

Builders and Martyrs of the Unification of Bessarabia with Romania



General Eremia Grigorescu (1863–1919)

They Shall not Pass!

There is no Romanian, in whose chest beats a Romanian heart, who has not heard these four words, who does not vibrate at these four words, perhaps the most sacred words of our nation, since Decebalus to this day, uttered by a great man and a brilliant General, Eremia Grigorescu, in those days and nights of horror and hope of our Holy War, a war that in its final hour, with the supreme sacrifice of thousands of soldiers, and with the support of the French mission and of the Russian armies, which at that crucial moment were massed on this front, forced the enemy to stop, stabilised the front, and revived hope.

General Grigorescu – this citizen of Galați, who had attended the Faculty of Medicine of Iasi, and subsequently even the Sorbonne, where he took courses in mathematics, before embracing the military career – dedicated his walk of life to weapons, being one of those brilliant intelligentsia who achieve tremendous tactical successes, smoothening the great strategic horizons and great characters of an army that never overshadowed the glory of his ancestors and of previous generations.

At the head of the 15th Infantry Division, in 1916, General Grigorescu won the victories of Mulciova and Arabaci in Dobruja, exhibiting those special qualities of a commander endowed with great tactical vision. Thence he was urgently sent to Oituz, where he stopped the enemy, won three decisive battles and contributed essentially to the stabilisation of the front. He held his positions till July 1917, and then was appointed commander of the 6th Army Corps, which was headquartered at Nămolosa. According to the plan of the campaign of 1917, he was appointed commander of the 1st Romanian Army and of the troops of Mărășești, where was also the 4th Russian Army. Russian soldiers called him the “tsar”, because he was a brilliant general, and moreover he was a proficient Russian speaker.

The enemy failed to cross both the Oituz Pass and other passes in the Eastern Carpathians. The Romanian and Russian Armies defended tooth and nail the front along mountain passes and the Siret River. General Eremia Grigorescu stopped this terrible enemy, winning several battles in the confrontation with this famous front breaker, Field Marshal August von Mackensen.

In his capacity as commander of the Mărășești troops, where the 1st Romanian Army and the 4th Army were operating, General Eremia Grigorescu, who had once taught higher algebra in the military schools of his country, who had a modern vision of tactics and strategy, the man who understood perfectly the commandments of modern war, at the border

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between the force of the manoeuvre of fire carried out with modern weaponry, especially with automatic weapons, heavy artillery and aviation, the ingenious and firm action of well-trained divisions, the morale of the troops and air manoeuvres, was that brilliant, firm, powerful, and visionary commander, capable of working miracles with an army confronted with the horrible mud of a war waged in numerical, technological and even ideological inferiority, but driven by the longing and hope of a great ideal of survival, and even of reunification of the Romanian people.

When the hostilities of Mărășești were over and Romania re-entered the war, General Eremia Grigorescu was Minister of War from October 24 to November 29, 1918. As it is well known, our Great War of Reunification of the Nation ended in 1919 after the banishment of the enemy from the Romanian soil. The hero of Oituz and Mărășești filled, during his remaining life, the position of general inspector of the Army.

On July 21, 1919, he passed away, prey to a cruel illness.

He was only 56 years old.

His body rests in the Mărășești Mausoleum amongst his comrades, shrouded in the flag of the country, honoured by the gratitude of the people he served with intelligence, abnegation and devotion, and of the generations of Romanians who are still living on this holy land.