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A BRAVE COATIAN MILITARY CHAPLAIN: FR. MIJO JURIĆ IN 1915–1918

Miha ŠIMAC, Ljubljana

Based on the recently discovered documents in the War Archives in Vienna, the paper thoroughly presents the life of a well-known Croatian priest Mijo Jurić (1883–1961) in the course of the period during the First World War. Mijo Jurić, whose work and operation during the aforementioned war have been vaguely described until now, was first faced with war as a young chaplain in Pakrac. No later than at the end of 1914, he was named a military chaplain of reserve status by the military authorities. He was mobilised in February 1915 and assigned to the Croatian Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 25. Due to his commitment, he soon gained admiration and respect by soldiers and officers. He did not hide in the background but rather joined the soldiers in their misery in the first lines of trenches, where he comforted them and provided pastoral care, which was the main mission of military chaplains. His efforts were too strenuous; therefore, he fell ill at the beginning of 1916. He was treated in various hospitals, then he returned to the front, continuing his work in the Honvéd Infantry Regiments No. 26 and 27. Regardless of his location, he gained the trust of the soldiers and the respect of the officers. Moreover, he was awarded different medals for bravery by the authorities. At the end of the war, he served at the Italian front, from where he returned home and made a good impression on people, regardless the location of his work and operation.

KEY WORDS: *Mijo Jurić, military chaplain, World War I, Honvéd Infantry Regiments No. 25, 26 and 27, pastoral care, War Archives in Vienna*Introduction.

Introduction

In 2011, a book by Stjepan Kožul on family Jurić from Stari Pavljani was published in Zagreb.¹ Among other important people from this lineage, the author also presents Mihael (Mijo) Jurić, a priest who was known as a patriot and someone who tried to do his best for people's wellbeing regardless their political, religious, or national belonging. In the

¹ Stjepan KOŽUL, *Znameniti Jurići porijeklom iz Starih Pavljana kod Bjelovara*, Zagreb, 2011.

aforementioned book, the description of Jurić's life includes information that he was a military chaplain during the First World War, but there is no other data on his life and work during the First World War (WWI) in the Armed Forces. In Croatian literature, there is no overview of military clergy during that period, therefore it was necessary to carry out a research on Jurić's work and operation in archival records and documentation in the War Archives in Vienna. Its fond the Apostolic Field Vicariate (ÖSTA/KA, AFV) contains 281 boxes of files on its operation throughout history. I focused on the records and documents relating to the operation of the military vicariate and military clergy during the First World War, especially on pastoral reports (Ktn. 215–247). I also took into consideration *Qualifikationslisten*, a fond of military personnel records on officers and military clergy.² There is also a special archival fond comprising recommendations for military honours and awards (*Belohnungsakten*) in the Armed Forces helping us to determine where, when, and why someone was decorated.³ Mijo Jurić was awarded several times. It was especially surprising to find a few manuscripts that were dedicated to him among the documents in the archival files. All things considered, based on the comprehensive archival records and documents in the War Archives in Vienna, the present paper presents newly discovered data on Mijo Jurić, a prominent Croatian personality, trying to supplement his extensive biographical presentation with the information on his life during the WWI, which has been published for the first time.

1. Mijo Jurić and the Military Clergy in the Habsburg Armed Forces

Mijo (Mihael) Jurić was born on September 27, 1883, in Stari Pavljani. As stated by Stjepan Kožul, he was named Mijo after his grandfather – this was his official baptismal name. Later, especially during the emigration, Mihael was used, but his friends and fellow priests called him Miško. He went to school in Bjelovar and Zagreb, where he decided for the priesthood and entered the seminary. He was ordained on March 21, 1909, and on April 13 he performed his First Mass in Nevinac. At first, he was a chaplain in Novigrad Podravski and later in Pakrac, where he served at the beginning of WWI. In 1915, he was mobilised and worked as a military chaplain of reserve status in the Croatian units.⁴ Several articles have been written about the priest Mijo Jurić,⁵ as stated by Kožul, but it seems that none of them focused on the times of WWI, even though he was a relatively well-known person at the time and was mentioned both in newspapers and by individuals in their diaries. In his book, Kožul provided only a scarce information that Jurić was a military chaplain in the Armed Forces of Austria-Hungary since 1915.

In order to better understand Jurić's work and operation at that time, a brief description highlights the development and organization of the military clergy in the Habsburg

² A short introduction of the fond Qualifikationslisten, available online, URL: <https://www.archivinformationssystem.at/detail.aspx?id=3064> (last accessed on February 10, 2020).

³ A short introduction of the fond Neue Belohnungsakten (NBA), available online, URL: <https://www.archivinformationssystem.at/detail.aspx?id=4655> (last accessed on February 10, 2020).

⁴ Adapted from: Stjepan KOŽUL, *Znameniti Jurići porijeklom iz Starih Pavljana kod Bjelovara*, Zagreb, 2011, pp. 154–160.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 161, footnote 200.

Armed Forces. The organization of spiritual care in the army gradually developed over time – it started when the first military vicar in the Imperial Army was appointed in the 16th century, continued with the establishment of the Apostolic Field Vicariate in 1773 and concluded with the dissolution of the Double Monarchy. In 1868, the reorganization of the state into the Double Monarchy had some influence on the organization of spiritual care in the Armed Forces, e.g. it abolished the office of the regiment military chaplain and thus ceased the personal contact between the military chaplain and the soldier.⁶ Military clergy was at that point reorganized into 17 military districts.⁷ Moreover, military chaplains were divided into active and reserve ones with the rank of officers. Despite the changes, organised spiritual care as such was never abolished. Furthermore, they redefined their attitude towards the representatives of other religions, which had their own military priests at the time. In 1882, after the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, military imams joined Catholic, Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Protestant military chaplains, in order to provide spiritual care to Muslims in the Imperial Army.⁸

The only exception in the army were Jewish rabbis. During the peacetime, they were not part of the military and spiritual care of Jewish soldiers was provided by local rabbis.⁹ Namely, Article 2 of the military service regulations provided that: »Everyone needs to be enabled, if the service allows, to perform one's devotion and religious duties on time, because the fear of God is a foundation for honest life and inclination to a faithful fulfilling of one's obligations.«¹⁰ However, this article was not consistently adhered, thus soldiers could get into trouble due to the performance of religious duties.

The main responsibility of military chaplains was to provide spiritual care to soldiers. In addition to performing pastoral tasks, keeping registers, and writing reports about their work, military chaplains were entrusted with the task of strengthening the unity among the soldiers and enflaming their love for the Emperor and the homeland. At the beginning of 1914, military clergy was active in 16 military territorial commands, in military garrison hospitals, in the navy, and various military educational institutions and academies.

Priests who wanted to perform the military service had to fulfil a few conditions, and their language skills were also taken into consideration. Namely, to enter the active military clergy one had to, in addition to other requirements (a priest had to be younger than 40, he had to complete studies with good grades and at least three years of pastoral practice, etc.), speak at least one language of the Monarchy in addition to German.¹¹

At the beginning of the First World War, there were 186 (among these 141 Roman Catholic) military chaplains of active status belonging to all seven religions recognised by

⁶ Cf. Emmerich BIELIK, *Geschichte der k. u. k. Militär-seelsorge*, Wien, 1901, pp. 205.

⁷ Cf. Die Militär-Seelsorge, in: *Kaiserlich-königliches Armeeverordnungsblatt, Normal Verordnungen*, Kaiserlich-königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, Wien, 1869, 15. 1. 1869, pp. 2–3.

⁸ Ziad ŠEHIĆ, »Vojni imami u bosanskohercegovačkim jedinicama u okviru austrougarske armije 1878–1918«, in: *Godišnjak BZK Preporod*, 2006, pp. 309–312.

⁹ Cf. Fürstbischöflichen Ordinariat Laibach, *Laibacher Diöcesanblatt*, Laibach, 1883, Nr. 12, pp. 165–166.

¹⁰ Jernej HAFNER, *Slovenskim fantom za slovo na pot v cesarsko službo*, Ljubljana, 1914, pp. 32.

¹¹ Cf. *Dienstvorschrift für die Militär-Geistlichkeit vom Jahre 1887*, Wien, 1887, pp. 1–2.

the state.¹² Due to lack of priests upon mobilization, the authorities also mobilised military chaplains of reserve status who were on the lists of military commands, while many volunteered for the job. At first, there were too many requests and the authorities could not accept all candidates; later, realising that the war is going to last a lot longer than it was hoped, the requests subsided. Therefore, they had to include reservists and even local priests. Article 29 paragraph 4 of the Military Service Law from 1912 specifies that all ordained priests or those who worked »in pastoral care or pastoral service« have to be on the list of Home Guard Ersatz-Reserve and in the case of war activated »for spiritual care in the Armed Forces«.¹³

The replacement of military clergy of all seven religions recognised in the state was constant due to sick and wounded military chaplains, some were even taken prisoners-of-war. All mobilised military chaplains of reserve status or military chaplains for the time of war (*Feldkuraten auf Kriegsdauer*) were assigned a rank IX (*Rangklasse*), an officer rank of a Captain. When enlisted, priests received decrees and special authorization from the Military Bishop, which enabled them to provide spiritual care to soldiers under all circumstances and to administer sacraments, especially the absolution, also in those cases which were otherwise reserved for the Apostolic See or the Pope.¹⁴ Many were sent to sanitation facilities in the hinterland area of fronts or to the garrison hospitals, and also to the front. Mijo Jurić, a young chaplain, was assigned to a military unit.

2. Military Chaplain Mijo Jurić on the front line in 1915

A military document, held at the War Archives in Vienna, explains that Mijo Jurić was appointed military chaplain of reserve status at the Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 25 on December 1, 1914. However, the appointment itself did not mean immediate mobilisation into active military service. The priests were mobilised in accordance with the needs of the Armed Forces, and language needs that appeared in the course of the war. Thus, Jurić spent Christmas in his parish, where he worked until the end of February 1915, when he was mobilised into active military service. On February 25, he started his service at the Croatian Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 25,¹⁵ which was at the time part of the 42nd Croatian Honvéd Division of the 7th Army at the Russian front.

The fundamental task of military clergy of all religions recognised in the state was to provide spiritual care to the soldiers. In the *Pastoralblatt*, a Catholic military chaplain Dr Parsch defined spiritual care as care for the wounded and the dying soldiers, care for the dead, and a personal contact with soldiers. Moreover, their work comprised bestowing sacraments, preaching, celebrating masses, hearing confessions, distributing prayer books

¹² Cf. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖSTA)/Kriegsarchiv (KA), Ministerium für Landesverteidigung (MfLV), Haupt-Reihe (HR), Mil. Teil, Ktn. 2394, VII 23734–17, Standesnachweisung -über die Militärgeistlichen des k. u. k. Heer, vom Beginn des Krieges bis 10. November 1917.

¹³ *Državni zakonik 1912*, LIV, 422, available online, URL: <http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=rsl&datum=1912&page=446&size=45> (last accessed on September 1, 2019).

¹⁴ Miha ŠIMAC, »Vojaški duhovniki iz slovenskih dežel pod habsburškim žezlom«, *Acta Ecclesiastica Sloveniae*, sv. 36, Ljubljana, 2014, pp. 99.

¹⁵ ÖSTA/KA, Qualifikationslisten (Quall), Ktn. 1266, Jurić Mijo.

and other printed material.¹⁶ In addition, they were also required to carry out various administrative tasks, keep records, etc.

A record entitled *Život hrvatskog svećenika u bojnim grabama* thoroughly presents work and operation of military chaplains, and also includes an insight into the life and work of Mijo Jurić. The anonymous writer noted down that the officers reported that during the first military conflicts when the unit was sent to Serbia, there was no military chaplain among them. On the explicit request of the regiment's command, one was sent there and that was no other than Jurić. He started his service with a Holy Mass on March 5, and provided the much necessary spiritual care to soldiers throughout the Galician campaign, especially after the bloody fighting at Krasna,¹⁷ Swaryczów,¹⁸ Łdziany¹⁹ and Galicia²⁰: »Započeo je svoje službovanje sa sv. Misom dne 5. ožujka kadno je od teških bojev kod Krasne, Swarycoz, Łdzanya duž cijele Galicije iznemoglu momčad krijepio vjerskom utjehom i vatrenim riječima držaho duh momčadi.«²¹

Between February 16 and 26, 1915, just before Jurić's arrival to the regiment, the units of the Croatian 42nd Honvéd Infantry Division were dealing with difficult circumstances (high snow, low temperatures, hilly wooded terrain) while penetrating the territory in the direction of Dolina (Ukr. Dolyna)–Stryj (Ukr. Stryi). They were constantly attacked by smaller groups of Cossacks. When the Russian rear-guard withdrew to the other side of the Łomnica River (Ukr. Lomnytsia), the Croatian Honvéd Infantry Regiments occupied the positions along the hilly ridge near the village of Krasna. South of them, the 6th (Graz) Infantry Division was stationed, and north of them, in the direction of Kałusz (Ukr. Kalush), the 36th (Croatian) Infantry Division. The Honvéd crossed the river Łomnica in the area near the village of Łdziany and started moving forward along the deep and wide valley of Łomnica, spreading from Kałusz to Jasień (Ukr. Yasen). The Croatian units occupied Roźniatów and immediately encountered the Russian troops occupying the heights surrounding the town of Dolina. Russians started counteroffensive, and broke through the positions of units of the 6th and 36th Infantry Divisions, thus the Croatian Honvéd was forced to retreat across Łomnica, back to the mountain ridge near the village of Krasna, where the division was located in the first days of March 1915.²²

Shortly after his arrival, Jurić gained respect and reputation among soldiers and officers due to his actions during the battle in March, 1915, when he provided spiritual care to the

¹⁶ K. u. k. Apostolischen Feldvikariat, *Pastoralblatt für die k. u. k. Katholische Militär – u. Marinegeistlichkeit*, Wien, 1916, No. 2, pp. 5–6.

¹⁷ Krasna (Ukr. Krasne) – the village is in the Busk district in present-day western Ukraine, approximately 45 km east of Lvov (Ukr. L'viv, Polish Lwów).

¹⁸ Swaryczów (Ukr. Svarychiv) – the village is located north of Roźniatów in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast (region) of western Ukraine.

¹⁹ Łdziany (Ukr. Verbivka) – the village is in Roźniatów district in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast of western Ukraine.

²⁰ Place names in Galicia are written in the Polish language, since they were the official geographical names in Galicia at that time, while the names in the brackets or the footnotes are written in the Ukrainian language, since these places are now a part of Ukraine.

²¹ ÖSTA/KA, Apostolische Feldvikariat (AFV), Ktn. 244, 1915–1918. *Život Hrvatskog svećenika u bojnim grabama*.

²² I thank my colleague Klemen Lužar, a historian, for the detailed description of the positions of the 42nd Honvéd Infantry Division.

wounded soldiers and buried the dead, as it was written in the document in the Croatian language:

»Pred neprijateljem hrabar i neustrašiv. - Bilo je to u ožujku kod napredovanja prema Pužniki u Galiciji stupa pukovnijski duhovnik pod žestokom neprijateljskom vatrom sa cijelom pukovnijom pred nosmo neprijatelju odvažno in neustrašivo. Zaostaje isto iza pukovnije kad blagoslavlja dva pala druga in sahranjuje u (s svinčnikom: Mjesto između Pužniki²³ - Zabokruki²⁴). Pukovnija stupa u boj otvoreni, tjera i suzdržaje neprijatelja uz osjetljive gubitke kod Zabokruki. Dva dana, danju i noći iza brijega na pomoćistima vrši duhovnik tešku žalosnu zadaću, tješec ispovjedajuć teško ranjene i pokapajuć mrtve. Dne 19. 3. 1915 u Zabokruki posvjeda na dvorištu punom teških ranjenike, kad na jednom rasprne se teška neprijateljska granata u istom dvorištu do 15 koračaja²⁵ od duhovnika, na sreću nikomu se ništa dogodilo nije.«²⁶

After these events, the unit was relocated. The soldiers were sent to Bukovina where they arrived on Good Friday, April 2, 1915, and were attacked by artillery, therefore many died. During the Russian attack at the mansion, Jurić protected the flag, admitting he did not expect to survive:

»Na Uskrs imala je biti svečana služba Božja, za koju je stajao oltar priredjen i iskićen. Na Uskrs ranom zorom započe ruska bubnjarska vatra, a na desnom krilu kod strane pukovnije provališe Rusi i okrenuše našima u ledja i nastade borba od napred i iz boka. U dvorcu 600 m od glavne pruge bio je stožer pukovnije. U toj vatri i u tom metežu neprijateljskih granata i ljudi ponio se je duhovnik Jurić hladnokrvno. U zadnje vrijeme kad je sve izpraznilo dvorac i neprijatelj sipao vatru na uzmak i dok je zapovjednik pukovnije sa pobočnikom vani na polju izdavao zapovjed za shodnu obranu, dodje pred pukovnijskog duhovnika stjegonoša sa zastavom i reče: «Velečasni što će mo sa zastavom?» «Položi zastavu uz zemlju i vuci razi zemlje pa bježi nazad, ja ću za tobom.» Rečeno i učinjeno. Svećenik slijedi i štiti zadnji zastavu. Ogdledno se još kod dvora natrag, opazi na još veće zastrašenje, da su Rusi već u vrtu dvorca 60 do 70 koračaja daleko iza njegovih ledja. Požurio teški hod, sam tvrdi, da nije mislio, da će živ ostati od kiše puščenih taneta i strojnih neprijateljskih pušaka. Hladnokrvnost i odvažnost zapovjednika podpukovnika Turčića učinila je kraj ruskom prodiranju, jer je zaustavio i opro se sa momčadi proti napredujućom Rusu.«²⁷

Afterwards, Jurić frequently proved himself by persisting alongside soldiers in the trenches or by his engagement in the first-aid stations immediately behind the front line, where he performed his pastoral duties.

²³ Pužniki (Ukr. Puzhnyky) – a smaller hamlet near the village of Chocimirz (Ukr. Khotymr) in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, in present-day Ukraine. The place is located south of the town Tlumacz (Ukr. Tlumach), near which is the village of Tarnowica Polna (Ukr. Ternovytsya), where the Croatian Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 25 especially distinguished itself between March 16 and 18, 1915. – I thank my colleague Klemen Lužar for this data.

²⁴ Zabokruki – located east of the village of Chocimirz in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, in present-day Ukraine.

²⁵ »Koračaj« (German Schritt, English pace) was an official measure in the Austro-Hungarian army and it measured 75 cm.

²⁶ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, 1915–1918. Život Hrvatskog svećenika u bojnim grabama.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Religion was important to the members of the Honvéd Regiment No. 25 which also reflected in the efforts of officers and soldiers to build a chapel immediately behind the front line. As reported by the *Ilustrovani list* from Zagreb, the idea was first presented by Captain Rudolf von Matanić. On April 17, 1915, the construction of a chapel was finished ten paces behind the front line, and blessed on April 22 by the military chaplain Jurić, just before celebrating a Holy Mass. The mass was attended by the regiment commander, Lieutenant Colonel Karl Turčić, a few officers, and 20 men from each company. After the service, as reported by the *Ilustrovani list*, Turčić decorated 20 brave soldiers who especially proved themselves during the Easter battle.²⁸

Jurić's service records reveal that the chapel was destroyed during a Russian attack and later restored after the Croatian soldiers regained their position. The chapel was renovated by the members of the Third Battalion of the Honvéd Regiment No. 25 under the Command of Captain Sertić. They used the shell fragments and the remains of shrapnel grenades to make a censer, a water pot, and altar candlesticks. The chapel was consecrated on November 1, 1915, as it is noted down in the original document: »Posveta je bila javna i svečana 1. studenog 1915 a prisustvovao je i sam divizioner Fml. A. Lipošćak.«²⁹ Besides Lipošćak,³⁰ there was also Lieutenant Colonel Karl Turčić and other officers. At the end, the regiment's chaplain addressed all people gathered, emphasising that a Croat defends his King and home in the trenches and at the same time builds a chapel as a sign of his love of the living faith in God: »Hrvat domobran sa Bogom brani u streljačkim jarcima milog kralja i dom, a u isto doba, kao znak ljubavi žive vjere Bogu, gradi Njemu u čas dom – kapelu.«

During the consecration, Russians were bombarding the surroundings of the chapel, but nobody was hurt. Jurić peacefully continued his prayers, as if nothing was happening outside: »Naš Velečasni služio je mirno dalje, a mi smo svi mirno stajali i promatrali lice njegovo, koje je ostalo - mirno kao, da se vani ništa ne događja.«³¹

The author described the events and mentioned Russian attempts to take up the position on hill 458. He also presented a short episode that happened on Christmas Eve. On that occasion, the military chaplain Mijo Jurić prayed with soldiers, officers, Captain Sertić and the members of the Third Battalion. In the original document it is emphasised that God's blessing was constantly with them and they were happy. »Blagoslov svrši sa pjevanjem: Narodi nam se kralj nebeski - iz toga sve dobije zapovjed na borbu. Što se dogodilo. Naši kopajuć lagume nadišli na ruske polagače laguma. Kratko - za tren oka, bili su ruski dekungi i lagumi u zraku. Božji blagoslov pratio nas je doista sve vrijeme i bili smo sretni.«³²

²⁸ »Uz naše slike«, *Ilustrovani list*, no. 20, 1915, pp. 467.

²⁹ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, 1915–1918. *Život Hrvatskog svećenika u bojnim grabama*.

³⁰ Anton Lipošćak (1863–1924), a Croatian General, the last Militär-General-Gouverneur of Poland until the end of the war. For more, see: Glenn JEWISON and Jörg C. STEINER, 'Anton LIPOŠĆAK', available online, URL: <http://www.austro-hungarian-army.co.uk/biog/liposcak.htm> (last accessed on February 10, 2020).

³¹ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, 1915–1918. *Život Hrvatskog svećenika u bojnim grabama*.

³² *Ibid.*

3. The First Decoration

The regimental command was thrilled with Jurić's work and operation, therefore they decided to reward him. In summer 1915, Lieutenant Colonel Karl Turčić signed a recommendation for decoration – a Merit Cross for Military Chaplains, Second Class. A recommendation with a detailed explanation, which was written in the German language, is held at the War Archives in Vienna:

»As a regimental chaplain, he fulfils his duties exemplary and upon every occasion, with great self-denial and sacrifice. Almost every day he examines all positions of the regiment, encourages men with patriotic and religious addresses, reminding them of their duties towards the highest general and homeland, which is very successful. He provides consolation to badly wounded or dying soldiers and blesses the graves of the fallen ones, even in the front lines, since he is not scared despite hostile actions of the enemy. He is a skilled orator who lifts the spirit and combativeness of the unit. His records and papers regarding the unit are always in the best possible order.«³³

On August 1, 1915, the recommendation was approved by the Brigade Commander, and on August 7, by the Division Commander Lipošćak, and later by the Commander of the 11th Corps. Finally, on August 17, 1915, it was approved by the Commander of the 7th Army, the General of Cavalry Karl von Pflanzer-Baltin (1855–1925).³⁴

Afterwards, Mijo Jurić was decorated with a Merit Cross for Military Chaplains, Second Class (*Geistliche Verdienstkreuz 2. Klasse*). This medal was founded by the Emperor Francis II on November 23, 1801, to honour military chaplains for outstanding acts in wartime and meritorious service in peacetime. Merit Cross for Military Chaplains had two classes: gold (First Class) and silver (Second Class). The medal was made in the shape of a Latin cross, in the centre of the gold one there was a white enamel medallion and in the centre of the silver one there was a blue enamel medallion. Both were decorated with the same inscription: PIIS MERITIS. During the war, in 1916, it was allowed to wear the addition of a pair of gilt crossed swords on the ribbon to recognise a higher grade of wartime merit.³⁵ They later was also worn by Jurić.

4. Illness

The original document, which was written in the Croatian language, also reports on Jurić's health condition in January 1916: »U takvom zdušnom radu i revnosti obolio nam je velečasni Jurić i 19 odnosno 20. siječnja 1916 morade teško bolestan ostvaiti svoju pukovniju, koju je od srca ljubio.«³⁶ As can be discerned from the data in the note of his personnel record, Jurić was seriously ill (*Schwer Erkrankung*) and was sent for treatment on January 20, 1916. The document reveals that he was first treated in sanitation facilities in Czer-

³³ ÖSTA/KA, Offiziersbelohnungsanträge (OBA), Ktn. 51, Nr. 43. 270, Jurić Mihael, Fk. i. d. R.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Adapted from: Pavel CAR, *Slovenci – junaki avstrijskih armad in njihova odlikovanja (od 1757 do 1918)*, Signum Laudis, Ljubljana, 2017, pp. 310.

³⁶ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, 1915–1918. *Život Hrvatskog svećenika u bojnim grabama.*

nowitze, then in Kolomeja and finally in Zagreb. He was treated until April 1, 1916, when he resumed his duties at the Zagreb Replacement Battalion. Jurić performed his service until August 15 of the same year when he was once again sent to the front, this time as a military chaplain of the Honvéd Regiment No. 27.³⁷

At the time, the unit was part of the 42nd Croatian Honvéd Infantry Division, which fought at the Russian front. In summer 1916, the Russians almost completely defeated the division.

5. Mijo Jurić and the Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 27

Military Bishop Emmerich Bjelik³⁸ (1860–1927) often personally inspected the work of military clergy at the fronts and was well acquainted with the conditions in which the military chaplains operated. At the beginning of 1915, the order was issued stating that military chaplains have to prepare monthly reports on their pastoral work for the military vicariate. Detailed instructions for the preparation of such reports were presented in the *Pastoralblatt für die k. u. k. Katholische Militär – u. Marinegeistlichkeit* no earlier than in 1916, but chaplains had to start sending reports before that time. Among other data in their reports, they had to specify where and when they performed Holy Masses, and in which language they held the sermons, approximate number of people participating at the masses, the content of their sermons, questions regarding the receiving of communion, hearing confessions, etc. Military chaplains who worked at sanitation facilities had to answer additional questions, regarding the number of wounded and sick in the hospitals, their religious and national belonging, and the number of deaths in a particular month.³⁹ At the end of the report, a military chaplain could report about the difficulties he was facing, the needs occurring during his work to be more efficient, or the problems caused by local commanders or his colleagues. Therefore, reports were not, as written by the American historian Patrick J. Houlihan, simply a matter of bureaucracy but were rather a two-way interaction between a bishop and a priest.⁴⁰ Under the given circumstances, every bishop, tried to help the chaplains with either his influence or by sending them the materials they asked for (e.g. prayer books, paraments, etc.).

Such reports were also written by Mijo Jurić. Among the so far examined archival records and documents, a few of his reports have been found; one of them from August 1916, when he returned to the front.⁴¹ Data in Jurić's personnel record regarding his arrival into

³⁷ ÖSTA/KA, Quall, Ktn. 1266, Jurić Mijo.

³⁸ The surname Bielik is spelled differently in various sources, as »Bielik« on the book cover and as »Bjelik« in the archival records and letters he sent. Therefore I used »Bjelik« in the text and »Bielik« when referring to his book *Geschichte der k.u.k. Militär-Seelsorge*.

³⁹ Miha ŠIMAC, »Vojaske duhovniki iz slovenskih dežel pod habsburškim žezlom«, *Acta Ecclesiastica Sloveniae*, no. 36, Ljubljana, 2014, pp. 160.

⁴⁰ Patrick J. HOULIHAN, *Clergy in the trenches: Catholic military chaplains of Germany and Austria-Hungary during the First World War*, doctoral thesis, University of Chicago, 2011, pp. 83.

⁴¹ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 222, Iskaz [sic!] o vršenju duhovničkih posala kod 27. d. pj. p. za mjesec kolovoz 1916, Jurić Mijo.

the unit slightly differ from what Jurić wrote in his pastoral report for August, where he also presented his work and operation in the new unit.⁴²

The report on his short work and operation at the unit, when he tried to encourage and positively influence on the soldiers since they severely suffered during the Brusilov Offensive, was written in the Croatian language, even though the reports used to be written in the German or Hungarian language. As an example, this report is presented as a whole in the original transcription:

»Bojno dušobrižništvo kr. 27. sis. dom. pj. pukovnije.⁴³

Iskaz [sic!] o vršenju duhovničkih posala kod 27. d. pj. p. za mjesec kolovoz 1916.

Svake nedelje i blagdana služena je sv. Misa izmjenično kod svih /dvoju/ baona u rojnoj pruzi, kao i kod povoza.

Kod svake sv. Mise rečena je propovjed. Dne 18. kolovoza t. j. na rodjeni dan Nj. Veličanstva, premilost. Cara kralja Franje Josipa I. obdržavala se svečana sv. Misa sa uznositom propovjedi o štovanju i ljubavi caru /kralju našem.

Potpisani dušobrižnik posjetio je od svoga nastupa t.j. od 25 – do 31. kolovoza dva puta rojnu prugu i to 25. VIII. i 28. VIII.

Tema razgovoru: Pouzdanjen u Boga ustrajati na putu konačne pobjede.

Dne 27. služena je sv. Misa kod prvog baona u rojnoj pruzi. Prisustvovala je po mogućnosti momčad iz rojne pruge i pričuva od ½ satnije. Propovjed: Zahvala Bogu za dosadašnje ratovanje, i topla molitva da daljne pobjedonosno ratovanje.

Moralno: Čuvati se otemanja, razbojstva psovke i nemorala.

Boravište 31. kolovoza 1916

[podpis] M. Jurić,

dušobrižnik«

In September 1916, Jurić's duties were similar. On September 3, he celebrated two Holy Masses in trenches with the First and Third Battalions. Masses were also held on September 8, 13, 17, and 24, either several times or once at different parts of the unit. Besides, he daily celebrated a Holy Mass at the first-aid station. Upon these occasions, he preached about the soldier's faith, the cross and the soldier, the respect for Mother of God, etc. In the report, he also wrote that he encouraged soldiers along the front line: »Osim toga govoreno je i bodrena momčad ovaj mjesec po čitavoj rojnoj pruzi više puta.«⁴⁴ He was hearing confessions between September 7 and 10 and also on September 13. Afterwards, soldiers and officers received communion. According to Jurić's estimates, there were up to 500 people who received communion: »Pričestilo se do 500.« He administered last rites

⁴² ÖSTA/KA, Quall, Ktn. 1266, Jurić Mijo.

⁴³ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 222, Iskaz [sic!] o vršenju duhovničkih posala kod 27. d. pj. p. za mjesec kolovoz 1916, Jurić Mijo.

⁴⁴ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 223, M. Jurić, Bojno dušobrižništvo kr. Ug. Sisačke 27. domobranske pješ. pukovnije, Svećeniški izvještaj za mjesec rujan.

to the badly wounded and dying and buried them at the local cemetery, »na povisici« – on the slope east of the village of Sadzawa.⁴⁵

The work and operation of the military chaplain Mijo Jurić in this unit can be more thoroughly described on the basis of the contribution entitled *Ratna godina 1916–1918*, kept at the War Archives in Vienna. The unknown writer emphasised that the military chaplain proved himself with a thorough knowledge of a soldier's soul and knew how to address everyone: »Znao je govoriti svima nama takovom govorničkom vještinom, da je sve bez razlike vjere predobio za sebe.«⁴⁶ First and foremost, he was a chaplain who took the time to talk to soldiers, to encourage and motivate them as well as relieve the distress and difficulties. He never forgot to administer sacraments and celebrate Holy Masses with soldiers and officers wherever possible. Stories were told about some sort of a »miracle« that happened in his proximity. As he was hearing confessions of the First Battalion of the Honvéd Regiment No. 27, the enemy spotted their movement and directed cannons towards a group of soldiers. The bombing attack lasted more than fifteen minutes, but no one was hurt:

»Dobro su gadjali u samo mjesto, gdje je bila momčad sakupljena, ali bez gubitaka. Bilo je zgodno promatrati mirnoću momčai, kako prebiru krunicu i moleć uz velečasnog svoga, sasna sigurno. Važan je to momenat i pouka za sve ratnike.«⁴⁷

Jurić distributed literature, newspapers and leaflets among the soldiers and kept their morale high during the challenging times, which, as can be expected, was not according to everyone's taste. However, most of the soldiers liked him as did the inhabitants of places through which the unit moved. He especially strived for children and poor people he encountered on his way: »Dnevno si vidio stajati kupove ljudi seljaka i seljakinja, koji su čekali na pana oca Jurića, kad će se povratiti iz rujen pruge. Tada je nastupilo uredovanje - sud. Ovim jadnim ljudima znao je govoriti i tješiti u njihovom doista najtužnijem stanju. Goli i bosi jadikovali su ljudi po siromašnim kućama. On je ulijevao utjeho i nadu u tužna iskrvarena srca te sirotnije.«⁴⁸ The author especially emphasises the event on the »Christmas Eve of 1916.« All officers were gathered at the table, there was only one missing – the military chaplain. »A gdje je velečasni?' 'Otišao je u prugu.« Jurić went into the trenches to personally wish soldiers a Merry Christmas and returned no sooner than he had made rounds to everyone and reported to the colonel: »Pokorno javljam, da sam prošao cijelu rojnu prugu a i svima Vama želim od srca sretan i veso Božić!« The colonel and all the others were very happy to hear that.⁴⁹

Some of the joy and enthusiasm of the unit reflected in the recommendation for Jurić's decoration. The explanation was written in the German language in the first days of January 1917: »As a pastor, he is relentless. He is always in the front line, in the trenches encouraging people and thus having great merit for excellent morals of the unit. He is not afraid of

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, *Ratna godina 1916–1918*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

danger nor the effort to perform his service with exemplary meticulousness. He stands by every wounded at the first-aid stations and is a role-model of priesthood.«⁵⁰

Firstly, Jurić was recommended for decoration *Signum Laudis*, but the army command changed the recommendation into the Golden Cross of Merit with a Crown on the Ribbon of the Medal of Bravery (*goldene Verdienstkreuz mit Krone am bande des Tapferkeitsmedaille*). Finally, as can be discerned from the note in his personnel record (*Qualifikationslisten*),⁵¹ Jurić got *Signum Laudis* (*Militärverdienstmedaille*) with a pair of gilt crossed swords. This medal was founded by Francis Joseph I in 1890 and awarded in peacetime for meritorious service and in wartime for outstanding acts. The medal has the Emperor's image with a laurel wreath on the obverse and the inscription *SIGNUM LAUDIS*, surrounded by a wreath, half-laurels and half-oak leaves, on the reverse. The medal is surmounted by the Austrian (Rudolphine) crown. The Military Medal Merit is often referred to as the *Signum Laudis* after the inscription on the reverse of the medal.⁵²

Mijo Jurić performed his duties in this unit until March 1, 1917, when he was reassigned and sent back to his previous unit, the Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 25. However, he stayed there only for a while, until September 9, 1917, when he was again reassigned. As a military chaplain, he was allocated to the Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 26.⁵³

6. Military Chaplain at the Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 26

A document that is kept at the War Archives in Vienna under the title *Četvrta ratna godina 1918. godina rada duhovnika Mije Jurića kod hrvatske karlovačke 26. domobranske pješачke bojne pukovnije* includes the author's delight about Jurić's presence in their regiment: »Sretna 25. pukovnija, sretna 27. pukovnija, još sretnija naša pukovnija slavna lička, primorska karlovačka 26.«⁵⁴

In the aforementioned document, Jurić's incredible rhetorical talent to gain the attention of the listeners is emphasised: »Svaka riječ njegova jest ona iskra, što upaljuje umornog shrvanoga hrvatskog domobrana. Moć govora je takova, da diže, elektrizira i predobiva sve slušatelje za predmet o kojem govori.«⁵⁵ In his diary, the officer Stjepan Kolander noted down one of Jurić's sermons, addressed to the soldiers on April 7, 1918. On that occasion, Jurić talked about four years of heavy fighting, encountering difficulties, sadness, and hunger: »Sve te je ostavilo jadni domobrane, sve se na te sručilo. Tko se za Tebe brine, guraju te iz zaleđa na ratište, ne brinu se za Tvoje sirote, djecu koja su ostala bez svega. Jedino Svevišnji koji je isto sve to morao pretrpjeti noseći križ na Golgotu dok je uskrnuo ovjenčan slavom i Tvoji poglavari, časnici koji jednako s Tobom trpe i pate.«⁵⁶ Jurić

⁵⁰ ÖSTA/KA, OBA, Ktn. 166, Nr. 136. 452, Feldkurat – Katholisch Mijo Jurić.

⁵¹ Cf. ÖSTA/KA, Quall, Ktn. 1266, Jurić Mijo.

⁵² Pavel CAR, *Slovinci – junaki avstrijskih armad in njihova odlikovanja (od 1757 do 1918)*, pp. 258–260.

⁵³ Cf. ÖSTA/KA, Quall, Ktn. 1266, Jurić Mijo.

⁵⁴ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, *Četvrta ratna godina 1918. godina rada duhovnika Mije Jurića kod hrvatske karlovačke 26. domobranske pješачke bojne pukovnije*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Hrvatski povijesni muzej, »Stjepan Kolandar, Sa ratišta XIX«, available online, URL: <http://www.bezruma-nemasturma.hismus.hr/wwi/o%20kolanderu.htm> (last accessed on March 29, 2019).

also encouraged them not to lose hope and to faithfully entrust God with all their efforts in expressing their love of the homeland and all the difficulties they encounter believing that from their sacrifice a better future will rise. eHe He concluded his speech by saying that after gaining freedom, soldiers will know how to appreciate life, and live another one without evil and menace in their hearts:

»Naša prolivena krv, naše junaštvo mora da donese slobode hrvatskome narodu. Nakon povratka znati ćete cijeniti taj život, disati drugim životom, a neće zlo i opačina vladati srcima Vašim! Kao u onih, koji sve to vode.«⁵⁷

Jurić was not only an excellent orator but he also strived for all members of the unit, thus connecting Catholics and Orthodox soldiers in his own way:

»Pravoslavnu braću sljubljuje sa katolicima, to mu je djelo za pukovniju i za općeniti cilj, od neizmjerne važnosti. I uspio je. Pokazuje to štovanje napram njemu ne samo katoličke već i pravoslavne momčadi. Kad svakom zgodom svrši govor, ili propovjed, čuješ jednolične zaključke: Taj govori pravo, taj zna, toga mora svatko slušati.«⁵⁸

Even more than by words, soldiers were thrilled about his everyday deeds and his exemplary life, which resulted in strong support from the Colonel Slavo Stanzer. The soldiers and officers were proud of Jurić, because he provided good spiritual care, administered sacraments, and performed small acts of kindness: »Naša slavna 26. pukovnija ponosi se s njim a dao Bog da nam ostane svima na veselje i radost.«⁵⁹

The same box of files that includes the insights into the life of the military chaplain Mijo Jurić, also includes his report on the pastoral care in the unit from July 1918. The report reveals that on July 5, 1918, on the Saints Cyril and Methodius Day, the regiment attended a Holy Mass, celebrated by three military chaplains. In his sermon, the military chaplain Jurić addressed the gathered soldiers and officers emphasizing the faith of Slavic nations, especially Croats.

Two days later, Jurić held a Holy Mass at the Second Battalion and preached that in the end there is only the Holy Faith left. The mass was attended by about 150 soldiers and eight officers. On the same day, he also celebrated a Holy Mass at the First Battalion and regiment headquarters, where about 200 soldiers and 6 officers, including the unit's commander, were present. In the afternoon, he performed a ceremonial blessing at the Third Battalion, where he addressed soldiers and officers.

On July 14, he celebrated two masses on the same day. The first Holy Mass was at eight in the morning at the Third Battalion when he stressed that God is merciful but also just: »Bog je milosrdan ali i pravedan – pravda u svijetu.« At 10.30 am he celebrated a mass in Levic at the artillery (*Feldartillerie 5/42*). On July 21 and 28, he celebrated two masses with a sermon on the same day for the soldiers. He concluded his report with the following words: »Auser dem in der Woche Tröstung der Mannschaft jeden dritten Tag.«⁶⁰ Briefly

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, Četvrta ratna godina 1918. godina rada duhovnika Mije Jurića kod hrvatske karlovačke 26. domobranske pješačke bojne pukovnije.

⁵⁹ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, Četvrta ratna godina 1918. godina rada duhovnika Mije Jurića kod hrvatske karlovačke 26. domobranske pješačke bojne pukovnije.

⁶⁰ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 244, M. Jurić – Militärseelsorge des Kug. U. Kroat. H I. R. N. 26.

summarised report cannot reveal the entire scope of Jurić's pastoral care. However, it seems that this was the last month in which he provided pastoral care solely in this unit. Furthermore, this unit was no exception in trying to award Jurić with a decoration. On June 30, the regiment's command sent the authorities the recommendation to decorate the military chaplain Jurić with the Imperial Austrian Order of Franz Joseph. This decoration was founded by the Emperor Francis Joseph on December 2, 1849, as an acknowledgement for civil and military merits. The regiment's recommendation especially emphasised Jurić's brave and self-sacrificing persistence in 1918: »Several times he proved himself with brave and fearless persistence in front of the enemy during the fights at the entrenched positions at Monte Sisemolo since mid-February 1918. Particularly, during the attack on the enemy position at Capitello Pennar on 15. 6. 1918, where he personally, regardless of the strong enemy fire, consoled the badly wounded at the first-aid station at the square in Frenzella. He heard confessions, buried the dead and administered the last rites. He was an excellent role model for soldiers as their regimental chaplain and as an example of personal courage, therefore they fully trusted him.«⁶¹

The recommendation was supported by all superiors with words of praise and consequently, Mijo Jurić, a military chaplain of reserve status, was awarded Franz Joseph Order, *Knight's Cross* with Swords and War decoration.

7. New Post

The Honvéd Infantry Regiment No. 26 hoped that Jurić would remain in their unit, but it seems that he was reassigned in August 1918. Even though this data was not found in the preserved notice in his personnel record, which was written in the middle of March 1918,⁶² the discovered pastoral reports confirm that in August he was certainly no longer responsible only for the above-mentioned regiment. The report from August 1918 confirms that Jurić was responsible for spiritual care of marching formations at the 11th Army, or, as it is written in the stamp: *Verein Maform. D. 11 Armee Gruppe IV*.⁶³ In the report, Jurić noted down that he spent the first three days of August visiting soldiers of all three or four Croatian Honvéd units, which were part of the 42nd Home Guard Infantry Division (HIR 25, 26, 27, and 28). On August 4, he celebrated a mass in Predazzo for marching formations. On August 4 and 6, he held an evening litany and prayers for soldiers and also addressed them on this occasion. In the following days, he provided spiritual care to the soldiers, except on August 14, when he was absent, therefore a local priest celebrated a mass and provided pastoral care to the soldiers instead of him. Besides celebrating masses and administering sacraments, Mijo Jurić took time for personal conversations with soldiers about ordinary, everyday, social, financial and other issues of life. He frequently distributed books. Jurić concluded his report on pastoral care in August with a thought that all the enlisted Croatian men are obedient and loyal: *Resultat: Die ganze – alle – Kroatische Mannschaft ist gehor-*

⁶¹ ÖSTA/KA, OBA, Ktn. 369, Nr. 267.218, Feldkurat Jurić Mijo.

⁶² Cf. ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 1266, Jurić Mijo.

⁶³ ÖSTA/KA, AFV, Ktn. 245, Verein Maform. D. 11 Armee Gruppe IV, Pastoralbericht für den Monat August 1918, Jurić Mijo.

*sam und Treu!*⁶⁴ He emphasised the obedience and loyalty of Croatian soldiers also in the time when soldiers' revolts were increasingly frequent and many units strayed away from these ideals. This report has no date, but it had to be written and posted on September 1 or September 2, since it was recorded by his superiors on September 3, 1918.⁶⁵ Jurić awaited the end of the war at the Italian front, from where he returned home and continued his pastoral mission after demobilization.

8. Jurić's Life after the First World War

After the end of the First World War, Jurić was a chaplain in Šandrovac until 1921 and then the parochial administrator in Peteranec, where he experienced political pressure and court hearing. Namely, Jurić was known for his affiliations to federalists, who strived for the federative system of the new state and a greater degree of Croatia's independence within the framework of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Consequently, he was under constant police control and was even convicted in 1922, therefore the authorities demanded that Jurić should be reassigned. In 1924, he returned to Šandrovac and then he worked as a parochial administrator in Kloštar Podravski (1926–1937), where he organised a Eucharistic Congress. During that time, he actively collaborated with youth and children organisations as well as marriage support organisations. Wherever he worked, he established choirs and strived for beautiful and organised church singing. From 1937 to 1940, he served as a priest in the Parish of Donja Stubica, and from 1940 as a priest in the Parish of Peteranac, when the Second World War started. Mijo Jurić was mobilised on November 28, 1941 and he served in the army until May 1945. He was a military chaplain in Croatian Home Guard in Bjelovar and a teacher of catechesis at a local school («središnja oružnička škola»). He was enthusiastic about the Independent State of Croatia, but not about the new measures of the national regime and the German units. Jurić thus strived to save and protect people regardless of their religion and political affiliation. In 1942, he particularly proved himself, when he helped to save orthodox Serbs from the camps in Sisak and Jesenovac, the actions he reported himself. His school-mate Dr Ivo Andres (1883–1959), a well-known lawyer and politician, helped Jurić to save people. Nevertheless, after the war, Jurić's name was on the persecution list of the new authorities, but he left Croatia among the latter. Jurić first went to Klagenfurt, Austria, and afterwards, he helped the Croatian fugitives in the dioceses of Klagenfurt and Graz, in Innsbruck and Salzburg, where he died on January 29, 1961.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Based on recently discovered newspaper articles and other archival materials kept at the War Archives in Vienna, we can gain a broader insight into the work and operation of Mijo

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Adapted from: Stjepan KOŽUL, *Znameniti Jurići porijeklom iz Starih Pavljana kod Bjelovara*, Zagreb, 2011, pp. 154–160.

Jurić during the war years of 1915–1918, which have not been thoroughly presented up till now. New information on his work and operation, valuable information on decorations which he received during the war and recommendations written by his superiors are here presented for the first time. In those turbulent times, Mijo Jurić probably acquired the best experience to do well in the new state and the tragic circumstances of the Second World War as well as the time after it. The aforementioned archival records and documents illustrate the life and work of the military chaplain Mijo Jurić, reminding us of the comprehensive sources held at the War Archives in Vienna. Even though such military records are useful when there are gaps in parish and other registers (some of them have been destroyed), it seems that they have not been used or researched so far by the Croatian historians and researchers. Therefore the present paper is not only a presentation of life and work of Mijo Jurić, but also an invitation for further in-depth research on other military chaplains from the Croatian dioceses, considering the aforementioned fonds and files from the War Archives in Vienna, which have not been taken into account by the Croatian historiographers until now.

SAŽETAK

Na temelju nedavno otkrivene arhivske građe u Ratnom arhivu u Beču u radu se prikazuje život i djelo Mije Jurića (1883. – 1961.). Bio je vojni kapelan rezervnog statusa, koji je služio u različitim jedinicama tijekom Prvoga svjetskog rata, a zapamćen je kao pozitivan primjer i uzor brojnim hrvatskim vojnicima u habsburškoj vojsci.

KEY WORDS: Mijo Jurić, vojni kapelan, Prvi svjetski rat, Honvédske pješačke jedinice br. 25, 26 i 27, pastoralna briga, Ratni arhiv u Beču.