A FORGOTTEN NAME: GENERAL EUGEN COTIUJINSCHI

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Romanians have a long history of fighting for national unity and recognition as a nation. Despite being divided by power-hungry empires, they have shown immense courage and heroism throughout the centuries. Many military figures have emerged from this struggle, some of whom are well-known from school. Unfortunately, others have been forgotten, especially those who were intentionally erased from collective memory during the communist period for ideological reasons. General Eugen Cotiujinschi is one such figure who deserves to be remembered and rehabilitated. Despite being unfairly overlooked, his life story is one that should be shared with the public. Cotiujinschi was the son of a Moldovan priest and rose to become a Lieutenant General in the Russian imperial army, participating in three wars. His example is one that can inspire younger generations today.

Keywords: Basarabia; army; military service; war; heroism;

INTRODUCTION

After being annexed in 1812, Basarabia was separated from the Country of Moldova and subjected to a 100-year process of Russification aimed at changing the ethnic composition of the population in favour of the Slavic group. Despite the Russian imperial authorities forbidding natives from studying and conducting religious services in their mother tongue, the Romanian population remained the majority in the province. Even in these harsh conditions, the Basarabian Romanians were able to produce outstanding personalities in various fields, including the military. Eugen Cotiujinschi was one of these exceptional individuals.

EXPOSITION



Photo 1: General Eugen Cotiujinschi (NARM, Ib.)

Eugen Cotiujinschi was born on 5 January 1859, in the family of Iacov Cotiujinschi, the Moldovan priest from Sculeni, the parish priest of the Church of Sf. Nicolai from the locality, an important communication node on the Prut River between the Russian Empire and Romania.

Besides Eugen, lacov had an older son, named Vladimir, who graduated from the theological seminary in Chişinău, in 1862, the only secondary education institution in Basarabia that taught the Romanian language, which was known then as the Moldavian language. In 1868, the family lost their father, Priest Iacov Cotiujinschi, who died leaving his followers without means of existence (NARM, 1862 Collection, inventory 9, file 415, p. 19 reverse).

Vladimir, the pillar of the family, graduated from the Theological Seminary in Chişinău and proceeded to have a distinguished ecclesiastical career, eventually becoming the principal priest and an inspector of parish schools in Soroca county (Иллюстрированный адрес-календарь Бессарабской губернии на 1914 год., 1913, p. 268).

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Photo 2: Chişinău Theological Seminary (NARM, Ib.)

At the age of 14 in 1873, Eugen Cotiujinschi, being the son of a deceased priest, entered the seminary in Chişinău, upon being urged by his elder brother. The seminary in Chişinău was the only secondary education institution in Basarabia that upheld the spirit of true Romanianism. Eugen Cotiujinschi, who was already well-educated at home, adapted well to the strict rules of the institution and performed well in all his tests. During the academic year 1873/1874, he obtained good results, scoring 4 in Holy Scripture, literature theory, universal history, Greek, Latin, French, German, and composition, and 3 in math on the passing exam for the next class (NARM, F. 1862, inv. 9, f. 434, p. 11). In the next academic year 1874/1875, he scored even better results: 5 in conduct, Holy Scripture, Russian literature, and religious chant, and 4 in universal civil history, mathematics, Greek, Latin, German, and composition (Ib., d. 87, p. 14).

As time went by, it became evident that Eugen was not interested in pursuing a career in the church. After completing the third class, he left the seminary and took the exam to become a military contractor with a reduced term of service of category 2. On 28 May 1876, he joined the 55th Podolia Infantry Regiment as a short-term common soldier with permanent placement in Tighina (Bender). Due to his studies, he was promoted to corporal on 10 August 1876, and to lower sergeant on 20 August. One of the benefits of short-term military service was that soldiers had the right to attend military schools upon the request of their unit commander.

On 6 September 1876, Sergeant-inferior Eugen Cotiujinschi was instructed by the regiment command to enrol in the Odessa School of Military Infantry Students and was directly admitted to the upper class. After completing one year of study, on 30 July 1878, he returned to the unit with full military education (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 2 reverse). The unit was stationed in Leskovets, Bulgaria, and was part of the IV Infantry Division, which took part in the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878 (Сборник, 1898, p. 123).

On 9 August 1877, the 14th Infantry Division received the bad news that Russian troops in the Shipka pass were attacked by Turkish superior forces. To help the Russian troops, the division marched towards the Shipka pass,



Photo 3: General Cotiujinschi's file (lb.)

reaching it on 12 August. The division held its defence for 139 days and nights, resisting countless attacks from the Turks. The Russians were trying to prevent the Turks from taking this strategic point. On 12 August 1877, the 55th Infantry Regiment Podolia occupied the defensive positions on Mount Sf. Nikolaos. From 15 August to 5 September, the Turks tried to attack the Russian positions, but they were rejected with great loss of life on both sides. On 30 November 1877, the Turks launched a long artillery offensive and attacked Mount St. Nikolaos. The companies of the 55th Infantry Regiment stood against them, halting the attack and forcing the Turks to return to their original positions (Ib., p. 178). On 9 November, the unit was alarmed to repel Turkish attempts to go on the offensive (lb., p. 179). For the courage demonstrated in the battles of 30 October and 9 November 1877, Sergeant-Inferior Eugen Cotiujinschi was decorated with the badge of the Military Order "Sf. Gheorghe", popularly called Military Cross "Sf. Gheorghe". For his skill and courage demonstrated in the battle of 5 September 1877, he was awarded the primary rank of officer – 2nd Lieutenant aid (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 2 reverse). After a series of battles, the Turks lost the war and the Russian army returned home in the spring of 1878, including the 55th Podolia Infantry Regiment.

After returning home, he continued his military service. On 1 March 1881, Eugen Cotiujinschi was promoted to 2^{nd} Lieutenant, and on 21 April 1884, he was appointed head of the regiment's training team. This role required military

knowledge, as well as a lot of tact and tolerance in educating young soldiers, mostly people without books and education. Eugen Cotiujinschi had acquired these qualities in his family and at the Theological Seminary. On 24 June 1885, he was promoted by High Order to the rank of Lieutenant. His success in educating young soldiers convinced the unit commanders that he also had the capabilities to lead a combat subunit. Thus, on 14 October 1885, he was appointed as commander of the 5th Infantry Company (lb., p. 2 reverse). He transformed the company into a model subunit, which is why, on 6 May 1886, he was decorated with the order of St. Stanislaw, 3rd class.

In the late nineteenth century, the Russian Empire intensified its expansion in the Far East, where it had territorial claims towards China and Korea. Russia's expansionist ambitions in that region were at odds with the limited number of military units deployed there, which did not allow an aggressive policy of territorial expansion. To redress the situation in the Far East, the General Staff decided to establish new military units in the region with permanent arrangements in the small towns of Siberia. In September 1886, the Stretensk Reserve Infantry Battalion was established, consisting of five companies. Officers from all units of the Russian Imperial Army were deployed to complete these units. By the High Order of 25 April 1889, Lieutenant Eugen Cotiujinschi was transferred, for work purposes, to the Stretensk Reserve Infantry Battalion, with the appointment as commander of the 5th Reserve Infantry Company, with permanent disposition in the city of Nerchinsk. He arrived on 3 September 1889, at the new place of service, where he quickly fit into the new collective, being highly esteemed by the rest of the officers. Due to his personal qualities, he was elected a member of the Court of the battalion and of the Council of Honour of the Corps of Officers of his unit. On 24 April 1890, he was given the rank of Captain.

Its location in the unit was short-lived because, in search of an appropriate formula for the forces available in the Far East, the Russian War Ministry was experimenting with the formation of new and new military units in the region, including the 5th East-Siberian Riflemen Battalion. By the High Order of 2 January 1891, Captain Eugen Cotiujinschi was transferred to this newly established unit, and shortly thereafter, on 29 May 1891, redirected to 1st East-Siberian Riflemen Regiment, stationed in the town of Razdolnoie, 58 km away from Vladivostok, which was soon renamed the 1st East-Siberian Riflemen Regiment. Shortly after arriving in the unit on 15 June 1891, he was appointed commander of the 4th Company. With the transition of the unit to regiment, on 10 March 1892, he was appointed ROMANIAN MILITARY THINKING INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

regiment commander assistent per household (lb., p. 3.), which he served until 1896, when, on 2 January, he was appointed commander of the 2nd Company. For his military service successes in various positions, on 24 February 1896, he was exceptionally promoted to Captain. On 11 March 1898, he was appointed commander of the 4th Company and, on 31 May 1899, he was unanimously elected President of the Regiment Tribunal (Ib., p. 3 reverse).

The quiet progress of his military career was suddenly stopped by the Boxer Rebellion in China, started in the summer of 1899 by the Yihetuan fighters, directed against the Western and especially Russian expansionism in China. By 1900, the uprising had spread throughout China, and in July of the same year, the siege of the embassies in the country's capital, Beijing, began. The situation was also quite serious in southern Manchuria, occupied by the Russians, with important urban centres – the cities of Mukden (Shenyang), Liaoyang and Haicheng. To cover this direction, on 18 July 1900, the Southern Manchuria Detachment was created under the command of Major General Nicolai Fleischer, which was composed of 8 infantry battalions, an engineer platoon, 16 field guns, 6 mounted artillery guns and 4 sotnie of Cossacks (Овсяный, 1910, p. 248.). At the request of Major General Nicolai Fleischer, Captain Eugen Cotiujinschi, who had experience in managing logistical problems, occupying for a long time the position of regiment commander assistant per household, was appointed, on 27 July 1900, quartermaster of the Southern Manchurian Detachment and on 7 September 1900, he was appointed quartermaster of the 1st East Siberian Riflemen Brigade. As part of the detachment, he participated in the campaign of 1900, which ended with the capturing of the city of Mukden (Shenyang). To a large extent, the successes achieved by the Russian troops in Manchuria were also due to the impeccable logistics service organised by Captain Eugen Cotiujinschi, who did not even dream that the experience gained in Manchuria would serve him well in the Russo-Japanese War, in which he would take part. For the special merits and courage shown during the China campaign, by the High Order of 15 March 1901, he was decorated with the order of St. Anne, 3rd class with swords and bow, and on 15 September 1901, with the commemorative medal "In memory of 1900-1901 military events in China".

After the campaign in Manchuria, which ended on 18 January 1901, he returned to the regiment, at the command of the 4th Riflemen Company. Soon after, on 26 February 1901, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and appointed to the position of assistant regiment commander-head of household (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 4.). His merits in the field of logistical management of the regiment, located at the eastern end of the empire, were fully appreciated.

On 5 December 1902 he was decorated with the high order of St. Vladimir, 4th class with bow, which automatically gave him access to the hereditary nobility of the Russian Empire. On 6 November 1902, Lieutenant Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was appointed commander of the 1st Battalion, where he demonstrated his qualities as a commander and professional in such a way that, in the absence of the commander, he successfully performed as regiment commander. This experience was invaluable given that the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) began.

The military actions in China were carried out according to a plan developed by the General Staff, which involved applying defence tactics in Septentrional Manchuria with the limited number of troops available in the theatre of operations. This was done until larger military forces arrived from Russia to proceed with the decisive counteroffensive, which would end with the destruction of the Japanese army (Lescu, 2009, p. 60). The 1st East-Siberian Riflemen Division, including the 1st East-Siberian Riflemen Regiment, was involved in these holding battles. In the absence of Colonel N. Ozerski, Commander of the 2nd East Siberian Riflemen Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was temporarily appointed as his replacement. After returning from his trip, he was temporarily appointed as the commander of the 1st East Siberian Rifle Regiment on 2 June 1904. He led the regiment in the historic battle of Wafangtien against the Japanese 2nd Army, with the 1st East Siberian Riflemen Corps tasked with stopping the Japanese advance towards Port-Arthur. To stop the Japanese offensive, General Georg von Stackelberg, commander of the Siberian Corps, decided to fight near the Wafangtien railway station. On the morning of 1 June, the Japanese attacked the left flank of the Russians, where the positions of the 1st East Siberian Rifleme Regiment were located (Русско-японскаявойна, 1910, р. 29).

Under the superior fire of the enemy, the units of the regiment began to withdraw and strengthened their positions at the height of 178.1. On 2 June, the Japanese continued the offensive, aiming to attack the left flank of the Russians with the 3rd Infantry Division and the centre of the Russian defence disposition with the 5th Infantry Division (Ib., p. 41). Unaware of the Japanese plans, the Russians went to the attack, but six companies of the 1st East Siberian Riflemen Regiment occupied positions that forced General Oku to bring new reinforcements to the scene of the battle (Ib., p. 58). These reinforcements changed the fate of the battle, and the Russian troops were forced, starting at 14.00, to withdraw from the conquered positions, resulting in their defeat. During the battle, Lieutenant-Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was wounded in the left thigh but did not leave his position and continued to lead the fighting (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 9.).

The Russian defeat at Wafangtien caused significant human casualties, especially in the officer corps. To cover the vacancies in the command corps, Lieutenant-Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was appointed acting commander of the 3rd East-Siberian Riflemen Regiment on 17 July 1914 (lb., p. 4 reverse), and acting commander of the 4th East Siberian Riflemen Regiment on 15 August 1904. He was then permanently appointed to the position by a High Order on 30 September 1904. The appointment was remarkable because Eugen Cotiujinschi was appointed regiment commander with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel instead of Colonel, which was the only rank that gave someone the right to hold the position of regiment commander. He was exceptionally promoted to the rank of Colonel on 17 November 1904. For his bravery, skill and professionalism displayed during the battle of 2-3 June 1904, he was decorated with the Order of St. Stanislaw 2nd class with swords by Order of 19 September 1904.

Taking command of the unit, under pressure from the Japanese army, he retreated towards the city of Liaoyang, where Russian commander General A. Kuropatkin planned to fight a decisive battle. The Russian army continued to retreat to fortified positions from the Sha He River, where General A. Kuropatkin planned to give another decisive battle. The plan was for the Siberian Corps of General Georg von Stackelberg to make a frontal strike, while the Japanese armies commanded by Marshal Oyama Iwao would be surrounded on their right flank. The offensive began at dawn on 22 September 1904. By 23 September, the main Russian forces reached the line of the Sha He River (Русско-японскаявойна 1904-1905 r.r. volume IV, p. 97). The actual decisive battle began on 22 September 1904. According to the battle disposition, the right column advanced towards the Nanshan Puha-Tavan gou alignment. On the right, the detachment of Colonel E. Cotiujinschi advanced and soon conquered the town of Hamatani, distancing itself by 8 km from the main forces. On 27 September 1904, E. Cotiujinschi's detachment reached the Cengou Lin pass but was forced to retreat to the town of Sialiuha Tzi due to pressure from the Japanese, and there he began strengthening defence positions (lb., p. 180). The Japanese troops began the offensive against E. Cotiujinschi's detachment on 28 September, which retreated to the village of Hamatani, where it arrived on the night of 29 September. On this day, Marshal Oyama Iwao began the general counteroffensive, directing the main thrust against the 4th East Siberian Riflemen Corps. The 4th East Siberian Riflemen Regiment occupied the defence positions to the left of Padiaza town, having two battalions in the first line and one battalion in the second line (lb., p. 259), which

repelled all enemy attacks. On the morning of 30 September, the Japanese went on the offensive again, attacking in the direction of the village of Siu-Liu Hudzi, defended by the regiment of Colonel E. Cotiujinschi. Due to intense enemy fire, around 10:00 a.m., only 50-70 riflemen remained fit for battle in the companies of the regiment, with only 25 riflemen remaining in the formation in the 10th Company. Running out of ammunition, the soldiers were prepared to fight with bayonets (lb., p. 279). They began to throw stones at the Japanese (lb., p. 280), but held on to the occupied positions. Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was seriously wounded in the leg, but he did not leave his position, continuing to lead the battle (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 9.). For his heroism shown in the battles of 29-30 September 1904, when, "under the pressure of the more numerous enemy and with less than 50% of the regiment remained on the battlefield, not only did he not surrender the occupied positions, but forced the enemy to retreat", he was decorated with the highest state military distinction, the Order of St. George, 4th class (Разведчик, 1905, p. 639). It was only after the battle that he was evacuated and hospitalised until 18 January 1906, when the war was already over.

He was then appointed commander of the 52nd Vilno Infantry Regiment on 24 July 1906, with permanent headquarters in the city of Feodosia, Crimea (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 5). In the absence of the brigade commander, he often performed his duties. For his merits in the management of the unit, he was decorated with the High Order of St. Vladimir, 3rd class and on 10 January he was allowed to wear the Ottoman Order of Osmaniye, 2nd class. On 29 October 1911, he was awarded the military rank of Major General, and on 11 September 1912, he was allowed to wear the order of the Emirate of Bukhara, the Golden Star, 1st class.

Despite being at the peak of his military career, Eugen Cotiujinschi's wounds from the battlefields of Manchuria began to affect his ability to fulfil service obligations. He submitted a report of release due to illness, and on 4 December 1912, he was released from military service with the right to wear military uniform and enroll in the infantry reserve of the Tavria government.

During the First World War, Major General Eugen Cotiujinschi was 55 years old but wanted to contribute to the final victory of the allies. He applied to be re-employed in the army and was rehired by the High Order of 25 July 1914. The request could not be ignored, as it was submitted by a general and a knight of the order of St. George! He was appointed commander of the 1st Brigade, 34th Infantry Division, which included the 133rd Simferopol Infantry Regiment and the 134th Feodosia Infantry Regiment. Major General Cotiujinschi and his Brigade 554

participated in the strategic operation to occupy Galicia, which was carried out through a concentric strike by the 3rd and 5th Armies towards Lviv and the 4th and 8th Armies from the Dniester to the west (Lescu, 2009, p. 110). To implement the plan of the Russian Supreme Command, on 5/18 August 1914, the 8th Russian Army went on the offensive and reached the Gnilia Lipa River on 16/29 August 1914 (Ib., p. 114). The Russian troops halted on the marshy banks of the river, however, and suffered serious losses due to intense machine gun and rifle fire opened by Austro-Hungarian units. In these critical conditions, Major General E. Cotiujinschi moved to the place where the Russian troops had stopped, took command of all subunits from different units of the division (in total, 6 companies and a platoon of infantry) who were lying in the mud, on the left bank of the river. With the cry "Forward!", he got up and led them on the attack. By his example, he captured the enemy trenches on the right bank of the river and also captured a battle flag of the 50th Austro-Hungarian Infantry Regiment (SMARF, F. 400, inv. 12, d. 26747, p. 107.). The forcing of the Gnilia Lipa River was instrumental in the operation, which was completed by the capture of the city of Lviv on 21 August/3 September 1914. Major General Eugen Cotiujinschi was decorated with the Sword of St. George, the second highest military distinction, for the battle of 16/29 August 1914, and with the High Order of St. Stanislaw, 1st class with swords, for his participation in the operation in Galicia (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 5 reverse.).

In 1915, it became clear that the war would become a long one and required new reinforcements in force. To supplement the losses on the battlefield, new divisions were formed, as part of the third wave of mobilisation in the summer of 1915. One of these divisions was the 125th Infantry Division, composed of recruits from Basarabia and the left of the Dniester and made up of the 497th Bălti Infantry, 498th Orhei Infantry, 499th Olviopol Infantry, and 500th Ingul Infantry regiments. It is not known whose idea it was and whether it was an intentional one, to appoint a Moldavian as the head of the division. By the High Order of 25 August 1915, Major General Eugen Cotiujinschi was appointed as the commander of the division, which was practically made up of Moldavians. On 27 September 1915, the division arrived at the front, in the region of the city of Proskurov, and on 28 September 1915, it occupied its defensive positions near the town of Klevan, in Galicia. During the seven-month break between battles, knowing very well the psychology of the Moldovans, General E. Cotiujinschi emphasised battle preparation, carrying out battle exercises in each regiment so that the soldiers could accumulate experience. These qualities fully spoke for themselves during the offensive **MILITARY HISTORY** 555 of the Central Powers in Galicia, when the army of A. Brusilov, on 9/22 July, left Lviv, retreating with battles to Volânia. On 14/27 August 1915, the 1st Army attacked the right flank of A. Brusilov's 8th Army. Simultaneously, the 2nd Austro-Hungarian Army attacked the 8th Russian Corps, creating conditions for the encirclement of A. Brusilov's 8th Army. The situation was saved when the 125th Infantry Division went into battle, within the 39th Army Corps, which repelled all Austro-Hungarian attacks, saving the army from destruction (Залесский, 2003, p. 94). For firm leadership with the great unit under his command, Major General Eugen Cotiujinschi was decorated with the order of St. Anne, 1st class with swords, by the High Order of 26 November 1915. He was also decorated with the order of St. Vladimir, 2nd class with swords, on 24 June 1916.

During the summer of 1915, Eugen Cotiujinschi participated in multiple battles which left him physically and mentally drained. Consequently, he was transferred to the active reserve of the Kyiv Military Region, and later, from 14 September 1916, the Odessa Military Region, where he was appointed as the president of the requisitions commission within the Odessa customs. After the abdication of Nicholas II, the Provisional Government appointed him as the President of the Officer Corps Verification Commission on 25 April 1917 (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 6.). He was then promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General for his commendable efforts in reforming the Russian army based on democratic principles. To continue the fighting, the Russian army was in dire need of new reinforcements. For this purpose, in January 1917, the fourth wave of mobilisation was decreed and the 193rd Infantry Division was formed, stationed in Botosani. Major General Eugen Cotiujinschi was appointed as its commander on 7 August 1917, in place of General Constantin Tihonravov, appointed to the higher position of commander of the 2nd Army Corps. However, the unit practically ceased to exist due to the anarchy that engulfed the Russian army by September 1917.

After the disbandment of the army, Eugen Cotiujinschi returned to Odessa with his wife and six children. Due to his age, injuries, and family obligations, he did not participate in the Civil War but was registered into the records of the Soviet security organs. His decision to sit out the Civil War saved him from the Stalinist terror that followed. In 1930, it was known that he lived in Odessa, on Tiraspolului Street, no. 7, and later moved to Anapa at the beginning of the Second World War. According to some sources, he died there during the occupation of the city by German troops (1942-1943).

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

Eugen Cotiujinschi's life and achievements as a son of the Romanian nation from the land of Cotiujenilor, Soroca, serve as an example of how a determined person can achieve remarkable success. Unfortunately, during the communist period, such individuals were often forgotten due to their abilities that did not fit into the propaganda clichés of the regime.

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