

ASPECTS FROM THE ACTIVITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL ALEXANDRU MANOLESCU, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE CROWN DOMAIN

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Abstract: Alexandru Manolescu, military carieer, was, over the years, physical education teacher at “Nicolae Filipescu” Military High-School from Dealu Monastery (1912–1916, 1922–1927) and, also, to the National Institute of Physical Education (1922–1927), under which he trained and led the military sportsman detachment, for the Inter-allied International Olympic Games, the Crown Domain administrator (15 februarie 1941 – 10 iulie 1942) and the Broșteni Crown Domain administrator, from Neamț County, whose owner was Prince Nicolae. He, also, was a member of the Military High-School Sportive Club, obtaining, at the national championships from 1915, the title of national champion in the discus throwing competition; a component of the athletics team of Romania, to participate to the Inter-allied Military Games from Paris, in 1919; president and honorary president of Ski Romanian Federation, and royal counsellor on sport matters and an active member of “«Nicolae Filipescu» Military High-School Friends from Dealu Monastery” Association, then president of the Leading Committee of the Association (May 1945).

For his entire career, General Alexandru Manolescu was decorated with several orders and military medals. We are therefore mentioning: “The Honorary Sign” – for 25 years of service; “Reward for Working in Education” – with the rank of knight; “Star of Romania”, with the rank of officer; “Star of Romania with Spades” – as knight, “Sport Cultural Merit” Order – as knight class I (1931) and the “Badge of Honour” – class I offered by the Sport Federations Union from Romania (1939).

Keywords: The Crown Domain, Alexandru Manolescu, administrator, activity, the first half of the 20th century.

The position of Crown Domain administrator was always filled by personalities with influence in the circles around the Palace. Among these, general Alexandru Manolescu (15th of February 1941 – 10th of July 1942), an experienced man with initiative, chosen by King Michael I, with the purpose of reviving the institution of Crown Domain, had only a short mandate, but proved initiative, making important decisions, in crucial moments.

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On addressing the activity carried out before the years spent as the Crown Domain administrator, most of the information was offered by colonel Constantin Chiper, in his work *Veterani în slujba patriei*¹. Thus, we have found that Alexandru Manolescu was born on the 25th of May 1885, in Sinaia, Prahova County, in a family of merchants, his father being, at some point, the mayor of the town. He attended the courses of “Sfinții Petru și Pavel” High-school from Ploiești. Captivated by arms, he registered as a volunteer, immediately after the finishing of high-school, in “Queen Elisabeth” Hunters Battalion no. 2, from Bucharest, advancing quite fast in rank, in the second year of military service, to the degree of corporal and then sergeant, being put in reserve on the 1st of August 1905. In 1906, he was a called-up reservist for two months, and at the end of the period of instruction, he was advanced as a warrant officer. In 1907, activating for the second time in “Queen Elisabeth” Mountain Corps Battalion no. 2, he took part to the repression of the peasant riots, and then he was put in reserve, with the rank of sub-lieutenant.

His military career began in 1909, when he enrolled for the courses of Reservist Officers School of Mountain Corps battalion no. 9 from Constanța, which he graduated with the degree “very well”². Shifted within the Infantry Regiment no.7 from Prahova, Alexandru Manolescu was remarked in 1910, as colonel Strățileanu was declaring, through “seriousness in the training of the subordinates”³. He completed the military courses by graduating the Infantry Officers Special School, courses that he also attended during the 1st of October 1911 and the 1st of August 1912. He was advanced in the position of lieutenant and, on the 3rd of October 1912, he was moved to “Nicolae Filipescu” Military High-School from Dealu Monastery, on the position of student pluton commander, also teaching physical education (1912–1916)⁴. A sportive person, Alexandru Manolescu was a member of the Military High-School Sportive Club, as mentioned in *Encyclopaedia of Târgoviște City*⁵, obtaining, at the national championships from 1915, the title of national champion in the discus throwing competition. Moreover, he was the first athlete from Romania, unregistered in a club from Bucharest, who became a champion, and, furthermore, the first sportsman registered in a club from Târgoviște, to obtain the title of national champion. The same source also unravels the fact that he was a component of the athletics team of Romania, to participate to

¹ Constantin Chiper, *Veterani în slujba patriei*, vol. I – *General de brigadă Alexandru Manolescu*, Ploiești, Buratino Publishing, 2005, pp. 63–65.

² Military school, founded in 1904, at Ploiești, and later moved to Constanța, in 1908.

³ Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁴ Neculai I. Staicu-Buciumeni, *Colegiul Național “Nicolae Filipescu”*, Galați, 2006, p. 9; Alexandru Manafu-Târgoviște, *Spiritul mănăstirean – punte de legătură între trecut și viitor (File din istoria Liceului Militar “Nicolae Filipescu” de la Mănăstirea Dealu)*, in “Eroica” – Revistă de cultură și de cinstire a eroilor neamului, year XV, no. 1–2 (37–38), Târgoviște, Bibliotheca Publishing, 2012, p. 15.

⁵ Gabriel Boriga, Honorius Moțoc (coord.), *Enciclopedia orașului Târgoviște*, 2nd edition, revised and completed, Târgoviște, Bibliotheca Publishing, 2012, pp. 300–301.

the Inter-allied Military Games from Paris, in 1919. Later on, he was appointed president and honorary president of Ski Romanian Federation, and royal counsellor on sport matters⁶. After the end of World War I, on the 1st of August 1918, he returned to his sport teaching career, at “Nicolae Filipescu” Military High-School, where he worked until 1922. Obtaining the qualification “very well” from General Lupescu, for the activity, the Minister of War proposed him for the transfer to the National Institute of Physical Education, led by Colonel Virgil Bădulescu⁷. Within this Institute, he trained and led, until 1927, the military sportsman detachment, for the Inter-allied International Olympic Games, also being graded “very well” by the director of the Institute⁸. In 1921, Major Al. Manolescu along with Lt. Constantin Petre Lazăr, organised a physical education course at Braşov, for the mountain corps officers, held in the rooms of Andrei Şaguna High-School⁹. Later, Alexandru Manolescu also graduated the Superior School of Commerce from Bucharest¹⁰.

The same as his brethren in arms of his generation, Alexandru Manolescu had the experience of the front line. The first contact was in 1913, when, together with his subordinates from “Cantemir” Regiment, no. 12, Bârlad, he participated to the military campaign from Bulgaria, until the 31st of August 1913, when he returned to the student platoon from the Military High-School. In 1915, he was shifted to “Queen Elisabeth” Mountain Corps Battalion no. 2, from Bucharest, “evidencing in the physical and fighting training of the subordinates from his platoon”¹¹. In World War I, Lieutenant Alexandru Manolescu was remarked, along with his subalterns from the 3rd Company of “Queen Elisabeth” Mountain Corps Battalion no.2, in the fights from Olt, from August 1916. As a reward, on the proposal of Colonel Penescu, the commander of the regiment, lieutenant Manolescu was advanced, on the 1st of September 1916, to the rank of Captain. Two months later, more precisely on the 1st of November, he was shifted to the Great Headquarters, and on the 1st of March 1917, to the Automobile Transport Corps, where he brought his contribution to the preparation of the military campaigns from the summer of 1917. On the 1st of September 1917, he was advanced to the rank of Major, and shifted to the first Mountain Corps Regiment, on the position of commander of the battalion, participating to the military campaigns from Oituz, until the 1st of June 1918.

In the following years he was again advanced in his rank, becoming: lieutenant-colonel (15th of February 1925), deputy commander of “Prince Nicolae” Hunters Battalion no. 1 (1st of April 1927), colonel (1930). On the 10th of May 1931, he resigned from army and was put in reserve¹². On the 25th of

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 65.

⁹ *Instituții, organizații și activități specifice*, available at <http://www.anst.gov.ro/documente/documente/115-164%20Specific%20Institutions%20and%20activities.pdf>, p. 120.

¹⁰ Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 65.

March 1939, Colonel Alexandru Manolescu was called up at Infantry Regiment no. 21 from Ilfov, contributing to the training of the troops for the defence of the country.

Advanced to the rank of brigade general, on the 3rd of October 1940, he was detailed to the Great General-Staff, and then shifted to Broșteni Crown Domain, from Neamț County, whose owner was Prince Nicolae, and where he continued to represent the interests of the prince, long after the demission from the Crown Domain Administration¹³.

The death of Adjutant-General of the Crown Domain Ernest Ballif¹⁴ allowed the appointing of Manolescu as general Administrator of the Crown Domain, a position that he held for a short period of time: February 15th 1941 – July 10th 1942¹⁵. The same as his predecessor, during the period of time that he had this function, he lived in Bucharest, at Central Administration Headquarters from no. 10 Basarabia St., having a net wage of 51,620 lei, from which: 30,000 lei basic pay, to which there was added 30,000 lei increase for expenses, and 9,600 lei rent indemnity. He was also registered to Pension and Aid Department of the Crown Domain¹⁶. The moment he accepted his position, the country was in the middle of the war, the great majority of the employees were called-up, the inflation was increasing, and the condition of the dwellers was a difficult one. Therefore there were needed measures that would reorganise the institution: the inferior staff had to wear a uniform, some of them a gun, and others not. In winter, they would wear hooded cloaks, the hat being replaced by a black-fur cap, on which there was applied a badge, also worn on the hat. He introduced the military way of saluting: “Să trăiți D-le... (Long live, Sir)”, with the palm facing outside¹⁷. It was founded *The Reunion Loan* fund, to which all the employees contributed with the net wage from a month, paid in 6 instalments¹⁸. Starting with June 1st 1941, he suspended the right to: provided housework, commons for the cattle, and also the wood fire that some of the employers enjoyed, in exchange maintaining the right for the land they did not pay taxes for¹⁹. On the same date, he appointed new heads for the departments from Mălini – general inspector engineer Alexandru Cristescu; at Borca – deputy-inspector engineer P. Voiculescu; at Segarcea – chief agricultural engineer Toma Busuioc and at Cocioac – chief forest ranger engineer Carol Iauerling (17th of May 1941)²⁰. By means of the memorandum, from the 14th of July 1941, he gave the families of the mobilized the possibility to pay their taxes

¹³ Central Historic National Archives, Bucharest, fund: Crown Domain Central Administration, file no. 189/1944, f. 70 (further quoted as A.N.I.C., Bucharest).

¹⁴ He died on the 12th of February 1941, la Bucharest, and he was buried at Iași.

¹⁵ A.N.I.C., Bucharest, fund: Crown Domain Central Administration, file no. 144/1942, f. 95.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, file no. 118/1941, f. 70.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, file no. 117/1941, f. 85.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 87.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 117.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 116.

within a wider period of time, even until the general demobilization, and the right to grazing field, in well-established locations, due to an exceptional arrangement²¹.

Among his priorities, there was also the convoking of a council on forest matters, at his headquarters from Bucharest, for the further forest planning²². At the Central Administration, he founded a forest department, led by engineer Carol Jauernig. In order to ensure a good collaboration, and also to become familiar with the field reality, between 3rd-4th of October 1941, he organised a conference of the heads of departments, in the headquarters of the Administration from Bucharest, who were invited to present a brief written statement, in which to present the main issues they were facing with²³.

A very important decision was represented by the appointing of a permanent doctor, for each Department, who would provide free of charge consultations, and would treat not only the staff and the workers from the domain, but also the dwellers from the area, being supplied with: a place for surgery, along with the necessary medicines. In the severe cases, the Administration would also pay for the cost that the nearby hospitals would require. The doctor, paid with a monthly wage of 5,000 lei, had the obligation to consult the staff free of charge, to provide home medical assistance, for the severe cases, and daily at the surgery from the Domain, according to an established schedule. The Administration would allow him to buy products from the Domain, under the same circumstances as for the employed staff²⁴.

Starting from 1941, at his initiative, the apprentices from the Domain's workshops were hired over a period of four years, with the following benefits: in their first year they would be provided with: dwelling, food, a suit of clothes and shoes; in their second year they had an extra monthly pay of 150 lei; in their third year they would obtain, besides what they had received in their first year, a suit of summer clothes and 300 lei every month, and, in the fourth year, the retribution would increase to 450 lei a month, and the right to be skilled as worker, and a yearly prize of 2,000 lei. The winter clothes were tailored after the uniform of the Domain, and the summer one was plain. The memorandum was provisioning that each Department would designate a maximum number of 10 apprentices²⁵.

Moreover, the financial situation of the employees was one of his main preoccupations. This aspect is clearly seen from the memorandum addressed, on the 7th of July 1941, the heads of the Departments, through which he would voice his concern on their future. According to his confessions, this concern emerged after the analysis at the Pension House made for the clerks and civil servants employed at the Crown Domain, from which it was noticed the insignificant quantum of the funds, insufficient for increasing the pensions, and the subventions

²¹ *Ibidem*, f. 121.

²² *Idem*, fund: Bicaz Crown Domain, file no. 315/1940, f. 201.

²³ *Idem*, fund: Crown Domain Central Administration, file no. 117/1941, f. 76.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 183.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 181.

were also not sufficient to consolidate these funds properly. As a consequence, he decided the mandatory registering, starting with the 1st of July 1941, at the Pension House, of all the Crown Domain's employees, who would be paid every month, regardless their length of service and the service that they carried out. In order not to affect their income, Alexandru Manolescu decided that, between the 1st of July and the 31st of December 1941, the taxes to be paid by the Crown Domain, from a special fund of the Central Administration, the employees being taxed for the 10% share, the amount of the tax, starting with the 1st of January 1942, a moment in which their gross wage would increase with 10%. From 1942, the expense indemnities were included in the basic pay. On the other hand, the rent, the shares, the housemaid indemnity, the money or nature payment were separated. In the same memorandum, there was provisioned the increasing of the pensions with approximately 50%. Moreover, in the regulation of the Pension House, there was stipulated a mandatory subvention from the Crown Domain, which would ensure the payment of the future pensioners²⁶.

New modification on addressing the taxing of wages occurred in February, 1942. Due to the fact that the 10% was insufficient to guarantee the future pensions, Alexandru Manolescu made the decision to increase the share of the taxes for the Pension House to 15%, and a quotation of 5% for creating a special savings capital "that would protect any clerk or civil officer in case of retirement, renouncing at the job, or dealing with some significant personal expenses", a quotation that needed to be paid through a 5% pay rise²⁷.

The social actions were also numerous. He helped the poor dwellers and the families of the called-up, but also the war widows, who were lacking the material means, offering, from the budget of the Domain, "a global amount of cash or other materials that you will share – that refers to the heads of the Departments – on due time, without any approval"²⁸. Starting from the 1st of June 1942, the invalids and the war widows, along with the local workers and the pensioners, benefited by significant price cuts, according to the memorandum from the 28th of May 1942. *The war invalids, the old men and women*, left alone, obtained a 75% cut for all the forest products; the right to graze a cow in milk; gratuity, for one year, for the chimney tax, in case they were not apt for working, along with food, of 200 lei, every trimester. *The war widows*, only the ones from 1941, were receiving: a 50% reduction for the forest products, a 25% reduction for the tax for grazing a cow in milk and they were expelled from paying the tax for chimney. *The local workers* had reductions of approximately 20% for the forest products, according to the number of worked days, or the transport. *The dwellers* had a 15% reduction, and

²⁶ *Ibidem*, file no. 127/1941, f. 271.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, file no. 140/1942, f. 394.

²⁸ Narcisa Maria Mitu, *Evoluția social-economică a Domeniului Coroanei Sadova după reforma agrară din 1921*, in "Arhivele Olteniei", New Series, no. 25/2011, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing, p. 113.

the pensioners and the civil officers on the Domain – 30% reduction for all the forest products²⁹.

In July 1941, the general adjutant Manolescu donated to the Town-hall of Bicz, from the Domain Administration: 21,035 lei and 213.39m² of fir-tree wood, for building the bridge from Mărceni, and 8,000 lei for paying the public lighting³⁰. He also donated: clothes and other necessary things for the employees' children; 25m² of timber for finalising the restauration of Slatina Monastery, from Baia County; 2,000 lei help for "Ordinea" newspaper, for a special issue on the Christmas Holiday; 500 lei for sustaining a festivity performance at "Casa Femeii", on the 20th of December 1941, for "Darul Oșteanului" organisation³¹. Moreover, the Crown Domain supported the Central Organisation of the Winter Aid for the families of dead soldiers, with 3,000 lei subvention; he gave 100 litres of wine from Segarcea to the Red Cross National Society, to be shared to the ill and wounded soldiers from "Queen Elisabeth" Military Hospital, during the Christmas Holiday, and 50 litres of wine, on the Easter Holiday; 10,000 lei for the Salvation Society and the Emergency Hospital from Bucharest³².

In August 1941, he imposed some restrictions for the staff working at the Crown Domain Central Department. Those who would buy food and products obtained on the Crown Domain Departments were forbidden to buy the same products, but using a ration card, from shops. In case of insubordination, they were imposed harsh penalties, including dismissal from the Crown Domain service, and exposure to the "severe law regulations"³³.

In the short period of time that he led the Crown Domain Administration, he also made some investments, their value reaching, in 1941, 33,131.401 lei³⁴. They also continued in the next year. In 1941/1942, there were made investments for an orchard, in the former roebuck park of Bicz Domain, founded in 1897–1900³⁵. In 1942, according to the order of Administrator Manolescu, from the 4th of July, the company W. Scharer from Bucharest arranged, in the park from Bușteni, a playground for children, with: 3 fir-wood rockers; 2 iron made merry-go-rounds of 8 seats each and 2 iron swings, of 359,300 lei³⁶. A sporty person, he organised a Sport Educational Centre, which could be used both in summer and winter, at Bușteni and Predeal³⁷.

On the 1st of December 1941, there was also opened the Model Farm from Periș that had a centre of guidance for the farmers, with the purpose to train "good householders and managers in their households"³⁸. The trainees were boys from the countryside, aged between 15 and 16, graduates of primary schools, perfectly healthy.

²⁹ A.N.I.C. Bucharest, fund: Crown Domain Central Administration, file no. 140/1942, f. 252.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, file no. 112/1941, f. 34.

³¹ *Ibidem*, ff. 46, 52, 79, 80, 84.

³² *Ibidem*, ff. 85, 87, 90; *Ibidem*, file no. 142/1942, f. 25.

³³ *Ibidem*, file no. 111/1941, f. 78.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, file no. 116/1941, f. 38.

³⁵ *Idem*, fund: Bicz Crown Domain, file no. 339/1946, ff. 6–10.

³⁶ *Idem*, fund: Bușteni Crown Domain, file no. 529/1942, ff. 235–237.

³⁷ *Idem*, fund: Crown Domain Central Administration, file no. 144/1942, f. 95.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, file no. 117/1941, f. 46; *Ibidem*, file no. 111/1941, f. 195.

At Segarcea Department, there was founded a centre for training the tractor drivers, with 10 students, providing them with the necessary tractors for studies and practice.

In case he would have still remained in this position, he intended to also organise a *centre for training the housekeepers* at Gherghița Department, and a *centre for training the rangers and foresters*, at Bicaz, that was supposed to start functioning from the fall of 1942³⁹.

Due to the misunderstandings between King Mihai I and Marshal Ion Antonescu, Alexandru Manolescu became a victim of the circumstances. The Marshal had transmitted the General that he no longer enjoyed the trust of the King. The King was dissatisfied with the manner he had been managing the Crown Domain. Facing this discontentment, Alexandru Manolescu drafted a report, on the 10th of July 1942, addressed to the King, in which he was trying to exculpate himself, but it remained without any positive result, his demission being accepted a day later, on the 11th of July⁴⁰. The King accused him of “too much initiative, completely uncoordinated with the expectations of a good management” and “too high and useless expenses”, without his approval. He was also blaming him for “demolishing the villas from Bușteni and cutting the forest from Azuga-Predeal for the sport organization”, and also “exaggerated investments that do not correspond to a real necessity”. Moreover, he was suspecting him of “drafting a regulation of the Domain law, in which he would arrogate himself rights against the Law, and tried to obtain, from the executive power, the confirmation of this regulation, infringing the rights of the Crown, consecrated through the law from 1884”⁴¹. Furthermore, his successor, Dimitrie D. Negel, confessed to Radu Rosetti that, after the death of Ernest O. Ballif, there was found the amount of 76,000,000 lei in the house, money that was wasted, on inutile expenditures, by General Alexandru Manolescu⁴².

In May 1945, Alexandru Manolescu became an active member of “«Nicolae Filipescu» Military High-School Friends from Dealu Monastery” Association, then president of the Leading Committee of the Association to which he would pay important membership dues for the expenses. He also attended the shows organised by the high-school⁴³. In 1947, he was put to reserve and, later, on the 30th of December 1950, he retired.

For his entire career, General Alexandru Manolescu was decorated with several orders and military medals. We are therefore mentioning: “The Honorary Sign” – for 25 years of service; “Reward for Working in Education” – with the rank of knight; “Star of Romania”, with the rank of officer; “Star of Romania with Spades” – as knight, “Sport Cultural Merit” Order – as knight class I (1931) and the “Badge of Honour” – class I offered by the Sport Federations Union from Romania (1939)⁴⁴.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, file no. 111/1941, f. 195.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, file no. 144/1942, f. 95.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² Radu R. Rosetti, *Pagini de jurnal*, edition supervised by Cristian Popișteanu, Marian Ștefan, Ioana Ursu, Bucharest, Adevărul Publishing, 1993, p. 217.

⁴³ Neculai I. Staicu-Buciumeni, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 103.

⁴⁴ Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-65; *Enciclopedia orașului Târgoviște*, p. 301.