

THE GREAT BATTLES ON THE EASTERN FRONT IN THE SUMMER OF 1917, IN THE COMMENTS OF THE HUNGARIAN PRESS IN ORADEA

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Rezumat. Marile confruntări din vara anului 1917 de pe frontul din Moldova, de la Mărăști, Mărășești și Oituz, unde, după refacere, armata română, prin lupte îndârjite, a oprit înaintarea inamicului și a obținut o strălucită victorie, a dus la eșuarea planului ofensiv al armatei germane de a ocupa Moldova și a da României lovitura de grație, după repetatele înfrângeri ale armatei ruse în Galiția. Victoriile românești au avut un amplu ecou în presa vremii, în țară și peste hotare. Presa maghiară însă, în speță cea din Oradea (cotidienele *Nagyvárad Napló*, *Szabadság*, *Tiszántúl*), optând pentru dezinformarea cititorului, vorbește doar de victorii ale germano-maghiarilor și de eșecuri ale românilor și rușilor. Rareori, printre rânduri, în expresii lacunare, exprimate evaziv și cu efect atenuant, întâlnim referiri la unele succese ale românilor.

Cuvinte-cheie: Frontul de Est, bătălii, presa maghiară, dezinformare, victorii românești

In the summer of 1917, the military situation on the various fronts became critical for the Triple Entente. On the Russian-Romanian front, the Central Powers' counter-offensive at the beginning of July led to the defeat of the Russian troops in the North, with the Austrian armies getting again to Galicia and Bucovina. In these conditions, the German commandment drew up a plan to remove Romania from the battle, through a concerted offensive of two groups of armies: one, guided by Mackensen, in the Nămolosa area, another one, guided by Gerock, in the Oituz area. According to the plan, the Romanian troops were to be caught in a huge pincers, destroyed, and Moldova occupied.

The succession of the military actions in the summer of 1917 generated three operations: the one from Mărăști (the *Battle of Mărăști*), the offensive operation of the 2nd Romanian Army; the defense operations of the 1st Romanian Army in the Mărășești area and the right wing of the 2nd Army in the Oituz area (*Battle of Mărășești* and *Battle of Oituz*).

The great confrontations in Mărăști, Mărășești and Oituz, where after the rehabilitation, the Romanian army, through fierce fighting, stopped the advancement of the enemy and won a brilliant victory, led the German Army's

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offensive plan to fail, to occupy Moldova and to destroy Romania. The Romanian victories had a great deal of echo in the press, both in the country and abroad. If the allied press, the politicians and the military have appreciated what happened in Romania to the right value, the adversary press (German and Austro-Hungarian), who dedicated to the battle at its beginning, long columns of detailed description of the „brilliant plan” of the Austro-German Command and Mackensen’s „hammering”, became, at one point, very discreet, eventually falling into complete silence. The German and Austro-Hungarian publications, so rich in the 1916 campaign, kept silence regarding the battle of Mărășești. A few lines, squeezed with indifference, like any other episode, is all what we find out about what it was supposed to be „the great breakthrough battle of Putna and Șușița”¹.

The Hungarian press, in particular that of Oradea (*Nagyvárad* *Napló*, *Szabadság*, *Tiszántúl*), does the same; more, opting for the misinformation of the reader, speaks only of the victories of the German-Austro-Hungarians and of the failings of the Romanians and the Russians (the headlines are significant). The comments are partinical. Rarely, in ranks, in vague expressions, elusive and mitigating, we find references to some Romanian successes. About the fights from August 19th, the newspapers did not write anything; They are canceling their comments on August 18th and resumed on August 23rd, in the same party note, maybe with a little attenuated tone.

The comments also highlight a number of other realities, such as: a) the failure of Russian military units and the fact that Mackensen relied on the low morale of Russian soldiers, trying to use it in his favor; b) From August 6th to August 18th, the German-Austro-Hungarian armies were in a permanent offensive, trying to give Romania a graceful blow to get it out of the war. The occupation of Moldova (the oil field Trotus valley), and then of South Ukraine was to provide Germany and its allies with the means to continue the war. To this end, important forces were concentrated here, using all the means to exploit the state of mind existing in the Russian army; c) the surprise generated by the Romanian-Russian offensive in the Mărăști area and the dilemma regarding the objectives /purpose of

¹ These are the memoirs of some senior German officers. If general feldmarschall Paul von Hindenburg only wrote „One of our later attempt to break the Romanian army from Moldova by an attack in Focsani did not succeed” the general von Morgen, the commander of the German 1st Rescue Corps, wrote in his memoirs, more detailed appreciations: „The resistance of the enemy, especially of the Romanians, was unusually dull and manifested through 61 counterattacks (on the front of Corps I) during the 14 days of struggle. They mainly led the fight with the bayonet. These caused considerable losses (for the Germans)...”. The general appreciation of von Morgen is of particular interest: „The August fights have brought us, rightly, a local success, but not a decisive one; they proved that the Romanians had become a respectable adversary. After conducting a six-month preparation behind the French front, they fought better and were more conducive, and infantry and artillery in particular co-operated more consistently than at the beginning of the campaign”. Constantin Kiritescu, *Istoria războiului pentru întregirea neamului*, vol. II, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1989, p. 134.

this campaign at the end of July 1917. We also find the inaccuracy of some assertions and weak knowledge of the area (incorrect names of localities and places), probably due to the fact that information is not taken from the front, but from the central newspapers in Budapest and Vienna. We can not notice the way of perceiving the other, the opponent, the air of superiority and sometimes the offensive tone regarding the Romanians.

Regarding the battle of Mărăști, the Hungarian newspapers in Oradea begin to report only after three days the start of the Romanian offensive. On July 25th, 1917, the *Szabadság* daily briefly states that „between the Siret and the Carpathians on a broad front, our troops are watching the retreating enemy”². It sprang with a wider commentary on July 29th, entitled „The Romanians started the offensive”, which lacked clarity for the reader: „In the South of the Carpathians, the troops of Ragoza and Averescu began the offensive, **occupying the villages of Mărăști and Voloșcani** (s.n. - I.Z). (We) took several hundred of prisoners and 19 cannons. This success is due to the skillful leadership and allied artillery. Tonight we pushed the enemy’s line on a wide front. The dedication and bravery of our troops was unbelievable. One of our mountain battery lost almost all of its crew, except seven people, who fired continuously until the enemy fires ceased”³.

So succinct, late and confused are the comments of the daily *Tiszántúl* regarding the battle. In the number of July 31st, 1917, under the title „We crossed the valley of Moldova”, it noted that „Several attacks of the enemy failed to the north of Șușița valley and on both sides of the Cașin valley”⁴. A brief information on the following day, August 1st, from which we find that „On both sides of the Cașin Valley, the enemy again attacked with great force. In the Northwest of the valley we countered the attacks, but **in the South they occupied our trenches** (s.n. - I.Z)”⁵.

The short and vague comments from both newspapers denote that the Romanian offensive from Mărăști was a surprise for the enemy. Evidence that in August 2nd, 1917, the day after the offensive ended, the *Szabadság* newspaper, under the title „The offensive of the Romanians”, made the following assumptions: „The purpose of the offensive is either to surround the left wing of the Mackensen army and attack it, thus, through the back, or to threaten the right wing of our front in Galicia. If any of the variants was successful, they hope they can stop us from advancing in Bucovina”. It added that a high-ranking officer expressed himself in the following manner about the variants of the Romanian offensive: „The crossing of the mountains would mean for the Romanians pure

² *Szabadság*, no. 167, July 25th, 1917, p. 4.

³ *Idem*, no. 171, July 29th, 1917, p. 1.

⁴ *Tiszántúl*, no. 174, July 31th, 1917, p. 2.

⁵ *Idem*, no. 175, August 1st, 1917, p. 2.

suicide. Only crossing would consist of many sacrifices. But if he would reach the Târgu Secuiesc depression, what could they do there? Here, on these monstrous mountains, could not be supplied neither with people, ammunition nor food. And for us nothing would be easier than the destruction of this isolated Romanian regiment”⁶. The revolt and the anger caused by the boldness of the Romanians are expressed in words as insulting as possible: „We must not fear the Olah’s aspirations. After the first bite we put them aside, but we can no longer let them keep us in place, we will not hand the victorious flag that anyone can read upon that the open and dedicated purpose of our victorious desire is: the liberation of Galicia and Bucovina”⁷.

The Hungarian daily newspapers in Oradea no longer provided the reader any other information about the Battle of Mărăști, or its effects. Only the unfavorable outcome can explain this silence, as time allowed it, the operations of Mărășești and Oituz began within four days from their last comment. To reconstitute the facts, we appeal at the documented work of Constantin Kirițescu. Deployed in the geographical area of the Vrancea and Zăbrăuțului depressions, the Battle of Marasti began on July 22nd, 1917, with a powerful artillery bombing of the enemy positions, after which the Romanian infantry attacked. The 3rd Infantry Division broke the enemy’s front, approaching the villages of Câmpuri, Roșculești and Ciuruc, which dominated the Șușița valley. A Russian army corps belonging to the 4th Army, together with the 15th Infantry Division of Romania, managed to conquer the Momâia peak. For the occupation of the village of Mărăști, strongly fortified and impossible to conquer by a frontal attack, a massive artillery bombing was carried out. Through fierce battles were conquered Plaiul Măgurii and Cornul Măgurii (on July 31st) and Măgura Cașinului (on August 1st). This was the end of the Mărăști fighting⁸. The Romanian troops have pierced the enemy’s front on a depth of 20 km and a length of 30 km. 30 localities were released, General Gerok’s army suffered a heavy defeat: 83 officers and 2.746 soldiers were taken prisoners, and 40 cannons, 30 trench mortars and 22 machine-guns were captured. The Romanian army had 1.462 dead and 3.052 wounded persons⁹.

The success of the Romanian offensive from Mărăști led to the change of the entire strategic plan of the enemy. Originally designed to run between Siret and Prut, the offensive of the 9th German Army, commissioned by feldmarschall von Mackensen, will move between Siret and the Carpathian elbow, heading Focșani -

⁶ *Szabadság*, no. 174, August 2nd, 1917, p. 1.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ The offensive was stopped due to the flaws of the Russian armies in Galicia, where the front was also broken in Tarnopol; the Russian soldiers refused to fight, evacuated Tarnopol, and withdrew on Siret river.

⁹ Constantin Kiritescu, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 78.

Mărășești-Adjud. It was supposed to be one of the arms of the nippers in which the enemy intended to catch and crush the Romanian and Russian forces, in order to be able to conquer Moldova. The second arm was made up of the Gerock Group, which had to start the offensive at Oituz. The occupation of Moldova and then of South Ukraine was to provide Germany and its allies the necessary means to continue the war. For this purpose, important forces were concentrated here, using all ways to exploit the state of mind existing in the Russian army.

The Mărășești fights started on August 6th. Unlike the previous episode, the Hungarian newspapers gave the readers the information from the very first moment of the German offensive. But they resort to a selection of facts, presenting only the favorable ones. Thus, in the number of August 7th, 1917, the daily *Nagyváradi Napló* in the suggestive article entitled „The Failure of the Romanian-Russian Offensive” mentions the violent artillery bombing with which the German Offensive began, and the fact that „in the Cașin area the enemy’s attacks did not have as a result other than its large losses”¹⁰, without any other detail. What can the reader understand but that he can wait calmly regarding the course of the war. The Russian flaw served precisely this propaganda goal. It is true that, following the virulent offensive on the morning of August 6th, the Germans had pierced the Russian front in the Putna valley (between Făurei and Biliștei), whereupon the 34th Division retreated in disarray. But the intervention of the Romanians saved the disaster. The 5th Division crossed the bridge over Siret to Cosmești, while the 8th Buzău Regiment crossed the Siret to Furceni and occupied Doaga. The battle of the second day, August 7th, marks a German success, but the Romanian front is not broken it only retires 2-3 km. Of all this, the newspaper does not remember anything. Instead, on August 8th, on the front page the headlines were „We defeated the Russians at Focșani”, accompanied by the explanation that „At the North of Focșani, on the lower course of Siret, the Prussian and Bavarian troops of Mackensen penetrated into the Russians’ positions. Advancement exceeds the importance of the local success, and long-term results will show up in the coming days. More cannons and hundreds of prisoners can be stocked as war booty”¹¹. At page 5, it was mentioned that the booty from Focșani counted „1.300 prisoners and 13 cannons”.

In turn, the daily *Szabadság*, on the first page of the number from August 8th, confirms the success of Mackensen on the Russians at the North of Focșani. In the comment, it just renews the events, to give the reader an overview of them: „A few weeks ago Romanians tried offensive actions in the area of Târgu Secuiesc. Over the course of a few **days they have also achieved local successes, after which their attacks were destroyed** (s.n. - I.Z.). Instead, now they have a surprise. We attack the Romanian front from two sides. In the North, to Moldova

¹⁰ *Nagyváradi Napló*, no. 179, August 7th, 1917, p. 5.

¹¹ Idem, no. 180, August 8th, 1917, p. 1.

submitted the troops of Archduke Joseph, and after the latest official news, Mackensen began the attacks from the South. The city of Focșani is the most important point of the South-eastern wing of the Russian-Romanian front, that supports on Siret river. On this sector, the defeated Romanian soldiers were replaced by Russian soldiers. The purpose of Mackensen's action is not known to us for the time being, but we will certainly turn our eyes towards this front if after the first day, the general will exploit the minimal success achieved. We believe that we are not wrong when we say that after the operations started by Mackensen, Romanians will have nothing to look for in the current positions, and about their advance in Transylvania they must forget for good"¹².

None of the newspapers has any knowledge, or avoid mentioning, that on the day of August 8th, took place The Battle of Pătrășcani (combined with the beginning of the Battle of Oituz), for the encirclement of the 2nd Romanian Army. The German main attack was given on the Russian front, held by the 71st and 13th Divisions, the Russians being defeated and the loss were considerable, including the villages Pătrășcani and Bitinești and they retreated in disarray on Șușița. As a result, the German front has submitted to the North of these villages.

Under the title „Entente is afraid for Bessarabia and Moldova”, the daily *Tiszántúl* of August 9th, 1917, note that due to the fact that „The right flank of the Russian-Romanian front was forced to withdraw,... French press considers the possibility of occupying Bessarabia's granary by the enemies. And in Moldova they fear the same thing”. To avoid this situation, the French press considered that the Romanian-Russian front „to withdraw to the Siret line”¹³.

The events of the day continue unnoticed by the Hungarian media in Oradea, and they are not remembered in the next days. It's about the German offensive whose main blow will get the Russian 71st and 13th Divisions, and as a result of the 9th Romanian Division replaced the Russian 71st Division. Continuing the offensive, the Germans made two cracks into the two flanks of the 9th Division, but the line is rebuilt, and the German offensive was stopped, following the courageous act of Colonel Stan Poetas. Foreshadowing the events that will form the subject of the next day's comments, the daily *Szabadság*, titrated on page 4, on August 9th, „The Romanians are attacking again”¹⁴.

The titles of the numbers of August 10th of the Hungarian dailies announced the Romanian-Russian disaster at Focșani: „The bloody defeat of the enemy at Focșani” (*Nagyváradi Napló*), „The bloody defeat of the Russians and Romanians in Focșani” (*Szabadság*), „The victory of Mackensen at Focșani” (*Tiszántúl*). The first one also shows the losses of the opponent: „We caught 3.300 Russians and Romanians (of which 50 officers), we got 17 guns and 50 machine guns”, with the

¹² *Szabadság*, no. 179, August 8th, 1917, p. 1.

¹³ *Tiszántúl*, no. 182, August 9th, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Szabadság*, no. 180, August 9th, 1917, p. 4.

mention that „The attempts of the Romanians and Russians to counteract, through mass attacks, the successes of the Germans in the North of Focșani, proved to be a failure”¹⁵. Under the title „On the Carpathian front we came out of the mountains”, on the first page, *Tiszántúl* noted that „At the North of the Narrows of Tulgheș, the enemy has withdrawn. We forced the exit of the mountains. In Romania we reached the Șușita line. In Cașinului Valley the Romanians attacked in vane”¹⁶.

The day of August 10th, 1917 was truly a bad day. The Romanian counter-offensive, with the goal of pushing the front on the line Bizighești-Străjeru and occupying the Gârla Morilor line, has resulted in great losses. The attack on the Doaga village, given by the regiments 3rd Hunters and 8th Buzău, failed, and the settlement tbeing unable to be conquered.

The numbers of the following days exult in eulogies on the triumphant advance of the German and Austro-Hungarian armies. „We forced the crossing of the Șușita River”, quotes *Nagyvárad* *Napló* on the page dedicated to the events on the front, stating that the „in the North of Focșani, the allied troops successfully countered the strong attacks of the Russians and Romanians and occupied the Northern shore of Șușita”. About the battles in the Oituz area, in which the Hungarian Honvez Division were involved, wrote: „Two days ago, on both sides of the road Oituz the Austro-Hungarian and German regiments successfully submitted among the reinforced positions. Yesterday, following an intensive attack, they banished the enemy from the heights in the South of the locality Oituz. Following the bloody battles the enemy has lost more than 1.400 people and 30 machine guns. The Russians had to hand over their positions on the shore of Bistrița to our Honvez Division”¹⁷. They tease with an article titled „The Honvez Division Treads Romania”, showing that „on August 6th, in the North of Focșani, the Austrian and Hungarian troops are fighting, moving through heavy battles on the line Șușita-Balparotu. Our brave Honvez broke the enemy’s lines at the South of the Oituz road. The new attack at 6 p.m. of the Honvezilor got to the breaking of the enemy’s positions from the East of Rjolda to Casanaiu (Cașin-n.n.)”¹⁸.

On the day of February 14th took place a mutual offensive on the line Șușita Seacă-Păduricea-Valea Jugastru-Doaga. On our side, the attack was thwarted by a new flaw of the Russians: Soldiers of the 71st Division tore the battle and withdrew, and General Ragoza, commander of the 4th Russian Army, gave orders to suspend the attack. As a result, the Germans approached to Mărășești.

¹⁵ *Nagyvárad* *Napló*, no. 182, August 9th, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁶ *Tiszántúl*, no. 183, August 10th, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Nagyvárad* *Napló*, no. 183, August 11th, 1917, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

Comments and eulogies continued in the following numbers. Under the title „We have made a new advance in the North of Focșani, the daily *Tiszántúl* noted: „Yesterday at North of Focșani, the Russians and the Romanians began the attack, but their attempts were rejected by the German troops. At the Narrows of Oituz the battles continued successfully. Occupying trenches after trenches from the defending enemies, the Austro-Hungarian and German troops forwarded to the South and Southwest of Ocna”¹⁹. In turn, *Nagyvárad* *Napló*, in an article with a similar title, „Mackensen’s new victory on the Șușița Valley”, said the same thing, with about the same words. It only added that „the Romanian and Russian attacked seven times our position at Șușița trying to recapture it, but without success. All their attacks were destroyed by our brave soldiers. This day brought to the enemy an unusually serious bloodshed, but no use”²⁰.

In the days of August 12th and 13th it occurred some changes in the Romanian Commandment, the General Constantin Cristescu being replaced with General Eremia Grigorescu. Also, those days took place the battle of Panciu, defended by the Russian VIII Corps, which was conquered by the enemy. The event is described in the pages of the numbers of August 14th in the Hungarian journals. Under the title „The Victorious Battles of MACKENSEN”, *Tiszántúl* published an official report, in which was said: „At Northwest of Focșani, Our allies continued to counteract the operations of the Russians and Romanians. Every attempt of the enemy has failed. In Oituz Area, at south of Grozești, the enemy attacked with great force. On the allotment they attacked even 12 times, but without success. Our troops are approaching the Trotuș Valley”²¹. „New victories in Romania”, also titrated the *Nagyvárad* *Napló*, accompanied by the comment: „Following an attack we conquered Panciu, heavily defended. At the South-west of this locality, our troops have banished the enemies from their positions. Counterattack of the enemy to the West of the Danube in Galați and in the North of Focșani, turned out to be ineffective. Our troops are fighting on both sides of the lower course of Slănic river and near Ocna. By exasperate counterattacks, the enemy increases its resistance”²². Without any comment or clarification, *Szabadság* titrated, in page 4, „Our successes on the Moldovian front”²³.

Two important events occurred on the day of February 14th. First the fight from Chicera, following which was resumed the German offensive to the North to conquer the hills of Șușița and the Zabrăuț Valley. The main attack was given in the Russian sector, and again Russians couldn’t resist, broke the front and ran. The combined intervention of 10th Romanian Regiment Hunters and 3rd

¹⁹ *Tiszántúl*, no. 185, August 12th, 1917, p. 4.

²⁰ *Nagyvárad* *Napló*, no. 184, August 12th, 1917, p. 6.

²¹ *Tiszántúl*, no. 186, August 14th, 1917, p. 1.

²² *Nagyvárad* *Napló*, no. 185, August 14th, 1917, p. 3.

²³ *Szabadság*, no. 184, August 14th, 1917, p. 4.

Regiment, make the lines not to fall. Instead, the forest Prisaca, defended by the 5th Romanian Division, was conquered by the enemy, the German offensive being stopped at the bridge over Siret from Băltărești-Cosmești.

„We are moving to Romania”, notified *Nagyvárad* *Napló* from August 15th, 1917, article in which was said: „At West of the Panciu, our troops have conquered new territories. At South of the Oituz Valley and West of Ocna, the enemy strived in vane to change the battle’s situation. Due to the powerful counterattacks of the enemy, at South of Trotus, **maintaining our occupied territories has become doubtful** (s.n. - I.Z.). Intense attacks have also occurred at South of the valleys of Oituz and Cașin, but which have been counteracted. At Panciu took place new battles, in which the enemy suffered great losses. Between the valleys of Șușița and Putna our troops have troubled the enemies to Northwest into the mountains. The battles on the lower shore of Siret have ended favorably as far as we are concerned. We’ve acquired prisoners and prey”²⁴. The daily *Szabadság*, in the characteristic style, published on page 5 only the title „New territories conquered in Romania” ,without further comments, which, as usual, were offered in the following numbers. In that of August 17th, under the title „We banished the enemy to the sly” they specified: „At East of Mărășești, the German regiments banished the enemies beyond Siret, while taking 3,500 prisoners, 16 cannons and more than 50 machine guns. On the upper course of Șușița, the enemy retreated to the mountains”²⁵.

The period 15th-18th August it was full of events that are no longer so favorable to the enemy: it occurred the fights from Muncelului plateau; the 14th Division passed on the right bank of the Siret; the Cosmești-Băltărești bridge is blown up by the Romanians. Consistently, Mackensen focuses the attacks on the wing defended by the Russians. The German’s attempt to break the front in the Muncelu region-to be able to climb the Șușița Valley cracked due the to energetic and on time intervention of th Romanians. An enemy attack in Panciu area, on August 15th was stopped by the 10th Romanian Division; a new German attack took place on August 16th, but the Romanians restored the situation by the intervention of the 10th Regiment Hunters. On August 17th and 18 were held mutual artillery bombardments, both sides being concerned by the Consolidation of the front and the battle of Răzoare.

The latest information of the Hungarian dailies in Oradea about the situation on the Romanian front dates back to August 18th. They are brief, however, and refer to the prey captured by that date, not the great decisive battle that was announcin. „At the North of Focșani, the enemy retreats”, titled *Nagyvárad* *Napló*, stating that „There are no changes in Romania. The total prey since the fighting began in the North of Focșani: 210 officers and over 11,000 prisoners

²⁴ *Nagyvárad* *Napló*, no. 186, August 15th, 1917, p. 4.

²⁵ Idem, no. 186, August 17th, 1917, p. 5.

soldiers, 110 machine guns and 35 cannons”²⁶. Also the total prey was the subject of the article „The successes of the Honvez Division on the Romanian front”, from *Szabadság*, containing the same numbers as those given by its confrere²⁷.

From this moment until August 23rd, 1917, the Hungarian press in Oradea wrote nothing about the situation on the Moldovian front. The reason cannot be other than the unfavourable turn for the Central Powers regarding the military operations and the silence that has been imposed on them. On August 19th, when it occurred the battle of Mărășești, meant stopping the enemy’s attack and the most important victory of the Romanian Army in the 1917’s campaign.

Mackensen planned a decisive blow to the front portion between Panciu and Mărășești, defended by the 13th and 9th Romanian Divisions, a blow to be given by the army led by general von Morgen. The action began with a strong bombardment, followed by a German success: occupying the first line of the 13th Romanian Division and of The Sugar Factory and the penetration of the enemy, with more than 1 Km into the Romanian positions. However, the Romanian counterattack followed and the line of the front was rebuilt, and Germans withdrew. Furthermore, the first line of the enemy’s positions was conquered by the Romanians, at which point the German commandment at Focșani evacuated the city. In the weekly report of the 9th Army to the commander of the Armed Group Mackensen, general von Eben mentioned: „Because an order of the units and a rest of the band is absolutely necessary and because, as a result of the heavy battles, the infantry has declined, a continuation of the offensive is no longer to be counseled, and therefore it is ordered for the time being to remain and to fortify the conquered positions”²⁸. The report of the Commander of the 9th Army expresses nothing but failure, capitulation, the confession of defeat.

When the Hungarian media in Oradea resumes the presentation of the events on the Moldovian front, on August 23rd, 1917, some newspapers, such as *Szabadság*, prefer to give information taken from the foreign press, even adverse (*Times*, London)²⁹, while others refer to the events of the days of August 21st-22nd, when, in the South of Trotuș Valley, the Romanians began high-force attacks to recapture the land in the Soveja area. Obviously, „Each attack was rejected and the Romanians suffered great losses”, their effort being useless, as we find out from the very title of the article³⁰.

Therefore, for 14 days, between August 6th and 19th, 1917, the Romanian Army was in a permanent clenching with a powerful enemy, who only wanted to

²⁶ *Nagyvárad Napló*, no. 188, August 18th, 1917, p. 5.

²⁷ *Szabadság*, no. 187, August 18th, 1917, p. 4.

²⁸ Constantin Kiritescu, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 131.

²⁹ *Szabadság*, no. 190, August 23rd, 1917, p. 4: „Great battle on the Romanian front”. „According to the *Times*, London: On the Romanian front, on a length of 162 km, to Galați, takes place a very intense and bloody battle. From both sides there are great forces”.

³⁰ *Tiszántúl*, no. 192, August 23rd, 1917, p. 2.

give it a blow. Despite the failure of major Russian units, who refused to fight and withdrew, the Romanian Army, along with Russian troops remaining in position, halted the enemy offensive. Came back Generalului Constantin Cristescu the difficult mission to reconstruct the front line, through the layout of new positions of battle instead of those left by the Russians. Fierce battles went to the Muncelului Plateau (15-18 August) and at Răzoare (18 August), on the Panciului Hills, at the Cosmești Bridge, to the Doaga, in the area of Dumbrava village, in the outskirts of Mărășești. The day of 19 August ended with the halt of the enemy attack and the most important victory of the Romanian Army in the 1917 campaign, with A large echo in the weather press, in the country and abroad.

The operation at Mărășești was, as stated in those days, general Eremia Grigorescu, „The Tomb of German illusions”. In the Oituz area, extremely bloody battles took place in the Cireșoaia sectors (12 August) and Coșna (17-19 August), where the blocking of enemy advances to the coal and oil area of the Troțușului Valley was sealed.

After a month of fighting, the German army was forced to move on to the defensive, its strategic objectives could not be achieved.