her unannounced visits were no longer a surprise. At the front, anxious Generals tried to persuade her that it was dangerous for her to walk to the trenches, her white uniform an obvious target for the Germans (...)."<sup>19</sup>*

Elena and Ioana Peticari returned to their home in Bucharest in the autumn of 1918. Ioana Peticari's testimonial is of great historical interest, due to the position of her family. The author has a privileged perspective, as the daughter of a senior officer of the Romanian army, sent by King Ferdinand on a military mission to Italy and of a lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie of Romania. It is a testimony of a woman who kept her childhood memories of war and refuge and who transmitted them through a writing that deserves to enter the circuit of historical research about the fate of civilians during World War I. It is also a text written with talent and I hope the family will decide one day to publish it in its entirety.

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<sup>18</sup> Peticari, *Souvenirs*, 9–11.

<sup>19</sup> Peticari, *Souvenirs*, 11–12.