

## THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ROMANIAN-RUSSIAN MILITARY ALLIANCE: THE BATTLES OF GALAȚI, PAȘCANI, SPĂTĂREȘTI (JANUARY, 1918)

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**Abstract.** Relying on all the accessible publications, the press, and particularly the research carried out in the Military Archives in Pitești, we set out to bring to light the less known events from the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, which unfolded in harsh conditions for the Romanian state in general, and for the Romanian army in particular. We intend to analyse the retreat of the partially bolshevised Russian army from the Romanian territory, focusing on the manner in which the Romanian political and military leaders dealt with this complicated relation with the Russian army. We are intent on revealing some less known aspects of the abuse carried out by the Russian army on our territory.

**Keywords:** *Romanian-Russian military alliance, january 1918, battles of Galați, Pașcani, Spătărești and Mihăileni*

### Historiographical considerations

The Romanian historiography comprises numerous papers and studies exploring the Romanian-Russian military cooperation between 1916 and 1918. However, these historiographical analyses failed to provide a homogenous image of the military relations between the two states for the given period of time. One of the topics worth a more thorough investigation is the unravelling of the Romanian-Russian military alliance at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918.

During the interbellum, the historian Constantin Kirițescu published the first edition of one of his most important works, focusing on Romania's involvement in the first World War. One of the chapters deals with the dissolution of the Russian-Romanian alliance, while the battles of Galați, Pașcani, Spătărești and Mihăileni between the Romanian and the Russian armies do not take central stage<sup>1</sup>. The memoirs of Constantin Argetoianu<sup>2</sup>, I.G. Duca<sup>3</sup>, Nicolae Iorga<sup>4</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *Istoria războiului pentru întregirea României 1916-1919*, vol. 2, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1989, p. 207-213.

<sup>2</sup> Constantin Argetoianu, *Memorii*, III-IV, The second edition, Supervised by Stelian Neagoe, Editura Machiavelli, București, 2008,

<sup>3</sup> I.G. Duca, *Amintiri politice*, Colecția „Memorii și mărturii”, vol. III, Jon Dumitru-Verlag, München, 1981.

published after Kirițescu's work complete and emphasize the already known information. During the communist regime, the topic was avoided and rarely referenced by historians. Over the last two decades, the works of Ion M. Oprea<sup>5</sup>, Glenn Torey<sup>6</sup>, Constantin I. Stan<sup>7</sup> have shed more light on the events unfolding at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. Over the last years, several studies<sup>8</sup>, autobiographical works<sup>9</sup> and books<sup>10</sup> have been published to commemorate 100 years since the first World War started and since Romania entered the first global conflagration, each one contributing to a more complete image of the events discussed in this article.

Relying on all the accessible publications, the press, and particularly the research carried out in the Military Archives in Pitești, we set out to bring to light the less known events from the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, which unfolded in harsh conditions for the Romanian state in general, and for the Romanian army in particular. We intend to analyse the retreat of the partially bolshevised Russian army from the Romanian territory, focusing on the manner in which the Romanian political and military leaders dealt with this complicated relation with the Russian army. We are intent on revealing some less known aspects of the abuse carried out by the Russian army on our territory. Within this framework, the Romanian Prime-Minister, Ion I. C. Brătianu, wrote on the situation of the Russian soldiers: "The Russian armies have become gangs without leaders, slowly poisoned by anarchy, incapable of holding the frontline and incapable of organising the demobilisation for the retreat, which in the absence of any provisions is in itself a devastating act"<sup>11</sup>. The current article aims in particular to study a few military confrontations between the two former allies.

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<sup>4</sup> N. Iorga, *Memorii. Însemnări zilnice (mai 1917-mart 1920). Războiul național. Lupta pentru o nouă viață politică*, vol. I, Editura „Națională” S. Ciornei.

<sup>5</sup> Ion M. Oprea, *România și Imperiul Rus*, vol. I, 1900-1924, București, Editura Albatros, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn Torey, *Armata revoluționară rusă și România 1917*, translated from English by Dana Constantin, Adrian Pandea, București, Editura Militară, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Constantin I. Stan, *Aliați și adversari. Relațiile româno-ruse 1916-1920*, Editura Paideia, București, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> For example, this article by Dinu Poștarencu is very interesting for our study: *Incidentul de la Leova din decembrie 1917*, in the volume *100 de ani de la deschiderea Frontului Românesc în Primul Război Mondial (1916–2016)*, coord. Gh. Vartic, Editura Militară, București, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război. 1917-1918*, Supervised by Lucian Boia, Editura Humanitas, București, 2015

<sup>10</sup> Ion Agrigoroaiei, *Opinie publică și stare de spirit în vremea Războiului de Întregire și a Marii Uniri*, The second revised edition, Editura Fundației Academice AXIS, Iași, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> *Apud* Petrică Coman, Mariana Păvăloiu, *Marinarii în apărarea Galațiului – 1918*, in "Marina Română", number 8 (130), 2008, p. 54.

### Introductory notes

At the beginning of 1917, Romania and Russia were members of the same alliance, the Russian army counting over 1 million soldiers and officers on the Romanian territory. The Romanian government, along with the military authorities, had been relocated to Iași, in an attempt to reorganize the army with the support of the French Military Mission. In Russia, the revolution of February 1917 resulted, among other things, in the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. After being deposed, the new authorities from Petrograd maintained the state of war, but the fighting capacity on the front was diminished considerably. Gradually, the soviets, emerging as expressions of the revolution, had an increasing influence on the soldiers, who started to act unruly, even to riot, including on the Romanian territory. The first incidents between the Russian soldiers and the Romanian authorities occurred as early as the months of May-June, 1917, in different towns. The information coming from different parts of Moldavia capture the building tension within the Russian army. For example, at the end of May, 1917, a violent brawl erupted between 9 Russian soldiers and 3 Bessarabians in Târgu Ocna, which was most likely caused by the “national issue”<sup>12</sup>. The information arriving from Dorohoi, one month later, on June, 20th, was troubling for the Romanian authorities. It was rumoured that the Russian soldiers were planning to use firearms and embark on a trail of devastation throughout the city<sup>13</sup>; and at the beginning of July, according to the reports coming from the informers of the General Directorate of Security, the Russian soldiers, especially the ones from the 17th Railways Regiment, wreaked terror and anarchy in Piatra Neamț<sup>14</sup>. A few days later, the Russian soldiers requisitioned the printing house and issued proclamations addressed to the Romanian people, urging them to change their government<sup>15</sup>. In October 1917, the Russian troops leaving the garrison of Piatra Neamț were difficult to control and caused serious damage to the town and its inhabitants<sup>16</sup>. These unruly acts were harshly sanctioned. For example, the 5th and 6th Regiments of the 40th Corps stationed in Târgu Ocna rebelled against the order to go into battle. The consequence? The 5th Regiment was destroyed by the other regiments from the same corps and its name was permanently deleted from the Russian Army annals<sup>17</sup>.

The battles of Mărăști, Mărășești, Oituz in the summer of 1917 marked the end of cooperation between the Romanian and the Russian army during the First World War. In the autumn of 1917, the events in Russia unfolded at a fast pace.

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<sup>12</sup> The National Archive of the Republic of Moldavia, fund 691, opis 3, file 995, sheet 12.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 40-47.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 81.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 97.

<sup>16</sup> Mihai Șurubaru, *Aspecte ale istoriei orașului Piatra Neamț în anii Primului Război Mondial (1914-1919)*, Piatra Neamț, Editura “Cetatea Domnească”, 2010, p. 81-82.

<sup>17</sup> The National Archive of the Republic of Moldova, fund 691, opis 3, file 999, sheet 62.

On 25th October / 7th November the coup d'état occurred, followed a month later by the truce that was signed with the Central powers in Brest-Litovsk (22nd November / 5th December 1917). A few days later, the Romanian government signed the truce of Focșani.

At the end of 1917 and the beginning of the following year, as a result of the extensive bolshevisation among the Russian troops stationed in Moldova, several incidents occurred between the Romanian and the bolshevised Russian troops. The first ones took place at the beginning of December: in Tecuci, a Russian army corps rioted; in Bucecea, the Russian units set the town on fire; in Leova, the subsistence warehouse was set on fire and around Iași, the Bolsheviks gathered near the Socola train station and pointed their cannons towards the city, threatening to bomb it<sup>18</sup>.

The lines written by Nicolae Iorga on the 6th December are illustrative of what was happening: “The Russians destroyed everything on their way. All the cantons along the way are shattered. Entire villages are deserted (...) on the roads, the Russians attack even automobiles, but whoever is more courageous can still beat them to a pulp”<sup>19</sup>. Queen Mary confessed that, by mid December, the main conversational topic was the disarmament of the Bolsheviks. Initially, everything unfolded peacefully, even though a certain state of concern was apparent: “we have to be prepared at any time for a dangerous reaction on their part”<sup>20</sup>, while the information coming from the territory was more and more worrying. An informative note dating from 11th December reported that the Russian soldiers, “having nothing else to do” caused a lot of damage in the county of Dorohoi, pillaging the population: “they have now turned against the Romanian government and it is rumoured that they are planning to set the town of Dorohoi on fire”<sup>21</sup>. According to the American historian Glenn Torrey, at that moment “the anarchic Russian troops had become a bigger menace than the enemy”<sup>22</sup>. At the beginning of December, the situation of the Russian army on the Romanian territory was discussed during the meetings of the Council of Ministers. The Romanian army generals attended some of these meetings, and they had contradictory opinions related to this issue. Following the events of the tragic night of 8th-9th / 21st-22nd December, 1917<sup>23</sup>, it was obvious that a more

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<sup>18</sup> I.G. Duca, *Memorii*, volume IV. The war, part II (1916-1917), edition and index by Stelian Neagoe, Editura Machiavelli, București, 1994, p. 38-39.

<sup>19</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>20</sup> Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război...*, p. 312 (record from 10th/23rd December, 1917).

<sup>21</sup> The Central National Historical Archives (from now on ANIC), Fund: The Archive of CC of the Romanian Communist Party, Collection no. 50, file 3962, sheet 56-57.

<sup>22</sup> Glenn Torrey, *România în Primul Război Mondial*, translated from English by Dan Criste, Meteor Publishing, București, 2014, p. 286.

<sup>23</sup> For further information on this event, see Ion I. Solcanu, *Un episod dramatic din 8-9 decembrie 1917: încercarea de asasinare a generalului Șcerbacev de către emisarii lui Lenin și soldații ruși*

energetic action was required to deal with the bolshevised troops: “the success of the Socola expedition encouraged the government and the Supreme Headquarters to change their attitude towards the Russian troops, which joyfully spread the seed of anarchy both on the front and behind the frontline”<sup>24</sup>.

Against the backdrop of the events unfolding in Iași, Ion I.C. Brătianu, the Romanian Prime-Minister, kept the plenipotentiary ministers dispatched in London, Paris and Petrograd updated with the delicate situation the Romanian authorities found themselves in. He demanded that the three diplomats inform the Allied governments about the events taking place in Romania and suggested that the Romanian treasure, which was located in Russia, be guaranteed by the allies<sup>25</sup>. Brătianu noted that the bolshevised troops “got organised in such a manner as if they were about to start a revolution” in Romania and as a result it was almost impossible to avoid a conflict with them<sup>26</sup>. Within this framework, the clashes between the Romanian and the bolshevised Russian troops multiplied. In Roman, on the night of 10th to 11th, the 5th Mountain Infantry Regiment, following the order given by the commander of the town garrison, helped make a “surprise arrest of the marxists”, who were planning the attempted murder of General Nekrasov, commander of the 4th Russian Army<sup>27</sup>. At the end of the month of December, several incidents occurred between the two armies: on 13th/26th December, the Bolshevik committee of the 9th Army was arrested in Botoșani<sup>28</sup>, and on 14th / 27th December in Moinești, Bacău county, the 194th Russian Regiment was ordered to give up their guns. Their refusal to do so resulted in clashes that led to the arrest of some Russian soldiers<sup>29</sup>. On 13th / 26th December, in Baisa, near Botoșani, the 34th Regiment Constanța contributed to the disarmament of a Russian unit that was stationed in Vlădeni. Several soldiers from the regiment were wounded in this incident. In the Regiment’s operation diary, under the aforementioned date, the following was recorded: “Departure for Baisa to disarm a Russian unit stationed in Vlădeni. At 8 a.m. the village is surrounded, followed by summonings and discussions that have no result until 4p.m. when one of our artillery batteries is ordered into action. At 5 p.m. the

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*bolșevizați din gara Socola-Iași* in “Analele Științifice ale Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași (Serie Nouă) Istorie”, Iași, tome LIX, 2017, p. 445-456.

<sup>24</sup> Constantin Argetoianu, *Pentru cei de mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri*, volume IV, part V (1917-1918), edition and index adnoted by Stelian Neagoe, Humanitas, București, 1993, p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, fund 71/1914, E2, part II vol. 50, sheet 16 r/v.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> Valeriu Giuran, *Momente din istoria Batalionului și al regimentului 5 Vânători (1896-1941)*, Editura Mirton, Timișoara, 2010, p. 133.

<sup>28</sup> General Henri Berthelot, *Jurnal și Corespondență 1916-1919*, second edition, translated from French by Oltița Cîntec, edition, introductory study and index by Gheorghe I. Florescu, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000, p. 248.

<sup>29</sup> Glenn E. Torrey, *Armata revoluționară rusă...*, p. 93-94.

Russians surrender. Two men from the regiment are wounded during this action. The disarmament of the Russians continues until late in the evening. At night, we set up camp in Vlădeni. Today starts the intensive disarmament of the Russian troops, that in the wake of the truce and of the revolutionary movements were leaving the front, plundering and pillaging on their way. General Poetaș Stan was the commander of the troops entrusted with the disarmament of the Russians, with their headquarters in the train station of Botoșani<sup>30</sup>. It was nevertheless hoped that they would be able to disarm the Russian soldiers “without any difficulty” all over Moldavia<sup>31</sup>. In reality, things were completely different.

The incident that occurred in Leova, at the end of December, 1917, fuelled the protest of the People’s Commissary for foreign affairs, Leon Davidovici Troțki, which he submitted to the chief of the Romanian legation in Petrograd. What is worth mentioning though, is the response offered by the Romanian legation, stating the official position of the Romanian authorities regarding the situation of the Russian troops on the Romanian territory. The Note submitted to the People’s Commissary for foreign affairs pointed out that: “Apart from this, the Romanian government is aware of the fact that entire (Russian) divisions leave the front without waiting for the demobilisation order, unfamiliar with the roads or the billets, without provisions and unfortunately lacking clear organization for the distribution of supplies along the way and resort to pillaging and plundering the neighbouring villages, even setting them on fire, thus provoking clashes with the army; and the Romanian population is defenseless in front of these acts. In order to prevent a real catastrophe, the Romanian government was forced to intervene, stopping the disorganised demobilisation and taking measures to ensure that even the interests of the Russian army are served”<sup>32</sup>.

The Romanian army sought to prevent and avoid contact with the unruly Russian troops. However, against the backdrop of an increase in the number of robberies and conflicts caused by the former allies, the Supreme Headquarters imposed a series of measures at the beginning of December 1917. The Circular of 2nd December stipulated the following: “In the future, all future movements of the troops on the Romanian Railway would require previous authorization from the Supreme Headquarters. Any individual, detachment or unit that would occupy trains without authorization, and use violence and threats to change their destination or timetable was to be sanctioned on the spot and brought back to

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<sup>30</sup> The Centre for the Study and Storage of Historical Archives Pitești (from now on CSPMI-Pitești), Fund Collection 1, Historical Files and Operation Journals of the Royal Army, file 3647 (34th Regiment Constanța Operation Journal, 15th August 1916- 5th May 1918. Chapter The second Restoration), sheet 36.

<sup>31</sup> I.G. Duca, *Memorii*, vol. IV., p. 53-54.

<sup>32</sup> *Relații româno-sovietice. Documente*, vol. I, 1917-1934, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1999, p. 8.

order through the use of firearms”<sup>33</sup>. It was also forbidden for the troops to pass through Iași<sup>34</sup> or to set camp in the area Cristești-Mogoșești-Voinești<sup>35</sup>.

In this context, the Romanians concentrated numerous troops along the main transport line going through Iași towards Russia, thus trying to protect the Romanian “war capital” and to prevent a chaotic retreat of the Russian troops. For this reason, the Russians willing to leave the front headed for the northern and southern parts of Moldavia, which provided more accessible routes to the former Russian Empire territory. On the other hand, at the beginning of January, the orders dispatched by the Bolshevik Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) from the Romanian front were clear: retreat, even through armed force. This had a huge impact on the Russian soldiers, who wanted to leave the front armed and in formation<sup>36</sup>; however, the impression they left on their departure upset the deafening peace and quiet of the Romanian villages. This is what Marcel Fontaine, member of the French Military Mission wrote in his war diary on 12th / 24th January, 1918, while travelling from Iași to Vaslui: “Yesterday and the day before, on several occasions, the silence was broken all of a sudden, and from the house one could hear the bustle and the screams: ”The Russians”, ”The Russians”. And suddenly, as if an ant hill was stirred, the peasants, men, women and children alike, scurried out to gather the livestock from their yards and the streets. They were in a frenzy to catch them and lock them. [...]. Meanwhile, from my observatory, I could see the long, winding snake of the Russian convoy retreating to Bessarabia. And I told myself that this was a sight that had been going on for ages, now and again, in this twice unfortunate country; for being wealthy and also for being on the path of great invasions. The fear of Russians, of their lawlessness, plunders and crimes seems to be one of the most deeply seeded sentiments in the Romanian peasants. And rightly so, unfortunately!”<sup>37</sup>.

All these incidents, including at the beginning of 1918, gave the Romanian army the feeling that the measures taken against the Russian army were not powerful enough. For example, on 12th January, the following could be read in the operation journal of the 8th Infantry Brigade: “we could notice on several occasions when we were asked to intervene against the Russians that our troops are somewhat cautious and even shy; we want to signal this damaging attitude and call for more energy, manliness and high fighting spirit”<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, Fund 2266, 4th Infantry Division, file 137/1917, sheet 32.

<sup>34</sup> However, The Romanians granted right of passage through Iași for the Russian supplies trains, which were accompanied by an armed guard. (*Ibidem*, f. 62)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 32.

<sup>36</sup> Glenn E. Torrey, *Armata revoluționară rusă...*, p. 98-99.

<sup>37</sup> Marcel Fontaine, Member of the French Military Mission, *War diary. Mission in Romania, November 1916-April 1918*, translated from French and postface by Micaela Ghițescu, Humanitas, București, 2016, p. 333-334.

<sup>38</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, Inventory S 2630, Fund 790, file 64, The 8th Infantry Brigade, sheet 2.

The most important battles took place near Galați, Pașcani, and Fălticeni, but other numerous incidents unfolded in the vicinity of other localities; other conflicts between the Russian and Romanian army occurred especially in the northern part of Moldavia, close to the border of Bukovina and Bessarabia. The Romanian troops also disarmed several Russian units near Botoșani and Dorohoi. Another important battle took place in Mihăileni, but the current study does not focus on it.

### **The battle of Galați – 7th / 20th - 9th / 22th January, 1918**

The Russian troops stationed on the lower course of the Siret and the Danube were considered the most bolshevized on the Romanian front<sup>39</sup>. The 6th Russian Army, comprising three army corps, made up of two divisions each, and including several bolshevized elements, was stationed in the area Tecuci-Galați. The six Russian divisions occupied the following sectors: Ivești, Hanu Conachi, Vameșu, Piscu, Șendreni and Galați. In total, the six divisions counted among them between 30,000 and 40,000 bayonets.<sup>40</sup> The 4th Siberian Corps, whose troops were difficult to control<sup>41</sup>, was stationed near Galați, the most important urban centre in the south of Moldavia.

The Romanian troops of the 4th Infantry Division, occupying the Tecuci-Galați sector with the general headquarters in Pechea, were billeted behind the Russian army<sup>42</sup>. The 4th Infantry Division was run by General Ion Ghinescu and, as many other Romanian units, was reorganized behind the frontline, being included in the 1st Army Corps for the first part of 1917. However, the task of defending the port town of Galați was in the hands of commander Constantin Niculescu Rizea, a renowned specialist in the field of “underwater weaponry”<sup>43</sup>. He was in charge of maintaining the order in the town, in the areas where the Russian troops of the 10th Divisions were billeted.

The situation around Galați became more tense towards the end of December, 1917. On the night of 25th December, 1917 / 6th January, 1918 an incident occurred between a Romanian army patrol and some Russian soldiers from the 4th Siberian Corps. Although the incident was appeased through the

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<sup>39</sup> Glenn Torrey, *Armata revoluționară rusă și România 1917...* p. 99-100.

<sup>40</sup> Constantin Kirișescu, *op. cit.*, p. 207; see the CSPMI-Pitești, Inventory S 2630, Fund 790, The 8th Infantry Brigade, file 42, sheet 36-39.

<sup>41</sup> Constantin Kirișescu, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 207.

<sup>43</sup> Born in 1870, Niculescu Rizea did military studies in Romania and Italy, becoming a commander in 1917, when he was appointed “military commander of the county of Covurlui”. For details about his career, see Nicolae C. Petrescu, *Cu tricolorul la catarg. Comandanți ai Marinei Militare în Războiul pentru Întregirea României*, Pitești, Editura și tipografia Europroduct, 2002, p. 51-67; Mariana Păvăloiu Marian Sârbu, *Forțele navale române. 150 de istorie modernă*, București, Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2010, p. 350-351.

intervention of the Romanian patrols, two Russian soldiers and a highschool student were injured and both parties involved concluded that it was the Russian soldiers who sparked the conflict<sup>44</sup>. Following an inspection of the 4th Infantry Division at the beginning of January 1918, it was recommended that the patrols in the larger cities like Galați, where Russian troops were stationed, be less frequent, but they should be made up of more soldiers, since a patrol made up of only 3-4 soldiers could be so easily disarmed by the Russians “if they ganged up”<sup>45</sup>.

Another incident between the Russian and the Romanian soldiers took place on 31st December, 1917 / 12th January, 1918. On that day, a delegation sent by the soldiers of the 13th Russian Division to inform the Romanians of their intention to leave the front and cross the Prut to Bessarabia was met with a negative response by the representatives of the 4th Romanian Division. The Russians even threatened to use force to cross the Prut, should the Romanians oppose them. In this rather tense context, the 4th Romanian Division received backups from the 13th Infantry Division of the Romanian Army, whose troops were stationed in their vicinity. Among the help sent by the 13th Division to Galați, we mention the 50th / 64th Infantry Regiment<sup>46</sup>, which had taken part in the Battle of Mărășești, under the command of lieutenant-colonel Dumitru Genuneanu.

Following the various incidents occurring between the Romanian and the Russian soldiers, the Supreme Headquarters ordered the 4th Romanian division to maintain the peace and to warn the Russians that the Romanian troops would resort to force<sup>47</sup>. Moreover, even the German intelligence signalled the state of tension between the bolshevised Russian troops and the Romanian ones near Galați<sup>48</sup>.

The firmness of the Romanian troops' intervention determined the Russian soldiers to postpone their plan to leave their positions and to retreat to Bessarabia. However, on the 3rd / 16th January, 1918, the 40th Russian Division which was stationed in the Hanu Conachi sector, dislodged its troops, heading for Pechea. The Romanian troops reacted by forcing the Russians to return to their initial position. The same procedure was used against the 12th Russian Division, which attempted to move towards the Prut<sup>49</sup>.

A few days later, on the 7th / 20th January, 1918, the 9th Russian Division, which was a part of the 4th Siberian Corps, started to march on the road from Tecuci to Galați, attempting to go through Galați and from there to Bessarabia<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file 119, sheet 50.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 117.

<sup>46</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>47</sup> Glenn E. Torrey, *Armata revoluționară rusă și România 1917*, p. 101.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>50</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file 119, sheet 158.

The 4th Division Commander ordered the Romanian troops to intervene in order to stop the Russians, even using armed force, if need be<sup>51</sup>. In Galați, the soldiers from the 10th Russian division appeared to have been organising in order to help their comrades from the 9th Division<sup>52</sup>.

It was a difficult situation for the Romanian troops, as well as for the safety of the inhabitants of Galați. The Romanians' main objective was preventing the town from becoming a theatre of war operations and from being occupied by the bolshevised Russian soldiers. For this reason, commander Constantin Niculescu Rizea received the order to block the Russian convoy on their way to the east and to defend the town.<sup>53</sup> Niculescu Rizea requested backups, on the grounds of insufficient troops, to defend the town<sup>54</sup>. Under these circumstances, the commander of the 4th Romanian Division ordered two companies to depart for Galați in order to be placed under Niculescu Rizea's command. Therefore, while the Russian troops ignored the messages sent by the Romanians, the Romanian forces around Galați were getting ready for an imminent confrontation with the Russians on 7th / 20th January, 1918. The Romanian troops tried to occupy strategic positions, such as the hill of Țiglina<sup>55</sup>, while attempting to form a circle around the 9th Russian division, in order to be better positioned in case of a battle with the Russian soldiers who largely outnumbered them.

The battles began on 7th / 29th January, at midday, when the Romanian troops near Șendreni were attacked by Russian soldiers from the 9th Division. At first, the Romanian troops managed to reject the attack, but the Russians' superior forces gained the upperhand and managed to make their way to Movileni and Barboși. Once in Movileni, near the town of Galați, the Russian troops installed 18 cannons in their battery<sup>56</sup>. Apparently, they threatened that unless they were granted right of passage through the town, they would bombard it<sup>57</sup>. As the Romanians refused to give in to the pressure exercised by the bolshevised Russian troops which represented a huge threat to the town, the Russians launched their bombardment of the town<sup>58</sup>, as well as of the troops stationed in its vicinity.

In this context, the Russian troops which got as far as Barboși were attacked by the Romanian soldiers occupying the hill of Țiglina. Colonel Bucur Bădescu, commander of the 8th Brigade, stationed in Fântânele, had a major role in this

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 158.

<sup>52</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>53</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file 119, sheet 158-159.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 122.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 158-159.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 185.

<sup>57</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>58</sup> The bombardment did not cause a lot of damage to the town, though (*ibidem*). See Paul Păltânea, *Istoria orașului Galați: dela origini până la 1918*, part II, 2nd edition, coordinated by Prof. Eugen Drăgoi, Galați, Editura Partener, 2008, p. 267.

battle, as he was entrusted with the mission to attack from the north and the west the Russian troops located in the gorges between the Mălina and the Calica ponds and the Siret river. Forces of the Romanian Military Navy were also concentrated here. These comprised four military torpedo boats (no. 1: “Maior Constantin Ene”; no. 2: “Căpitan Nicolae Lascăr Bogdan”; no. 5: “Maior Gheorghe Șonțu” and no. 7: “Locotenent Dimitrie Călinescu”), a gunboat and a river monitor placed at the mouth of the Siret flowing into the Danube<sup>59</sup>. At the same time, Constantin Niculescu Rizea ordered that the eight cannons dismounted from the cruiser “Elisabeta” be deployed on the hill of Țiglina, under the command of commander Nicolae Puricescu<sup>60</sup>.

The fighting reached at times a high intensity, with casualties on both sides<sup>61</sup>. Around 8p.m. though, the fighting stopped. The Romanian troops regrouped and tried to surround the Russian forces once again.

Thus unfolded the first episode of “the battle of Galați”, a military confrontation between soldiers who had fought side by side against the troops of the Central powers in the previous year. The Romanian officers were aware of the gravity of the situation and did their best to localize the conflict with the Russian troops and to put an end to it as quickly as possible. For this reason, after a few hours of confrontations, on the night of 7th / 8th – 20th / 21st January, 1918, the Romanians dispatched “emissaries to discuss with representatives of the Russian troops committees in Șendreni”<sup>62</sup>. However, the Russians refused to negotiate with the Romanians and, in response, they bombarded the town of Galați again<sup>63</sup>.

The Romanian officers tried to protect themselves against an attack from the Russian troops located in Galați, and therefore they deployed a company with the mission to stop a possible surprise attack of the 10th Russian division from behind the Romanian troops stationed in Țiglina<sup>64</sup>. Another navy detachment and two infantry platoons were also deployed in Galați in order to keep a close watch on the 10th Russian Division. Other Romanian troops were deployed in the areas near Filești and Reni, with clear orders to stop any attack that might have come from these directions.

Despite all that, soldiers from the 10th Russian Division planned to occupy the firefighters unit, fill the fire engines with petrol and thus set the town on fire.

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<sup>59</sup> Cristian Dragoș Căldăraru, *Scurtă lecție de eroism: apărătorii orașului Galați* (<https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/scurta-lectie-de-eroism-aparatorii-orasului-galati>)

<sup>60</sup> Cristian Dragoș Căldăraru, *Scurtă lecție de eroism: apărătorii orașului Galați* (<https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/scurta-lectie-de-eroism-aparatorii-orasului-galati>)

<sup>61</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file dosar 119, sheet 159.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*. For details see Paul Păltânea, *Istoria orașului Galați: dela origini până la 1918*, part II, 2nd edition, coordinated by Prof. Eugen Drăgoi, Galați, Editura Partener, 2008, p. 267.

<sup>64</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

Fortunately, their plan was thwarted by the Romanian troops, which saved the citizens of Galați from a tragedy<sup>65</sup>.

The fighting resumed on the night of 7th / 8th – 20th / 21st January, 1918, albeit lower in intensity. On the 8th / 21st January though, wild battles took place between the Romanian forces (the land, navy and air forces) and the Russian soldiers in some areas around Galați. For example, things became complicated when the Russian crossed the Prut in the eastern part of the city, trying to install an artillery battery on the hill of Giurgiulești. Commander Niculescu Rizea deployed some troops in this area, which managed to repel the Russians, forcing them to cross the Prut back to Bessarabia<sup>66</sup>. Thus, the Romanians succeeded in preventing the junction of the Russian troops located near Reni with the 9th and 10th divisions, located in the west, north and south of the town, which would have led to the encirclement of Galați. An informative note sent on 8th / 21st January, 1918 by the 4th Romanian division to the 1st Army read the following: “Phone connection with Galați has been reestablished. The town is not fully encircled, the action is unfolding on the outside. At the time when our troops fighting against the 9th Russian division outside Galați were bombarded, a few projectiles fell in Galați”<sup>67</sup>.

Between 12 and 7.30 p.m., on 8th / 21st January 1918, a rough battle took place between the troops of the 9th Russian Division and the Romanian troops, which managed to encircle them<sup>68</sup>. The Romanian soldiers’ discipline and devotion, under the command of commander Constantin Niculescu-Rizea, led to a surprise counter-attack near Țiglina and on the Danube. In the north of Galați, the soldiers from the 8th Brigade, under the command of colonel Bucur Bădescu, distinguished themselves through their attack on the military units of the 9th Division, located between the Cătușa and the Mălina lakes. Taken by surprise by the Romanian attacks in the area Țiglina-Cătușa-Mălina, as well as by the fire launched by the torpedo boats on the water, the Russians retreated between the Siret and the trainstation of Barboși<sup>69</sup>.

This is what the priest of the 21st Infantry Regiment, part of the 8th Infantry Brigade, wrote about these events, in January 1918: “The fighting started on St. John’s day, at around 4 p.m. and lasted all night long and on the 8th until 7 in the evening, and it ended with the utter defeat of the Russians who proceeded to cross

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<sup>65</sup> Cristian Dragoș Căldăraru, *Scurtă lecție de eroism: apărătorii orașului Galați* (<https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/scurta-lectie-de-eroism-aparatorii-orasului-galati> )

<sup>66</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file 119, sheet 164.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 126.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 165.

<sup>69</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, RIJO 1, Inventory 916, The 8th Infantry Brigade, Historical Register 16.VIII.1916-1.IV. 1921, file 1, sheet 64; see Cristian Dragoș Căldăraru, *Scurtă lecție de eroism: apărătorii orașului Galați* (<https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/scurta-lectie-de-eroism-aparatorii-orasului-galati> )

the Siret to the German camps. However, on the 8th, around 10 o'clock in the morning, we faced serious danger coming from Galați, when the Russians repelled our troop within 300 m of Țiglina, threatening to enter the town and taking two of our companies and their commanders prisoners. Fortunately, when the torpedo boats came into action our troops also relaunched their attack and pushed the Russians back to the railway. On the morning of 9th, our victorious troops were on the bridge across the Siret, disarming the Russians who did not want to surrender to the Germans – that is the infantry, as the artillery never returned”<sup>70</sup>.

The battle around the town of Galați was a bitter one. For example, two battalions of the 50th / 64th Infantry Regiment took part in the battles from the 8th / 21st January 1918 near the village of Filești. On that day, the 50th / 64th Infantry Regiment lost 14 soldiers, while 1 officer and 49 other soldiers were wounded<sup>71</sup>. The Romanian soldiers stopped the advancement of the Russian troops and captured 5 machine guns and more ammunition from a convoy of the 34th Russian Regiment<sup>72</sup>.

Until the night of 21st January, the Russian troops on the eastern part of the town took refuge in Bessarabia. After requesting help from the Germans and being refused, the 9th Division capitulated. The troops of the 9th Division accepted to be disarmed and to peacefully leave the Romanian territory, receiving in return their horses and carriages. On 22nd January, at 5 o'clock in the morning, the 9th Division crossed through the west towards the German flanks. Two days later, the 10th Division accepted to give up their arms and were allowed to cross the Prut to Bessarabia<sup>73</sup>. Glenn Torrey states that “the bloody defeat suffered by the Russians convinced the other Russians in the area to give up the fight and to accept the Romanians’ request to disarm and be transported to Russia”<sup>74</sup>.

The German intelligence reports stated that “the battle of Galați” was a serious confrontation, given that the well-known quality of the troops of the 4th Siberian Corps. After the battle, a few Russian units arrived in Brăila, which was occupied by the Germans. The Russian soldiers were well-equipped and they seemed to be in good spirits but admitted that the battle of Galați had been “bitter”, as the Romanians caused them serious losses and took 1,000 men prisoners<sup>75</sup>.

The Romanians also suffered notable losses. Although there are no clear figures as to the total losses incurred by the Romanian Army, the military

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<sup>70</sup> Gheorghe Niculescu, Gheorghe Dobrescu, Andrei Niculescu, *Preoți în lupta pentru făurirea României Mari 1916-1919*, București, Editura Europa Nova, 2000, p. 198-199.

<sup>71</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, fund 790, The 8th Infantry Brigade, file 42, sheet 15.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>73</sup> Glenn E. Torrey, *Armata revoluționară rusă și România 1917*, p. 102.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 103.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*. Actually, those soldiers were disarmed and forced to obey the orders given by the commander of the Romanian troops on the Romanian front.

documents state that the 6th, 21st, and the 50th/64th Infantry Regiments lost an officer and 22 soldiers, with other 90 wounded<sup>76</sup>. These losses reveal the intensity of the battles that occurred around the town of Galați and proves the dedication of the Romanian soldiers and officers involved in isolating the bolshevik danger that was threatening Romania. The heroism of the Romanian soldiers is also evident from the fact that they engaged in battle despite their enemy's superiority in numbers most of the times. However, the Romanian officers and soldiers' training, their excellent coordination as well as the way the troops were organised played a decisive role in obtaining this victory.

From a different perspective, the battle of Galați was, according to some statements, the first battle in Romanian military history when the air force, the navy and the land forces worked together<sup>77</sup>. In these battles, the Romanian air force carried out surveillance missions, of utmost importance in understanding the movement of the Russian troops for the purpose of bombarding the Russian positions. The fights left a lasting impression on the inhabitants of Galați. In April 1918, an article in the local paper read: "The Russian incursion through Romania will remain in our minds, as it destroyed our country's wealth, drained its energy, emptied its rich barns and left a trail of destruction in its wake: ruins, fire, pillage, murders and sheer poverty. This is what the Russian army did in Romania, in the name of civilization and the rights of all peoples, in the memorable campaign of 1916-1917-1918. And the new generations will shudder at the thought that: «The Russians were here»"<sup>78</sup>.

In order to honour the memory of the army men who took part in the battle and those who lost their lives, the local authorities of Galați commissioned in 1925 the erection of a monument known as "The defenders of the town of Galați 7th-9th January, 1918", work executed by the local sculptor Ioannis N. Renieris<sup>79</sup>. This initiative follows another one from 1919, when a commemorative plaque and badge were made to honour those who lost their lives in the battle of Galați<sup>80</sup>. In 1963 the monument was destroyed to make room for "the civil works in the area", but in 2017 the County Council of Galați decided to finance a project to rebuild the monument "The defenders of the town of Galați 7th-9th January, 1918" and to reproduce the badge and the plaque. On 20th January, 2018, the monument "The defenders of the town of Galați 7th-9th January, 1918", 7th-9th

<sup>76</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file 119, sheet 160.

<sup>77</sup> Cristian Dragoș Căldăraru, *Scurtă lecție de eroism: apărătorii orașului Galați* (<https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/scurta-lectie-de-eroism-aparatorii-orasului-galati>)

<sup>78</sup> *Galații noi*, V, no. 66, 10 aprilie 1918, *apud* Paul Păltânea, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>79</sup> Cristian Dragoș Căldăraru, *Scurtă lecție de eroism: apărătorii orașului Galați* (<https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/scurta-lectie-de-eroism-aparatorii-orasului-galati>)

<sup>80</sup> Paul Păltânea, *op. cit.*, p. 268; Cristian Dragoș Căldăraru, *Scurtă lecție de eroism: apărătorii orașului Galați* (<https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/scurta-lectie-de-eroism-aparatorii-orasului-galati>)

January, 1918” was inaugurated during the ceremonies occasioned by the commemoration of the centenary of the battle of Galați<sup>81</sup>.

To commemorate those battles, the town of Galați was decorated by the king of Italy and the president of France. On 25th May, 1921 general Pietro Badoglio, commander-in-chief of the Supreme Headquarters of the Italian Army came to Galați in person to award them the Italian War Merit Cross for their sacrifice and heroism in the battle that took place between 7th and 9th January, 1918 while on 11th October, 1922 general Henri Mathias Berthelot, former chief of the French mission in Romania, offered the local authorities of Galați the French War Merit Cross on behalf of the president of France. These gestures and “insignia” proved the appreciation duly given to those who sacrificed their lives to save the town of Galați from destruction and prevented the expansion of the chaos produced by the Russian troops affected by the “plague of bolshevism”.

#### **The battle of Pașcani (13th / 25th January 1918)**

The first incidents caused by the retreating Russian troops in the county of Iași occurred starting with the end of 1917 and the beginning of the following year. On 29th December 1917 / 11th January 1918, the 30th column of the 9th Russian Division was stationed in the village of Fântânele (near Pașcani). The Russian officers threatened to bombard Pașcani unless they were allowed to leave the front. Likewise, 900 armed soldiers and 25 Russian officers from the 333rd and 346th Infantry Regiments were stationed in the commune of Valea Seacă, to the north of Pașcani. The 84th Regiment, with two artillery batteries, 400 men, 12 officers, 12 cannons, 18 ammunition caissons, was also stationed in their vicinity. According to written accounts of the event “they resented our soldiers for not starting a revolution as well”. Four more Russian artillery batteries, 16 cannons, 16 ammunition caissons, 120 carriages with provisions and ammunition were stationed in the commune of Miroslavești, the village of Soci<sup>82</sup>. On 28th December 1917 / 10th January, 1918, the Russian troops wandering through the counties of Moldavia were destroying the telephone lines and stealing the wires. For instance, they stole 50 kilos of wire from the line Pașcani-Cristești-Fălticeni<sup>83</sup>. Meanwhile, the Roman-Paşcani line was guarded by the Romanian troops of the 7th Division. In Timișești, the mountain infantry soldiers succeeded in disarming the Russians who were threatening to occupy the water supply stations for the city of Iași<sup>84</sup>. Around the town of Pașcani, the Moskals “urged the villagers to riot against the authorities”. The Romanian officers were clear about what had to be done: “the Moskals of Sodomeni, who

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<sup>81</sup> For details go to <https://presagalati.ro/inaugurare-a-monumentului-aparatorii-orasului-galati-la-100-de-ani-de-la-batalia-de-la-galati-din-7-9-ianuarie-1918/>

<sup>82</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, Fund 4496, the 2nd Border Regiment, Inventory, file 19, sheet 88

<sup>83</sup> Idem, file 18, sheet 201.

<sup>84</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

messed with people's minds, should be tied tightly, held down and beaten to a pulp, before our discipline and strength is worn down!"<sup>85</sup>

The 16th Regiment Suceava, occupying positions in Mirosllovești and Brătești, with avanposts in Soci, Moțca, Gâștești and Pașcani had an important role to play in the area near Pașcani. According to the records from the morning of 13th/25th January, the situation of the troops was as follows: "The 1st Battalion, except the 1st company, and the 2nd Battalion occupied positions in Mirosllovești, with posts in Soci and Moțca. The 3rd Battalion, except the 11th company, occupied positions in Brătești, with avanposts in Gastești-Sodomani-Paşcani. Their duty was to stop the Russian army in their advancement towards Pașcani. The 2nd Company was stationed in Tupilești-Barticești. At 11 o'clock, the 2nd Battalion was dispatched to the village of Soci to prevent 2 Russian companies coming from Cristești from entering the village. On arriving in Soci, Major Butnaru C., Commander of the 2nd Battalion, found a group of Russian soldiers on the outskirts of the village and urged them to give up their arms before continuing their journey. While trying to persuade the Russians to do so, they cowardly shot and wounded him gravely. The 7th Company, already dispatched on the premises, after being fired at from inside the village, opened fire as well and launched the attack. The action started at 12.45 and at 1 p.m. the Russian artillery opened fire onto our front. At 1.05 our artillery responded with fire onto the enemy troops located to the S.E. of the village of Soci, creating complete havoc among them and making them run into the forest to the N.W. of the village. The Russian artillery also ceased fire and escaped towards Boureni, being chased with open fire by our artillery. Despite their attempt to join the battery on the national road Roman-Cristești, they were chased again, and retreated towards Cristești"<sup>86</sup>.

The Regiment helped capture a truck, as well as the Russian army horses and carriages. Then, on 15th / 28th January, the Russian troops located in the villages of Oniceni-Forăști-Ruși were disarmed on their way to Humulești. In the meantime, the Russian troops attacked the 2nd Border Regiment. However, they were not given any chance to open fire onto the Romanian troops: "all escape routes were closed for them. At 2 p.m. the Russian troops sent emissaries with white flags, informing the Romanians that the Commander of the 2nd Russian Corps had agreed to surrender"<sup>87</sup>. The first pieces of information to reach Iași indicated no violent clashes. The historian Nicolae Iorga found out from Ionel

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<sup>85</sup> Constantin Turtureanu, *În vârtoarea războiului (1914-1919). Amintiri*, Tip. "Litera românească", Cernăuți, 1938, p. 100-101.

<sup>86</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, RIJO 1, file 3363, sheet 74 ( Copy after the 1st Corps Chronicle from 1st August 1914 to 15th August 1916 and after the Operations Log from 15th August 1916 to 1st July 1918 and from 1st July 1918 to 1st April 1921: The "Suceava" Regiment No. 16).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 74.

Brătianu that a single fire exchange had occurred in Pașcani, caused by a “cowardly attack” on a Romanian officer. On the other hand, he also had information about the battle of Mărăști, which resulted in a lot of casualties<sup>88</sup>.

### **The battle of Spătărești (14th-15th / 27th-28th January, 1918)**

The undisarmed Russian troops which left from the area near Pașcani headed for Fălticeni. This is where they joined other troops from the 2nd Russian Corps, a total of 10,000 people. Such a massive presence in the area posed a real threat for the town and its inhabitants. The 1st and 2nd Romanian Border Regiments were stationed in Pașcani<sup>89</sup>. The 2nd Russian Army Corps was under the command of general Șelepin and of the commander -in-chief of the Supreme Headquarters, Moina Podoleski, and comprised 29 infantry battalions. 108 light cannons, 13 heavy machine guns, two pioneer companies. The purpose was an obvious one: junction with the bolshevized troops from the northern part of Bukovina<sup>90</sup>. The 3rd battalion from the 2nd Border Regiment, as well as a cavalry squadron, under the command of colonel D. Rădulescu, were involved in the battle of Spătărești. The colonel had a big role to play in this event: “the civilian population knew how to let the then colonel, now retired pensioner, Rădulescu Dumitru, handle the situation as he saw fit”<sup>91</sup>. The 2nd Border Regiment had already taken firm action against the Russians starting with the end of December. For instance, on 21st December, 1917, the 23rd Russian Mountain Infantry Regiment was forbidden to leave Cristești, and a few days later, 10 Russian carriages with 700 weapons were confiscated from them<sup>92</sup>. Colonel Rădulescu had almost 800 border guards under his command, while the others were dispatched outside of town where the bolsheviks were torturing and plundering the citizens and setting the barns with provisions on fire”<sup>93</sup>.

At the beginning of January, 1918, the county of Suceava was under siege. The Russian soldiers spread their propaganda in an attempt to get the population to rebel against the Romanian authorities and even the King. Gangs raided the streets at night and in Fântâna Mare, they shot a gendarme and an entire family. The Supreme Headquarters received information from several sources related to the critical and potentially dangerous situation from Suceava. On the evening of

<sup>88</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>89</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

<sup>90</sup> *Lupta de la Spătărești pentru apărarea orașului Folticeni de către Regimentul 2 Grăniceri contra corpului II de bolșevici* by Gh. Fira aka Nicolae Gh., Teacher in Folticeni and reserve lieutenant in the 2nd Border Regiment, Tipografia M. Saidman, Fălticeni, p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Colonelul P. Șeicărescu, *Amintirea luptei de la Spătărești* in “Înmuguriri. Literary-artistic-social magazine, year IV, no. 7-12, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, RIJO 1, file 3247, sheet 14-18 (Operations Log of the 2nd Border Regiment, September 1917 - April 1918).

<sup>93</sup> Mihai-Aurelian Căruntu, *Lupta de la Spătărești din 14/15 ianuarie 1918* in “Europa XXI”, VOL. XI-XII/2002-2003, p. 161.

5th / 18th January, a big meeting was held in Suceava, which lasted from 8 in the evening until 3 in the morning. A total of 80 people attended this meeting, including all the division, regiment and corps commanders, as well as the soviet presidents. This meeting further alerted the Romanian authorities<sup>94</sup>. On 8th / 21st January, 1918, the 2nd Border Regiment was informed by the Romanian Railway Direction that: “1) the Russians threaten to set the ammunition warehouse from Basarabi station on fire 2) the Russians plan to stop an empty train by force and load the ammunition from Basarabi station. Get in touch with the station chief and take all precautions necessary in order to prevent this danger”<sup>95</sup>.

The day before the battle of Spătărești, the daily Bulletin could not be dispatched as all the telegraphic lines to the south of Fălticeni had been cut by the Russians. All the poles had been cut down and the wires cut, rolled and thrown away<sup>96</sup>. One participant’s record of the battle of Spătărești capture very well the general mood and state of mind: “I am not wrong to say that it felt as if we were going to a party. Everybody was joyful, not thinking about what was in store for us, for, in all honesty, we had no idea what we might have to face”<sup>97</sup>.

On 14th / 17th January, a Russian delegation requested permission to leave for Suceava from the 2nd Border Regiment and threatened to open fire unless this permission was granted. Following the refusal of the Romanian army representatives, the Russians carried out their threat. The battle started at 11.30 a.m. and lasted until evening, when another Russian delegation requested permission to leave for Cornu Luncii. They were asked to give up their arms and ammunition. At 7 a.m. the following day, the Russians announced their capitulation<sup>98</sup>. The Russians suffered significant losses: over 150 men died and 500 were injured, while the Romanians lost 11 men with 28 others being injured. As eye witness testimonies reveal, the bayonet battle was bitter<sup>99</sup>. There were also some other sub-officers who distinguished themselves in the battle of Spătărești. These included 26 soldiers, corporals, sergeants and platoonists from the 10th Company of the 2nd Border Regiment of the 3rd Battalion<sup>100</sup>; also, 35 sub-officers and officers from the 9th Active Company were put forward for decoration<sup>101</sup>. As a result of the battle of Spătărești, the Russian troops in the

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<sup>94</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, Fund 4496, the 2nd Border Regiment, file 19, sheet 31, 101.

<sup>95</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, RIJO 1, file 3247, sheet 14-18 (Operations Log of the 2nd Border Regiment, Spetember 1917 - April 1918, sheet 20).

<sup>96</sup> CSPMI-Pitești, Fund 4496, The 2nd Border Regiment, file 19, sheet 299.

<sup>97</sup> *Lupta de la Spătărești pentru apărarea orașului Folticeni de către Regimentul 2 Grăniceri contra corpului II de bolșevici* by Gh. Fira aka Nicolae Gh., Teacher in Folticeni and reserve lieutenant in the 2nd Border Regiment, Tipografia M. Saidman, Fălticeni, p.12.

<sup>98</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 211-212.

<sup>99</sup> *Lupta de la Spătărești pentru apărarea...*, p. 21.

<sup>100</sup> See Table 1 (CSPMI-Pitești Fund 4496 The 2nd Border Regiment, file 20, sheet 128)

<sup>101</sup> See Table 2 (*Ibidem*, sheet 127).

center of Moldavia failed to meet the 18th and 40th bolshevised Corps in Bukovina. A possible junction might have had disastrous results for the localities in the northern part of the country. A few days after the battle of Spătărești, the 1st-3rd Battalions of the 2nd Border Regiment continued their mission to disarm the bolshevised troops near Fălticeni; for instance, on 18th January the Romanians attempted to “cleanse” the villages of Rădășeni, Baia, Fântâna Mare, Bogdănești and Boroaia of the Russian troops that were left behind<sup>102</sup>.

In the wake of these events, during the meeting held on 17th / 29th January, the city hall of Fălticeni decided to rename the “Tâmpești” Street “The 2nd Border Regiment”, as a token of gratitude for the regiment that on 14th January succeeded in ridding the town of the Russian troops that wanted to destroy it<sup>103</sup>. A few years later, on 22nd September 1922, a bronze statue of the border guards made by the sculptor Burcă was inaugurated in Fălticeni, while in January, 1932, one of the town streets was named Dumitru Rădulescu<sup>104</sup>.

**Table 1**

Regiment 2 Border  
Battalion III Border

Company 10 Activ

Nominal Table

People who have distinguished themselves in the fight with the Russians at Spătărești

Nr. crt.	Registration	Nominal Table	Military Rank	Medals in possession	Obs.
1	1/909	Pană D. Ioan	Sergeant Major	Sf. Gheorghe Cross	
2	529/13	Drăgușeanu Nicolae	Serg. Instr.	Manhood and faith cl. II	
3	117/14	Mancaș Vasile	Sergeant		
4	303/11	Zahariuc Vasile	Corporal		
5	655/13	Tudose Nicolae	Corporal		
6	455/16	Lupoaca Stan	Corporal		
7	398/10	Brânză Ioan	Soldier		
8	1179/11	Simion Gheorghe	Soldier		
9	808/14	Vișoiu Vasile	Soldier		
10	830/14	Vulpe Gheorghe	Soldier		
11	931/14	Cristea Ștefan	Soldier		
12	438/15	Hlihor Petre	Soldier		
13	446/15	Avrămiuc Vasile	Soldier		

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, sheet 108.

<sup>103</sup> AMR, Inventory 558, The 2nd Border Regiment Fund, file 19, sheet 165.

<sup>104</sup> Colonelul P. Seicărescu, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

14	554/15	Mazilu Anton	Soldier		
15	1376/15	Bahagiu Trofin	Soldier		injured
16	569/16	Iliescu Ilie	Soldier		
17	599/16	Contiuc Gheorghe	Soldier		
18	1284/17	[Illegible- n.n] Anton	Soldier		
19	1344/17	Mercaș Grigore	Soldier		
20	1416/17	Marin Marin	Soldier		
21	1540/17	Deacu Gheorghe	Soldier		
22	1570/17	Matei Nicolae	Soldier		injured
23	112/18	Tănase Dumitru	Soldier		
24	123/18	Busuioc Vasile	Soldier		
25	180/18	Stoleru Constantin	Soldier		
26	339/18	Frigură Dumitru	Soldier		

Commander of 10<sup>th</sup> Company Activ  
Lieutenant [Illegible- n.n]

**Table 2**

Regiment II Border

Company 9 [Illegible- n.n] Activ

Nominal Table

People who have distinguished themselves in the fight with the Russians at Spătărești  
and proposed for decoration

Nr. crt.	Registration and contingent	Name and Surname	Military Rank	Medals and decorations in possession
1	-	Calangiu Constantin	Captain	Order of the Crown of Romania
2	-	Bancilă Alexandru	Lieutenant	Nothing
3	-	Lupescu Artur	Sergeant	Virt. Milit. Cl II
4	1175/1914	Constantin Mihalache	Sergeant	Nothing
5	407/1912	Gheorghe Gheorghe	Sergeant	Nothing
6	212/1913	Păciucă Dumitru	Sergeant	Nothing
7	225/1914	Eftimie Dumitru	Sergeant	Nothing
8	/1914	Duțu Comșa	Sergeant	Nothing
9	1032/1910	[Illegible- n.n] Constantin	Sergeant	Nothing
10	818/1914	Hiuță Marin	Corporal	Nothing
11	534/911	Bajenaru Constantin	Corporal	Nothing
12	80/915	Serafim Ioan	Corporal	Nothing
13	741/915	Jugaur Zaharia	Corporal	Nothing
14	343/912	[Illegible- n.n] Gheorghe	Corporal	Nothing
15	230/1910	Nistor Ioan	Corporal	Nothing

16	225/915	Zaharia Ioan	Corporal	Nothing
17	3/1901	[Illegible- n.n] Ioan	Corporal	Nothing
18	998/914	Stanciu Constantin	Corporal	Nothing
19	692/917	Zahariea Costică	Soldier	Nothing
20	507/918	Aghiorghiesei Costache	Soldier	Nothing
21	40/1916	[Illegible- n.n] Dimitrie	Soldier	Nothing
22	341/1917	Harapu Neculaie	Soldier	Nothing
23	1178/1917	[Illegible- n.n] Dimitrie	Soldier	Nothing
24	114/916	Velicu Ilie	Soldier	Nothing
25	452/910	Avram radu	Soldier	Nothing
26	950/1917	Iacob Lefter	Soldier	Nothing
27	281/914	Andronic Ioan	Soldier	Nothing
28	337/918	Groapă Constantin	Soldier	Nothing
29	56/912	Petrescu Constantin	Soldier	Nothing
30	924/917	Băiculescu Ilie	Soldier	Nothing
31	120/910	Drăghici Marin	Soldier	Nothing
32	246/916	Furtună Costache	Soldier	Nothing
33	1026/917	Oancea Toader	Soldier	Nothing
34	1417/917	Cornea Ioan	Soldier	Nothing
35	1208/917	Ciobanu Ioan	Soldier	Nothing

Commander of 9 Company Grăniceri  
Captain Calangiu

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## Appendix

### Document no. 1

#### Reports on the events of 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th January 1918

7th January, 10 o'clock.

Colonel Bădescu, commander of the 8th Infantry Brigade, gave me and my company a direct order to leave towards lake Calica at 12 o'clock. After 10 km we received the written order, attached here.

Following the given order, we took the route Smârdan-Movila Calica (altitude 61) taking all the necessary safety measures for the march and heading south on the western side of the lake. Once we got to the 3rd Canton of the Romanian Railways Filești-Barboși, the patrol signalled to us the presence of some Russian columns from the 10th Artillery Brigade. After we made contact with them, we realised that they were not one of the bolshevised troops and we continued our advancement, leaving behind a patrol to supervise them. As our patrols were climbing the hill towards the national road Movileni-Galați, one of them spotted some Russian infantry units occupying the trenches to the north of this road. With the entire company deployed into shooters, we occupied the hill of Șoldan, with lake Calica on our left and no cover on our right.

Meanwhile, (3.30p.m.) our troops were attacked by the Russian patrols, wounding private Dinu Ion. In front of the trenches occupied by the Russians, there were 2 antiaerial cannons and numerous hut holes that the Russian had occupied and where they had installed machine guns facing the valley that separated us. When they wanted to advance towards us, they were stopped by our fire and forced to retreat to their positions. The fire stopped at 7.30 p.m. At 8 o'clock we set up advanced posts to avoid being caught by surprise. At 11 p.m. the sentinell from the 2nd advanced post came with a Russian horseman who wanted to reach the Russian bolshevised troops, carrying an order whose copy I attach here, translated from Russian. Seeing the content of the order, I let the horseman go.

At 12.30 a.m. the Russian troops opened an intensive artillery fire, which continued until 1 o'clock.

At 10 p.m., I dispatched sublieutenant Nicolescu C[onstan]tin to establish contact with our troops, which were found on the road Smârdan-Filești, at km 5, and were part of the 50th Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Battalion. After reporting to the commander of that respective regiment and informing him of our company's situation, he was given a platoon from the 5th/50th Infantry Company to ensure that our company would connect with the troops on our right, informing me that we were under the orders of that Regiment.

8th January 1918, 7.30. The Russian troops reopened the fire. At 9 a horseman informed me that our right would be enforced by a battalion (2nd) from the 50th Infantry Regiment. The Russian troops attempted to advance on the

valley of lake Calica to make their way towards Filești, but we managed to stop them in a fight that cost us one dead sergeant and two injured soldiers. The fight lasted until 7.15 p.m.

9th January, 4 o'clock. A riding emissary from the 50th Infantry Regiment delivered us the verbal order of the 2nd Battalion commander to stop the fire as the Russian troops had agreed to give up their arms.

At 5.30, we sent some patrols in the direction of the Russian troops, only to discover that we had not been informed that the Russian troops had left their positions and the disarmament was to be carried out by the 21st Infantry Regiment of the 9th Company at Barboși bridge.

At 11 o'clock, when we dispatched sublieutenant Papazissu Emanuel to the command post of the 50th Infantry Regiment under whose command he was, he no longer found anyone there. When the student platoonist Zilberman Hugo established contact with the 21st Infantry Regiment in Barboși, we received the verbal command to retreat, as order was now fully restored.

At 4 p.m. we left for the village of Fântânele.

Signature [Illegible – n.n.]

(CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file 119, sheet 169, both sides).

### **Document no. 2**

#### **Report no. 2837 of 18th January 1918, The 8th Infantry Brigade of the 4th Division**

In response to the order received by phone, and following the investigations we conducted as well as captain Pavtchincie's interrogations, I respectfully report the following:

1. The Russian troops gathered in Branișteea on the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> January, under the command of captain Partianicov.
2. At 7 o'clock, the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Infantry Regiments, the 13th artillery sub-division of the 13th Division and the 9th Artillery Brigade were in Branișteea. The itinerary they followed was: Branișteea – Traian - Șerbeștii Vechi - Movileni.
3. The first clash with the Russian troops occurred on the Țiglina hill.
4. From the information provided by captain Pavtchincie the following can be inferred: The 35<sup>th</sup> Regiment acted as an avanpost; the 33rd Regiment fought in the north of Movileni between the two ponds and the 36th Regiment acted as a rearguard. Two batteries from the 13th Division were positioned so as to shoot towards Galați and the troops on the Țiglina hill; another battery from the 9th Brigade was positioned so as to shoot towards the troops located to the north of Movileni.

5. The Russian units which surrendered to the Germans by crossing the Barboși bridge are as follows: The 13th subdivision of the 13th Division; the 1st Battery of the 10th Artillery Brigade; 419 soldiers from the 33rd Infantry regiment; 267 soldiers from the 35th Infantry Regiment; 70 soldiers from the 36th Regiment. These Regiments crossed with their arsenal: machine guns, weapons, horses, carriages, etc. The following scheme shows the Russian troops' arsenal on 8th January 1918.

6. The position of the other batteries and the units' supplies could not be identified, as the Russian captain Partenicov, commander of the 9th Division, fled to Reni during the battle.

Commander of the 8th Infantry Brigade Bădescu  
(CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file 119, sheet 218)

### **Document No. 3**

#### **Report on the operations against the 9th Russian Division**

7th January 1918

At 9.30 the troops of the 9th Russian division gathered quickly in Branișteana, on the national road, and by 10 o'clock, the Division was already on their march to Șendreni.

When summoned by our posts, the Russians responded by opening fire.

Our troops, positioned as outlined in scheme no. 1, received immediate orders to stop the Russians: the company from Șendreni was ordered to delay the march of the Russian column, the troops from Galați were ordered to meet the Russian troops between the Calica Pond and the Danube, while the companies from Fântânele, Vânători, Smârdan and Tulucești were ordered to gravitate towards the south in an attempt to encircle the Russian troops.

The reserve of the Division from Pechea, comprising 2 battalions from the 50th Infantry Regiment, 2 squadrons and 2 batteries, was dispatched to Fântânele. The company from Șendreni, enforced with the ones from Branișteana, blocked the advancement of the Russian troops, halting them until 2 p.m.

The Russians initiated the attack, but were surprised by the fire of our machine guns, while a second attack, much stronger than the first, was successful in defeating the companies from Șendreni, thus opening their way to Movileni and Barboși.

At that moment, the position of the Romanian troops was as outlined in scheme no. 2 (stage I). Once the vanguard of the Russian column reached Movileni, they were summoned to give up their arms. Instead, they set up 18 cannons and bombarded Galați and our troops. Meanwhile, the Infantry which reached Barboși was met with fire by the Romanian troops on the hill of Țiglina,

the Navy batteries and the battery of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, which caused considerable losses among the Russian columns.

At 6 p.m. the units deployed from the Division reserve arrived in Fântânele, some of which being directed to the centre of the northern sector, while the others to Smârdan where they surrounded and disarmed the Russian troops stationed here, which had provoked them.

At 7 p.m., the Russians, after an intense training with the entire field and heavy artillery at their disposal, attacked the eastern side of our position, but were repelled, suffering significant losses.

At 8 p.m. both sides ceased the action, with our troops organising and completing the encirclement.

The day of 8th January 1918

At 12.30 a.m., the Russian infantry and artillery started the action, but it lasted only about 30 minutes.

At 8.30 the action was resumed with artillery bombardment and intense machine gun fire. Our troops launched the attack at 10.15 and, although opposed with a violent artillery blockade and a lot of machine guns, managed to advance up to a few hundred meters away from the enemy infantry.

At 11.00, a detachment made up of 2 companies with many machine guns attempted to push back our left flank under the bank of the Danube, action which proved unsuccessful due to the help of our gunboats positioned on the Danube.

At 12 p.m. started the bombardment of the Russian artillery, conducted with great precision and method, which continued until 7.30 p.m.; starting with 3 p.m., the Russians also used blockades with long distance machine gun batteries.

All this time, our infantry advanced slowly but surely under a hurricane of fire, on an open field, stopping at 3 p.m. after gaining 1 km to the centre and the west (stage 2 on the scheme), while in the east, they managed to repel the enemy in a bayonet attack, making them retreat chaotically to their canton and causing them significant losses. A company dispatched to Filești in order to surveil the 34th Russian Infantry which was stirring up trouble, was met with fire. The company watched them closely, preventing them from taking part in the action.

At 5 p.m. a small plane flew over Movileni.

The data collected by the plane – transmitted to the Division and then immediately to the troops – revealed the position of the Russian troops reserve, approximately 2,500 people, who were massed between the station and the bridge of Barboși.

Meanwhile, a Kazakh squadron coming from Reni, attacked and disarmed the border guards platoon at the mouth of the Prut, while the heavy batteries on the left bank of the Prut bombarded Galați and the navy batteries on the hill of Țiglina.

Following the report that two regiments of the 10th Russian Division joined the 9th Division and the rumours that the Russian troops were advancing from Reni to Galați, it was decided that:

a ) The 1st Battalion of the 6th R[egiment] must travel from Slobozia-Conachi to Filești in requisitioned carriages.

b ) The 150 m/m Subdivision from Tecuci is ordered to deploy to Filești passing through Cudalbi and Pechea.

c ) The 1st Army is asked to deploy an infantry regiment from the 13h Division that would protect the sector left unprotected as a result of the movement of the troops concentrated near Galați.

Indeed, at 6 p.m, three Russian companies, accompanied by their artillery, entered the country via Reni, planning to reach Galați, but were repelled by the company left to guard the town. An armed boat advanced on the Danube and fired at the docks and the gunboats but to no avail.

At 6.30 p.m., a squadron of 3 planes launched bombs on the Russian troops in Barboși.

During the night, taking advantage of the dark, the Russian troops massed near Barboși bridge started their retreat on the right side of the Siret river, planning to surrender to the Germans. This plan was hindered by the Romanian troops by occupying the brigde.

This is when the word is out that the 9th Division requested help from Reni via T.F.F., stating that unless it came, they would be forced to cross into the German flanks, and that their troops had been led by German officers into action.

A group of officers from the 9th artillery Brigade surrendered to the troops on the hill of Țiglina, stating that 18 batteries had taken part in action.

At 9 p.m. captain Pafcinsky, commander-in-chief of the 9th Division, presented himself as an emissary, declaring that the his troops had accepted to be disarmed, provided they were left alive and granted safe passage to Russia.

The day of 9th January 1918.

During the night of 8th-9th nothing happened. At 10.30 the action to disarm the Russian troops started, after which they were concentrated in Vânătoti, Costi, Smârdan and Fântânele.

#### Losses

	Injured	Dead	Missing
Officers	-	1	-
Troop	86	18	-
Horsed	-	-	-

The enemy losses are not known exactly, but they were much higher, and the wounded are said to have been evacuated towards Brăila, and 150 towards Galați; 150 were buried on the field.

**Captures**

Up until now:

a) 1154 men from the 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th infantry Regiments as well as 28 officers were disarmed.

b) 2 120 mortars, 42 field cannons, 263 horses, 586 weapons, 12 machine guns, 4 mine throwers were inventoried.

Commander of the 4th Division, General Ioan Ghinescu

Commander-in-chief, Lt. Colonel [illegible – n.n.]

(CSPMI-Pitești, fund 2266, The 4th Infantry Division, file 119, sheet 185-186)

**Document no. 4**

**Copy after the Corps Chronicle from 1st August 1914 to 15th August 1916 and after the Operations Log from 15th August 1916 to 1st July 1918 and from 1st July 1918 until 1st April 1921: The “Suceava” Regiment, No. 16.**

Sheet 74. 13th January

The situation of the troops until 11 o'clock is as follows. The 1st Battalion, with the exception of the 1st Company, and the 2nd Battalion occupied Miroslovești with posts in Soci and Motzca. The 3rd Battalion, except the 11th Company - based in Bratești, with avantposts in Gâștești-Sodomeni-Pășcani. Their task was to stop any Russian troop attempting to cross to Pașcani. The 2nd Company was stationed in Tupilești-Barticești. At 11 o'clock the 2nd Battalion was dispatched to Soci to prevent 2 companies coming from Cristești from entering the village. Once in Soci, Major Butnaru C., Commander of the 2nd Battalion, found a group of Russian soldiers and summoned them to give up their arms before allowing them to continue their journey. While trying to persuade the Russians to do so, they cowardly shot him, injuring him severely. The 7th Company, already dispatched on the premises, after being fired at from inside the village, opened fire as well and launched their attack. The action started at 12.45 and at 1 p.m. the Russian artillery opened fire onto our front. At 1.05 our artillery responded with fire directed at the enemy troops located to the S.E. of the village of Soci, creating complete havoc among them and making them run into the forest to the N.W. of the village. The Russian Artillery, chased with open fire by our artillery, ceased their fire and escaped towards Boureni. After an unsuccessful attempt to join the battery on the national road Roman-Cristești, they were chased again and forced to retreat towards Cristești.

[...]

Sheet 73. Carriages, horses and a truck were captured and returned to the Brigade with [illegible – n.n.] separate

Sheet 74. 15th January 1918

The 1st Battalion, on its way to Ciumulești, disarmed all the Russian troops in the villages of Oniceni-Forăști-Ruși, so that they would not cause any trouble during the operation that was about to unfold against the Russian troops that attacked the 2nd Border Regiment.

[...]

They were not given a single opportunity to open fire onto our troops; all the possible escape routes were blocked. At 2 p.m. the Russian troops sent emissaries carrying white flags, to inform us of the 2nd Russian Corps commander's decision to give up their arms.

Sheet 75. The action ended immediately after this. This battalion operated single-handedly and without a simultaneous action from the 2nd Regiment, that did not fire a single shot. Afterwards, the Russian troops on their way to Ciumulești were disarmed; while the other troops, following their surrender as a result of the 1st Battalion's action, were disarmed by other Romanian troops in Fălticeni.

[...]

(CSPMI-Pitești, RIJO 1, file 3363)

#### **Document no. 5**

#### **Operations log of the 2nd Border Regiment, September 1917-April 1918**

Sheet 14. 21st December 1917, the 23rd (Russian) Mountain Infantry Regiment was not allowed to leave Cristești. This regiment was spread throughout the entire county and was blocked from advancing any further. The news coming from Suceava and Bukovina report a peaceful situation.

Sheet 18. [...] 10 Russian carriages with 700 weapons and machine guns were confiscated from the Bolsheviks.

Sheet 20. 8th January 1918, The Romanian Railway Direction informed us that: "1) the Russians threaten to set the ammunition warehouse from Basarabi station on fire 2) the Russians plan to stop an empty train by force and load the ammunition from Basarabi station. Get in touch with the station chief and take all necessary precautions in order to prevent this danger".

9th January. Following the threats of the 9th Russian army, it appears that two divisions have decided to follow the Liteni-Frumușica-Todireni route, while two others the Mihăileni-Molnița route.

The Russians held meetings in Cristești and resorted to pillage and plunders.

[...]

(CSPMI-Pitești, RIJO 1, file 3247)