

DUMITRU MURĂREȚU – PRIEST OF NO. 7 HUNTER’S REGIMENT AND NO. 39 INFANTRY REGIMENT

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Abstract

Priest Dumitru Murărețu, born in the village of Păișani, the Stoina commune, participated in the First World War – more precisely in the 1916-1917 campaigns – as priest of the 7th Ranger Regiment, taking part in the battle of Mărăști and in the third battle of Oituz and he distinguished himself by the bravery in the fights from Hârja (Oituz), where he contributed to uplifting the troops’ and officers’ morale. Moreover, Priest Dumitru Murărețu helped the regiment doctor to tend the wounded coming from first line of front.

Under these circumstances, Priest Dumitru Murărețu would be promoted, on the 1st of January 1918, to a rank equivalent to captain.

Later on, Priest Dumitru Murărețu took part in the Romanian Army’s campaign in Bessarabia, as priest of the 39th Infantry Regiment within the Xth Infantry Division, unit which deployed its garrison at Tighina (Bender), where Priest Dumitru Murărețu served until the end of the year 1918.

After the First World War ended, Priest Dumitru Murărețu would be decorated by King Ferdinand I of Romania with the “Crown of Romania” order and, after demobilization, he returned to the Țânțăreni parish, from where, subsequently, during the year 1927, he transferred to the Urdari parish.

Keywords: military priest, First World War, Mărăști, Oituz, Bessarabia.

He was born in the year 1882 in the village of Păișani, the Stoina commune, and later lived with his parents in the Bărbătești commune. He married Iulia Pretorian (1885 - 1975) together with whom he had four children: Lucia, married Gregorian, Ernestina, married Niculescu, Geta, married Bălănescu, and Tiberiu Murărețu. Priest Dumitru Murărețu’s first child, Lucia, was born on 16 August 1904 and the second child was Tiberiu Murărețu, the family’s only male heir, born sometime during the year 1906 in the Urdari commune, Gorj County. Ernestina, the third child of Priest Dumitru Murărețu’s family came to life on the 25 October 1907 in the Urdari commune, while Geta, the family’s youngest child, would be born in the family house din comuna Urdari în cursul anului 1911.

Priest Dumitru Murărețu’s wife, Iulia, born Pretorian, was born on 7 December 1885 in the Țânțăreni commune. Widowed by Priest Dumitru Murărețu’s death, which occurred on 21 September 1927, Iulia Murărețu would die at the venerable age of almost 90, on 19 June 1975, in her home village.

Dumitru Murărețu was parish priest at Urdari until the year 1914, when he transferred to the Țânțăreni parish.

On the 22 September 1909 he acquired from Calistrița Negomireanu a patch of land at Urdari. A document dated 16 May 1909 mentioned the ownership of Priest Dumitru Murărețu over a patch of 44 meters wide patch of land from the Jiu course to the Artanu heights.

During the 1916-1917 campaigns, Dumitru Murărețu was priest of the 7th Ranger Regiment, holding sermons in the first trench lines and helping the regiment doctor, as well as the staff of the first aid points to apply bandages and to tend the wounded.

The 7th Ranger Regiment was part of the 6th Infantry Division within the IIIrd Army Corps of the 2nd Army. The Regiment was constituted on the 14/27 August 1916 by mobilizing the units and subunits belonging to the 7th Ranger Battalion from the permanent army, a battalion deployed in the Galați garrison (*Anuarul Armatei Române pe anul 1916*, 1916). On the 15 August 1916, the 7th Ranger Regiment was commanded by Colonel Dumitru Gherculescu (*Ordinea de bătaie a armatei – 14 august 1916*, 1916; Ioanițiu, 1929).

In the 1916 campaign, the 7th Ranger Regiment took part to the military actions of the 6th Infantry Division operative plan, respectively: the offensive in the Transylvania, defending the Carpathian passes, the fights on the Cricov – Ialomița alignment, the fights on the Râmnicu Sărat – Viziru alignments, as well as the actions that led to the stabilization of the front on the Siret river (Dabija, 1932).

In the 1917 campaign, the 7th Ranger Regiment took part in the battle of Mărăști and the third battle of Oituz under the command of Colonel Constantin Paulian (*Ordinea de bătaie a comandamentelor și serviciilor armatei – 15 iunie 1917*, 1917), and during the year 1918, the 7th Ranger Regiment was part of the 3rd Ranger Brigade within the 2nd Ranger Division (Ioanițiu, 1929).

The 6th Infantry Division was part of the IIIrd Army Corps within the 2nd Army, at the time Romania entered the First World War under the command the Brigadier General Constantin Costescu. The IIIrd Army Corps comprised the 5th and 6th Infantry Divisions, under the command of Division General Constantin Tănăsescu.

The order of battle for the 6th Infantry Division, on 14 August 1916, was as follows: the 7th Ranger Regiment, the 11th Infantry Brigade, formed from the 10th Putna Regiment, the VIth 24 Tecuci Regiment, the 12th Infantry Brigade, formed from the 11th Siret Regiment and the 12th Cantemir Regiment, the 36th Infantry Brigade, formed from the 51st Infantry Regiment and the 52nd Infantry Regiment, and the 6th Artillery Brigade, formed from the 11th Artillery Regiment and the 16th Howitzer Regiment.

In the first part of the year 1917, the 6th Infantry Division was reorganized, resulting in the following order of battle: In the first part of the year 1917, the 6th Infantry Division was reorganized, resulting the following order of battle: the 7th Ranger Regiment, the 11th Infantry Brigade, formed from the 11th Infantry Regiment and the 24th Infantry Regiment, the 12 Infantry Brigade, formed from the 11th Infantry Regiment and the 12th Infantry Regiment, and the 6th Artillery Brigade, formed from the 11th Artillery Regiment and the 16th Howitzer Regiment, to which were added a division company of machine guns, a cavalry troop and the 6th Pioneer Battalion. After the reorganization, the 6th Division was part, along with the 7th and 8th Infantry Divisions, of the IVth Army Corps commanded by Division General Gheorghe Văleanu.

Throughout its participation to the First World War, the 6th Infantry Division was commanded by Brigadier Generals: Constantin Costescu (15 -27 August 1916), Nicolae

Arghirescu (27 August 1916 – 4 February 1918), Gheorghe Dabija (4 February – 28 October 1918) and Ștefan Holban, starting with 28 October 1918.

According to the testimony of Major D. Gheorghiu, Priest Dumitru Murărețu *„followed the regiment for as long as it was on position and engaged in fighting, performing his religious sermon even in the first line of the trenches, aiming on all occasions to uplift and elevate the men’s moral condition. At the first aid point he helped the doctor in making bandages and tended the wounded“* (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

Another testimony, belonging to Colonel Dr. Rădulescu, noted the fact that Priest Dumitru Murărețu *„loves the soldiers“*, being *„at all times among their midst, giving them good advice“*, reason for which the Colonel showed that *„I was pleased with the way he performed his mission“* (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

While referring to Priest Dumitru Murărețu’s participation in the battle of Oituz, Colonel Dr. Rădulescu appreciated the fact he was exposing himself to dangers *„fearlessly, disdaining death, setting a good example“* for the soldiers and officers of the regiment. In this respect, Colonel Rădulescu mentioned that fact that, during the battle of Oituz, Priest Dumitru Murărețu *„almost all the time close to the front and the command post and the first aid post“* (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

According to the testimony of Lieutenant-Colonel Paulian, Priest Dumitru Murărețu *„showed courage, as in the month of April [i.e. 1917] he accompanied, voluntarily, reconnaissance mission performed by officers and patrols up to the enemy’s barbed wire networks, while also retrieving a letter and other materials found in the vicinity of the networks“*, the same witness noting that *„during the Hârja fights (Oituz) he showed courage“*, reason for which, in Lieutenant-Colonel Paulian’s opinion, *„he can serve as an example of courage in the line of fire“* (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

In an address dated 24 November 1917, Dumitru Murărețu, Priest and Confessor of the 7th Ranger Regiment, notified the Romanian Army’s Religious Service regarding that, on the prior day, *„accompanied by priests of the ambulance service of the 6th Division and Artillery Brigade“*, he had performed *„the Sacred Baptising of the Jew Reful Iancu and the Ointment of the Catholic Dan Amos“*, ceremonies performed *„in the church from the Filipești village, where the regiment is deployed“* (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

By mentioning that *„the Jew Reful Iancu has received the Baptizing as result of a long preparation, during which I noticed that he converted to Christianity out of conviction“*, Priest Dumitru Murărețu showed that, *„for the Baptizing, I administered to him the right Catechisms, reaching the situation, (...) that he would know by heart the Symbol of Faith and many other prayers“*, while *„Dan Amos, who is a worthy soldier, (...) unrestrained, has requested to pass to our Orthodox Church“*, reason for which *„I prepared him too for a long time, and he ended saying the Symbol of Faith by heart, as well as other useful prayers“* (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

Under these conditions, in the closing of the above mentioned document, Priest Dumitru Murărețu mentioned: *„I consider that this fact [i.e. converting the two soldiers to Orthodox Christianity] is also the result of my efforts as a confessor in this regiment, as, having time of not, I requested brotherly love from all the soldiers I was responsible for and they thus helped each other to death during the hard life in the trenches, in face of the enemy, a life which made all of them feel and pray the same“* (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

On the date of 1 January 1918, as a recognition of the merits and courage he has displayed on the battlefield, Priest Dumitru Murărețu to a rank equivalent to captain (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

Later on, Dumitru Murărețu was priest of the 39th Infantry Regiment within the 10th Division, a regiment which, after Bessarabi's union with Romania, was garrisoned at Tighina (Bender), where Priest N. Sârbu also activated, as Vicar of the garrison. Moreover, in the hospital of the Xth Infantry Division, located in the town of Tighina (Bender), the service was performed by Priest I. Ivanov (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

In an address written on 2 December 1918 by the Steward Priest Constantin Partenie, Archpriest of the military priests from Bessarabia and confessor of the Chișinău garrison, was formulated the request towards the Archpriest of the Romanian Army Religious Service Steward Priest Constantin Nazarie, „*vouchsafe calling Priest D. Murăreț back to his parish from the 39th Infantry Regiment from the Town of Bender, which does not observe his wishes, and to anoint another worthy priest in his place*“ (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

As a result of the requests formulated in this address, the Archpriest of the Romanian Army Religious Service, Steward Priest Constantin Nazarie, showed, in a resolution dated December 17th 1918, that „*the priests from the Army's mobilized units are under the jurisdiction of the Religious Service*“, so that, „*about Priest Murărețu confidential clarifications will be required from the unit*“ (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

Despite this fact, in a „*Table of the military confessors in garrisons, units and military hospitals in Bessarabia, according to the Vth Army Corps data, in the month of October 1918*“, document elaborated on 10 January 1919 by the Steward Priest Constantin Partenie, Archpriest of the military priests from Bessarabia, „*as I was asked by the Vth Army Corps in the month of October 1918 (...) if I wish to serve as military confessor for the Bessarabia garrisons*“, Priest Dumitru Murărețu, confessor priest of the 39th Infantry Regiment within the Xth Infantry Division, had answered affirmatively (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

According to Major D. Gheorghiu from the 7th Ranger Regiment, Priest, Priest Dumitru Murărețu „*followed the regiment as long as it was on position and engaged in fighting, performing his sermon even in the first line of the trenches, aiming on all occasions to uplift and elevate the men's moral condition*“, în timp ce, „*at the first aid point he helped the doctor in making bandages and tended the wounded*“ (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

Expressing his own opinion about Priest Dumitru Murărețu's activity as confessor priest of 7th Ranger Regiment, Colonel Dr. Rădulescu appreciated that he „*loves the soldiers*“, so that, he is „*always among their midst, giving good advice*“, reason for which „*I was very pleased of the way he performed his mission*“ (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

Moreover, referring to Priest Dumitru Murărețu's participation to the battles in the summer of 1917, Colonel Dr. Rădulescu appreciated that he had acted „*fearlessly, disdaining death, setting a good example*“ the soldiers and officers of the 7th Ranger Regiment, while during the battle of „*Oituz he stayed almost all the time close to the front, the command unit and the first aid point*“ (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000). Related, also, to the way the battle of Oituz took place, Lieutenant-Colonel Paulian showed that Priest Dumitru Murărețu, „*in the Hârja (Oituz fights), a showed great courage*“, reason for which „*he can serve as an example of courage in the line of fire*“ (Apud Nicolescu și alții, 2000).

In recognition of his merits and of the courage shown on the battlefield during the First World War, Priest Dumitru Murărețu was decorated with the „Crown of Romania” Order, as well as with others Romanian decorations.

After the end of the First World War, Priest Dumitru Murărețu returned to his parish, and later on, during the year 1927, he transferred to the Urdari parish, where he would pass away on 21 September 1927, at the age of 45.

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