



GENERAL IOAN DUMITRACHE, PORTRAIT OF A LEGEND COMMANDER OF THE 2ND MOUNTAIN DIVISION – “DIVIZIA DE CREMENE”

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The activity and the memoirs of General Ion Dumitrache are undoubtedly important, if not capital, for knowing our history and especially the history of the Second World War. It is notorious that Mountain Troops represented the only elite troops of the Romanian Infantry during the entire Eastern Campaign. In today’s jargon a kind of “green berets”. The best known of them was the 2nd Mountain Division.

The courage of the fighters under the command of General Dumitrache made the 2nd Mountain Division to acquire on the front a well-deserved renown, in sync with the determination demonstrated by the troops of that great unit: “Divizia de Cremene”. Historian Alesandru Dușu noted in his most recent volume that “General Dumitrache led large units of the Romanian Army that reached the easternmost point in the Second World War. The Romanian troops under his command fought in the Caucasus Mountains, the 2nd Romanian Mountain Division reaching close to Grozny, the capital of Chechnya!”

Keywords. Second World War, General Ioan Dumitrache, 2nd Mountain Division, Crimea Division, Grozny, Chechnya.

INTRODUCTION. BIOGRAPHY. MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The future general was born on 25 August 1889¹, the same year as his future comrade-in-arms, General Leonard Mociulschi², in Slobozia - Ciorăști, as the only child of Gheorghe and Ioana Dumitrache. *“The undersigned Dumitrache Ion was born on 25 August 1889 in Ciorăști, R. Sărat County, son of Gheorghe and Ioana (dead). I attended the primary school in the village of Cîrăști, the gymnasium in Râmnicu Sărat and the high school “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” in Focșani”, as confessed in an autobiography before the Securitatea*³.

He attended the gymnasium in Râmnicu-Sărat and the high school in Focșani.

In 1909 he was admitted to the Military School of Infantry Officers in Bucharest, which he graduated on 15 June 1911, with good results, being advanced to the rank of Second Lieutenant. The young officer

¹ Valeriu Anghel, Alexandru Deșliu, *Vocație și destin. 600 fișe-portret pentru un tablou spiritual-istoric al județului Vrancea*, Editura Terra, Focșani, 2000, p. 115.

² Leonard Mociulschi (1889 - 1979). He participated in the Campaign of Romania in the Balkan War (1913), but also in the First World War, noting in the battles of Oituz and Soveja, for which he was decorated by both King Ferdinand and General Berthelot. In the Second World War, Colonel Mociulschi was noted as Deputy Commander of the 1st Mountain Joint Brigade forcing the Dniester, for which he was decorated with the “Mihai Viteazul” Order, 3rd class, in the rank of Knight (High Decree No. 2,886/17 October 1941). Promoted to the rank of Brigadier General (1942), he was appointed Deputy Commander of the 4th Mountain Troops Division, a unit noted in the Sevastopol area offensive. In the same year, he was promoted to the command of the 3rd Mountain Division, which led to heavy fighting with the Soviets in the Taman-Caucasus area (until August 1943 when it was withdrawn in Crimea for restoration). Brigadier General Mociulschi was decorated with the Order “Mihai Viteazul” - 2nd class (Royal Decree no. 382/19 February 1944). After 23 August 1944, General Mociulschi was appointed at the command of the “Crișuri” Group, participating in the liberation of Western Transylvania. Its division participated in the liberation of Hungary, reaching as far as Slovakia. The victories from the Javorina massifs brought to the Division General, Leonard Mociulschi, the “Mihai Viteazul” 3rd class Order, with swords. The end of the war found him at the command of the Mountain Corps. When the Communists came to power, he was arrested and imprisoned without trial (1948 - 1964). It was rehabilitated at the intervention of the President of France, Charles de Gaulle, in 1966 (Gheorghe Suman, *Vânători de Munte in Enciclopedia Armatei României*, Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, București, 2009, pp. 184-188; Eugen Stănescu, Iulia Stănescu, Gavriil Preda, *Cavalerii ai ordinului “Mihai Viteazul”*, Editura UNIVERSAL CARTFIL, Ploiești, 1996, pp. 342, 344, 459).

³ Archive of the National Council for Security Studies (ACNSAS), *Criminal Collection*, P 076544, Vol. 1.



From the autumn of 1931, Lieutenant-Colonel Ioan Dumitrache worked in the General Staff of the Territorial Inspectorate of Bucharest. The special qualities of Lieutenant Colonel Ioan Dumitrache were confirmed by the characterisations made by his superiors.

began his military career on 1 July 1911 in the 38th “*Neagoe Basarab*” Infantry Regiment of Braila. For three years he ambitiously trained the recruits he commanded in the Second Balkan War (17/30 June – 17/30 July 1913)⁴.

He was advanced to the rank of Lieutenant in 1914, and between 1914 and 1916 he was trained in infantry and military and professional specialization⁵. He participated in the First World War from August 1916. He was noted in the battles from Mărășești – Răzoare (August 1917), being wounded, decorated and advanced to the rank of captain (1917)⁶. He was admitted to the Superior War School⁷ in 1919 (it was 30 years since the establishment of the prestigious educational institution in the Romanian army), which he graduated on 10 October 1921 with an average of 6.78 and the qualification “*Good*”.

Promoted to the rank of Major (1920), after graduating from the Superior War School, he was assigned as a Chief of Staff in the Command of the 1st Mountain Troops Division in Arad, which included all the troops of mountain hunters.

By the Decree no. 1,674/1 August 1924, the Command of the Mountain Hunters Corps was transformed into the Mountain Hunters Corps, located in Bucharest. Also, the 1st Mountain Troops Sinaia and the 2nd Mountain Troops Bistrita-Năsăud were set up⁸. Advanced to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he was promoted, in 1927, Deputy Commander of the 1st Mountain Division. After two years he was appointed Commander of the 2nd Mountain Troops Battalion in Caransebeș. From the autumn of 1931, Lieutenant-Colonel Ioan Dumitrache worked in the General Staff of the Territorial Inspectorate of Bucharest⁹.

The special qualities of Lieutenant Colonel Ioan Dumitrache were confirmed by the characterisations made by his superiors.

⁴ Horia Dumitrescu, Marilena Sima, *General de corp de armată Ion Dumitrache (1889 - 1977). Contribuții, “Cronica Vrancei”* XIX, Vrance Museum, 2014, pp. 369-393

⁵ Constantin Chiper, *General de corp de armată Ion Dumitrache*, in *Veterani în slujba Patriei*, vol. II, under the aegis of the National Association “*Cultul Eroilor*”, Editura BURATINO, Ploiești, 2006, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁷ The Superior War School was established on the basis of Decree no. 2,073/8 August 1889. The duration of the courses was two years. Its activity was interrupted during the First World War, the institution resuming its courses on 1 March 1919 (Florian Răpan, Dorel Bușe, *Învățământul militar*, in *Enciclopedia Armatei Române*, Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, București, 2009, p. 994).

⁸ Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

We exemplify through the Qualifying Sheet for the period 1 November 1930 – 31 October 1931:

Colonel Savu: *“Lieutenant Colonel Dumitrache Ioan commanded from 1.II.930 to the day X 931 the 11th Mountain Troops Battalion – which was independent.*

Physical aptitudes: As in 1929/30.

Military skills: As in 1929/30.

Capacity: As in 1929/930. With the following additions. Through serious studies he has enriched both his professional and general knowledge.

Military education: As in 1929/30.

Service fulfilment: He performed the service as well. As a Corps Commander with a lot of zeal, very conscientious, with a great deal of self-sacrifice having the most beautiful results.

The battalion commanded by him is well trained, well disciplined and well managed. Lieutenant Colonel Dumitrache led the training and education of the officer corps and of the re-engaged personnel with good results. -

This year the ski patrol took the 3rd prize in the CMV competition.

He continued to remove the shortcomings regarding the troops accommodation, and to take care of the war material with good results. -

Through his care a large hut was built in the mountains for 150 soldiers and officers who would bring great profits for mountain instruction.

For the applications in the garrison, he successfully commanded the Infantry Regiment, with artillery, proving that he knows how to well conduct a detachment on the tactical field.

He has often proved to be a very correct referee. -

The officer leaves the battalion command after 2½ years to continue his specialization as an officer.

Conclusion: very good and reliable front and staff officer, who deserves to be entrusted with the leadership of a group of mountain troops.

Not having the necessary seniority this year, he is not the subject of a proposal”.

Colonel A. Phlepps – Commander of the 1st Mountain Troops Brigade: *“I totally agree with the note given by the group commander.*



At all the inspections I carried out at this Battalion during the training hours I found this officer remarkably in his place as a commander of a separate corps.

Full of zeal and skill, he led instruction and practice with great talent and and kindness, so this battalion took the lead of the Brigade. -

He commanded the battalion in difficult mountainous terrain, during difficult atmospheric conditions, in the most beautiful way taking the most accurate decisions, achieving them with remarkable energy, and being praised by the General Inspector who was present.

Lieutenant Colonel Dumitrache is a very valuable commander and demonstrating rich professional knowledge, being independent and apt to command a regiment (Mountain Troops Group).

He is a superior officer with all the aptitudes for the activity in the mountains, being a remarkable mountaineer, who animated his subordinates in this direction. -

Not having the necessary age, he is not the subject of a proposal”¹⁰.

General Nicola – Commander of the 1st Mountain Troops Division:
“I agree.

Lieutenant Colonel Dumitrache is a mountaineer, a cross-country skier and a peerless instructor. -

He puts soul and passion into training his unit and keeps it always in front of others.

The battalion he commanded excels in outfit, discipline, instruction and shooting.

Lieutenant Colonel Dumitrache personally sets the tone. The first one on the mountain where he built a hut with great sacrifices, first in ski, first in shooting.

His team was awarded in all competitions.

During the Inspection of General Cihosky, he commanded the detachment in the Muntele Mic (South of Caransebeş) at 1,800 altitude. He well appreciates the land and he is perfectly identified with the operations in the mountains. -

He is an excellent mountain officer”.

General Gorsky – Commander of Mountain Troops Corps:

“I maintain without reservation the excellent appreciation given by the hierarchical chiefs.

¹⁰ Military Archives of Mountain Troops (A.M.Vn.), General Ioan Dumitrache Collection, p. 2.

A senior officer who stands out through his entire military achievements, as Corps Chief.

He will be advanced following eligibility”.

General Gorsky – Inspector General of the Army:

“I maintain the favourable appreciation given to this valuable senior officer. -”¹¹.

Advanced Colonel in 1935, he commanded with great firmness the 4th Group Mountain Troops from Bistrița-Năsăud. In the civil hierarchy, Patriarch Miron Cristea (Prime Minister of the country between 11 February 1938 – 6 March 1939) appointed him in 1938 - 1939 as the Prefect of Năsăud County.

He was promoted Commander of the 2nd Mountain Joint Brigade in the autumn of 1939.

Prince Nicholas, the son of King Ferdinand and Queen Mary, set up a Group of 15 officers from the best skiers from the 2nd Mountain Troops Brigade, who were making trips to the mountains when time allowed. On 16 January 1940, Colonel Ioan Dumitrache received the following Convocation:

“These 15 will meet this year on 24 January at 10 a.m. in Predeal, Park Garden, from where they will depart to Mount Dihamu.

You are urged not to miss the meeting, for which purpose the hierarchical authority was informed in order to be granted a three-day transfer.

Secretary, Major Emilian Teacă”¹².

On 5 10 May 1941, Colonel Ioan Dumitrache was advanced to the rank of Brigadier General¹³.

From 20 June 1941, the Mountain Corps commanded by Division General Gheorghe Avramescu passed, operatively, under the command of the 11th German Army.

The mountain troops brigades entered the Holy War on 2 July 1941, attacking the main direction of Rădăuți - Cernăuți - Hotin. The city of Cernăuți was liberated on 4 July 1941. Within these actions, the 2nd Joint Mountain Brigade, commanded by General Ioan Dumitrache, was the spearhead. Together with the 8th Cavalry Division, it forced



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¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 2 verso.

¹² A.M.Vn., *General Ioan Dumitrache* Collection, p. 3.

¹³ Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, p. 9.



The human losses suffered, caused the 2nd and 4th Mountain Joint Brigades to be sent to the country (8 November 1941) to complete the numbers, equipment and training in peace garrisons, as well as the applications in the mountains.

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the Prut and liberated the Land of Herta. By 9 July 1941, the entire northern part of Bukovina was liberated.

Arriving at the Dniester, the *General Antonescu Army Group* ceased its existence and the 11th German Army was subordinated to the “*Southern*” Army Group led by Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt¹⁴, with the mission to advance to the Bug. With great losses, the Bug was crossed, on 21 August 1941. After heavy fighting, the mountain troops crossed the Dnieper on 16 September 1941. The 2nd and 4th Joint Mountain Brigades were disposed on the coast of the Sea of Azov, and the 1st Mountain Joint Brigade was sent to Crimea¹⁵.

By the Royal Decree no. 2,886 on 19 October 1941, Ion Dumitrache – Brigadier General, Commander of the 2nd Mountain Joint Brigade – was decorated with the “*Mihai Viteazul*” Order, 3rd class.

The human losses suffered, caused the 2nd and 4th Mountain Joint Brigades to be sent to the country (8 November 1941) to complete the numbers, equipment and training in peace garrisons, as well as the applications in the mountains. The 2nd Mountain Division (the brigades were transformed into divisions on 15 March 1942) left for the front on 6 July 1942, and on 31 July it was in combat disposition in the Rostov area. Starting on 6 August 1942, the 2nd Mountain Division was permanently subordinated to the German military commanders operating in the Caucasus.

THE VICTORY OF NALCHIK

In the battles in the centre of the Caucasus, the Romanian 2nd Mountain Division (Commander: General Ion Dumitrache) was also engaged, which triggered, on the evening of 22 August 1942, the action of forcing the Baksan River, without artillery training. The surprise did not succeed, because, when reaching the river bank,

¹⁴ Gerd von Rundstedt (Aschersleben 1875 - Hanover 1953). German Marshal. Chief of Staff of the Division and Army Corps from 1914 to 1918, he was noted as a remarkable organizer. Seeckt's disciple, apolitical, tried to keep his distance from the Nazi regime. Retired in 1938, he was recalled in 1939, when he led the Southern Army Group in Poland, then operated the Sedan attack and the Dunkirk circle. He resigned in November 1941, before invading Ukraine and Crimea. Recalled on the Western Front (March 1942), he was appointed to the command of Army Group D (November 1943). After June 1944, he was replaced by Marshal Hans Günther von Kluge. He led the Ardennes attack since December 1944. Detained by Americans, he was handed over to the English who released him in 1949 (*Grand Larousse en 10 volumes*, Librairie Larousse, Paris, 1993, Volume 9: rectifiable/Szymonowic, p. 2, 710).

¹⁵ More about the military actions in Crimea in Adrian Pandeia, Eftimie Ardeleanu, *Românii în Crimeea. 1941-1944*, București, 1995.

the units were received by a fiery fire, of all the categories, resulting in great human losses for the Romanian troops. On the ninth day, the attack on the 2nd Mountain Division broke out across the front. The 4th Mountain Troops Group occupied, with battalions 7 and 15, the villages Malka and Kysburun 2, but the enemy resisted, favoured by the configuration of the land. On the night of 23 to 24 August, the 7th Mountain Troops Battalion managed, by a clever manoeuvre, to reach the southern bank of the river, constituting a bridgehead that was kept, despite all the counterattacks executed by the enemy, especially after 27 August. Between 28 August and 31 August, the fights became dramatic, especially in the high zone with the height of 910, which dominated the whole area and through which the road that crossed the Caucasus from north to south passed. It was on the one side or the other for several times.

The heroism of the Romanian hunters was also shown at the assault of quota 910, where Sergeant Rusu, under the command of Lieutenant Botiș, told, looking over his shoulder as he left it: “*Quota 910, dry it God dry it!*”. They were those who survived, who collected on the tent sheets the comrades made pieces by the Soviet artillery, loaded them into trucks, then left, for a new battle for life and death. The Commander of the 1st Company, Captain Tiberiu Coloiu, the superior of Lieutenant Botiș Volumiu, fell with the leg cut from the knees by a shrapnel shell. “*Take the order and resist!*”, he said before being evacuated to the hospital in Piatigorsk, where he died, being buried in the city cemetery¹⁶.

Here is the agenda of General Ion Dumitrache after the conquest of quota 910 by the 7th Mountain Troops Battalion:

2nd Division Mountain

Commander

Order of the Day no. 2

On 2 September 1942

In the operations of forcing the Baksan River (Caucasus) and in the bridgehead beyond it on the heights 910 all the soldiers of the division bravely fought. The 7th Mountain Troops Battalion, in the front, surprised the crossing of the river in the village in front



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¹⁶ Cristian Negrea, *Vânătorii de munte în Caucaz*, <http://cristiannegrea.blogspot.ro/2012/08/vanatorii-de-munte-in-caucaz-i.html>, retrieved on 10 September 2019.



On 17 October, the 2nd Mountain Division starts a strong offensive and occupies the entire village of Saiukovo. A day later, General von Kleist comes personally to the heights conquered by the Romanian troops and decorates the soldiers of the Division who have stood out in the battle.

of the quota 910, crushed the enemy's defence of the village and entered the heights stormily; thus facilitating the very rapid development of the bridgehead – decisive for the future battle – being mentioned as such in the orders of the Mackensen Armoured Corps. Despite all the heavy losses, although the commander, the deputy commander and all the company commanders were injured, the battalion penetrated and remained steadfastly 10 (ten) days high on the conquered heights, crushing all furious and continually refreshed attacks by the enemy. Thus, it was the backbone of the entire operation. The brave soldiers and officers of the 7th Mountain Troops Battalion deserve unlimited gratitude and admiration, both Romanian and German.

Lieutenant Colonel Ciubotaru Nicolae, the Battalion Commander, though wounded, was in command and with the brave officers remaining, kept his brave battalion on the heights of glory, where he is and must always remain.

He has also shown that he is brave and puts his life in danger for the battalion and the country.

Honour the 7th Mountain Troops Battalion!

*The Commander of the 2nd Mountain Division,
General I Dumitrache*

On 17 October, the 2nd Mountain Division starts a strong offensive and occupies the entire village of Saiukovo. A day later, General von Kleist comes personally to the heights conquered by the Romanian troops and decorates the soldiers of the Division who have stood out in the battle, declaring: *“The great deed of arms achieved by the Romanian 2nd Mountain Division made possible for the 1st Armoured Army to pass to decisive operations”*¹⁷.

The German plans provided for the liquidation of the enemy from the Nalchik area and the penetration to the East, between the Terek springs, occupying the town of Ordjonikidze, then the conquest of the Grozny oil centre, and finally, an attack on the Caspian Sea to Baku. For the first phase of the battle, two attack hypotheses of the 2nd Mountain Division were considered: Sajukovo-Nalchik and Baksan-Nalchik along the road between the two localities. The attack starts at the beginning of 25 October with a bombardment of the German

¹⁷ Florin Cristescu, *Operațiunile Diviziei 2 Munte în Munții Caucaz*, http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/opera-iunile-diviziei-2-munte-n-mun-ii-caucaz, retrieved on 10 September 2019.

aviation squadrons, followed by preparatory artillery blows by the mountain hunters' guns. At 8 o'clock a heavy salvo of signal throwers is fired to mark the beginning of the attack. Towards evening there is a strong Soviet counterattack with Katyusha missiles, which shows that the enemy is expecting an attack from the forces north of the river. In this bombardment Lieutenant Oltei is killed with seven soldiers preparing the materials for the passage of the 1st Mountain Pioneers Battalion.

Following heavy losses, the 2nd Mountain Division was ordered to leave the conquered position, with much effort and numerous sacrifices, and to organise a defensive position on the north bank of the river. Finally, the Baksan would be forced again on 25 October, following a strong artillery and aviation training.

Subsequently, the 2nd Mountain Division advanced rapidly towards Nalchik (under the command of the 3rd German Armoured Corps, commanded by Friedrich August Eberhard von Mackensen). The following day, 26 October, the Romanian troops reached the outskirts of the city on the northern edge, where the Soviet troops bravely resisted in concrete barracks and fortified buildings. Following the annihilation of enemy resistance in the cemetery on the outskirts of Nalchik, the 16th Mountain Troops Battalion conquered several blocks inside the heavily fortified city. At the same time, the 7th Mountain Troops Battalion maneuvered the town to the northeast, defeating the resistance from Salushta and Kensha, after which it attacked and conquered the houses on the west side of the city where the enemy resisted strongly.

The fierceness of the fight is described as follows in the division's operations log: *“The action is progressing quite easily throughout the division, except for the city of Nalchik where strong resistance is encountered as the attackers approach the centre. Each house is in a state of defence. Through each window or wall is removed the pipe of a weapon. Large blocks and groups of houses are true centres of resistance. The streets are barricaded with obstacles against infantry and tanks, forcing the penetration of automatic weapons and anti-enemy cannons. At every crossroads or public market, there is a concrete casemate with the possibility of firing in several directions along the streets and with deep communication ditches. In the gardens of houses and parks campaign works complement*



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German Marshal Ewald von Kleist, the Commander of the 1st Armoured Army appreciated the victory: *“The Battle of Nalchik is one of the biggest victories of the Caucasus operations. The 2nd Mountain Division had a heroic behaviour in the battles of Vladicaucaz, when they removed from the circle a German armoured military division”.*

those of permanent fortification. The heights that dominate the city on the south bank of the Nalchik brook are filled with enemy artillery and mortars”¹⁸. The city is surrounded, but the fighting continues the next day. On 28 October 1942, the 3rd German Armoured Corps envisaged the liquidation of all forces in the Nalchik encirclement. The 2nd Mountain Division occupied increasingly solid positions in Nalchik, including in Alexandrovskaya, and narrows the encirclement of the Soviet troops by advancing to Urban. At 7.30 a.m., after a 20-minute artillery training, the Romanian troops received the mission to conquer Nalchik, to cross the Nalchik valley and to occupy the village Casania reaching the Cerek river. Compared to the strong artillery training, the enemy’s resistance was getting weaker, the targets were hit hard by both the accompanying artillery and the assault cannons, which entered the buildings and struck the defence artillery. In a raging attack, the 7th, 10th and 16th Mountain Troops Battalions conquered the city and the heights from the southeast.

Defeated and disoriented, the enemy withdrew into the mountains. The city was conquered, but for the sake of victory, the fighting continued in the adjacent areas. Until 30 October 1942, the 2nd Mountain Division occupied the city of Nalchik and the surrounding area (25-28 October 1942). Here is how he addressed his subordinate troops after the defeat at Nalchik: *“I ordered you to stay a few days together, front and services, in the city of Nalchik, in front of which you bled and which you conquered with the brave soul of all. I have great joy when I see you passing serious and proud on its streets. From the zeal with which I see you running after your business, I trust that you defend with your soul, at any time, our honour, paid so dearly ...”¹⁹.*

German Marshal Ewald von Kleist²⁰, the Commander of the 1st Armoured Army appreciated the victory: *“The Battle of Nalchik is one of the biggest victories of the Caucasus operations. The 2nd Mountain*

¹⁸ Military Archives – Marele Stat Major Collection - P II- 1224.

¹⁹ According to Colonel (r.) Gh. Suman, *Istoria Brigăzii 2 Vânători de Munte Sarmizegetusa*, Editura Pro-Transilvania, 2003, p. 134.

²⁰ Ewald von Kleist (Braunfels, Hessa, 1881 – Vladimir, 1954). German Marshal. He was, together with Guderian, the creator of the German armoured weapon. Captain of the Hussars at Tannenberg (1914), then served in the General Staff and in the Reichswehr. He led in 1940 the breakdown of the French front in Ardennes, after which he acted in the Balkans, where he conquered Thessaloniki and Athens (April 1941). He fought in Kiev (1941), Stalingrad (1942) and in front of a group of German-Romanian armies. He died in captivity in the URSS (*Grand Larousse in 10 volumes, Volume 6: incapacité/marbrure*, pp. 1, 758).



Division had a heroic behaviour in the battles of Vladicaucz, when they removed from the circle a German armoured military division”²¹.

Congratulations were sent to General Eberhard von Mackensen – the Commander of the 3rd Armoured Corps and the Commander of the 4th Richtofen Air Fleet. The Battle of Nalchik ended as one of the biggest Romanian victories on the Eastern Front. 3,079 prisoners, a large amount of weaponry and war material were captured ²².

In the battles of Baksan and Nalchik, the Romanian 2nd Mountain Division lost 820 soldiers (157 dead, 647 wounded and 16 missing). On 2 November 1942, General Ioan Dumitrache was decorated with the Order of the “Iron Cross”, in the rank of Knight (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes), the highest Order of the Third Reich. On the same day, he received the following letter from the mayor of Nalchik:

“Dear Esteemed General,

I allow myself to express my deepest gratitude for the liberation of Nalchik on 28. X. c.

As the conqueror of Nalchik, please, in memory of this great military action, receive a gift from the city museum.

The new City Hall under my leadership will seek to bring the city and its population to well-being.

Mayor of Nalchik

Professor A. N. Dainaco”²³.

In Bucharest, on 10 November 1942, Marshal Ion Antonescu issued the Order of the Day no. 34:

“Following the fierce fighting between 25 October and 3 November, the 2nd Mountain Division, strongly supported by German air force, managed to break the enemy front on the Baksan River.

It then conquered, through close combat, numerous localities, strongly defended by Soviet troops, and entered the fortified city of Nalchik, from the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, over which it took control by means of heavy street fighting.

Continuing the ordeal of the pursuit to Ordjoni – kidze, the brave soldiers of this Mountain Division crushed the last attempts of resistance of the enemy, throwing his broken and disorganised

²¹ Apud Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

²² Jipa Rotaru, Leonida Moise, Vladimir Zodian, Teofil Oroian, *Antonescu - Hitler. Caucazul și Crimeea*, Editura Paideia, București, 1999, p. 56.

²³ A.M.Vn., *General Ioan Dumitrache* Collection, p. 4.



The 2nd Mountain Division reaches the easternmost point of the entire Eastern campaign, reaching about 20 kilometres from the Grozny oil centre.

remains in the mountains and capturing thousands of prisoners and a lot of war material.

For the wonderful deeds of arms and the beautiful victory of the mountain hunters in the “Battle of Nalchik”, which will remain in the history of our great achievements, I transmit to General Dumitrache, the officers and soldiers of this glorious Division, the thanks of HIS MAJESTY THE KING and the gratitude of the MOTHERLAND, and I bow with deep respect in front of the heroes who have fallen in battle for the defeat of our enemy forever”²⁴.

Here are the words that General Dumitrache addressed to his soldiers, by order of the day, in those times of turmoil: “Troops of the 2nd Mountain Division and the 10th Infantry Division: my soul is attached to your souls of martyrs of war and especially of these days. For the courage with which you arrived so well at the end of April 1944, in the name of the country you honour, I thank you with gratitude. Yet a bravery of the brave, all together, with your confidence of untroubled shooters, we will surely overcome the hard trials, defeating fate to the end, no matter how difficult it could be ...”²⁵.

THE 2ND MOUNTAIN DIVISION REACHES THE EASTERNMOST POINT OF THE ENTIRE EASTERN CAMPAIGN

The offensive that followed after the conquest of the city of Nalchik is still part of the plans of the German army, the troops of the 2nd Mountain Division occupying positions on the flank of its advance. The operations begin on 2 November, with Romanian troops marching behind German armoured columns to continue the offensive towards Alagir and Ordjonikidze. *The 2nd Mountain Division reaches the easternmost point of the entire Eastern campaign, reaching about 20 kilometres from the Grozny oil centre.* Taking advantage of the fog on 14 and 15 November, the 2nd Mountain Division prepares its defensive system for winter. The enemy launches a first attack on 16 November, when it manages to enter the village of Kora-Ursdon, which it occupies. The 2nd Mountain Mounted Squadron together with the Mounted Reconnaissance Squadron try to occupy the locality, but they are rejected. Enemy reconnaissance also takes place in the other

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²⁵ Colonel (r.) Gh. Suman, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

sectors of the division, but due to dense fog, such patrols are captured. In the days of the great Soviet offensive in Stalingrad, the situation on the front of the 2nd Mountain Division is a quiet one, except for an attack in the area of the 4th Mountain Troops Group given by the 37th Soviet Brigade. On days 20 and 21 only sporadic exchanges of fire are recorded. Starting from mid-November, the Romanian troops are beginning to face the adverse weather, with the presence of snow and frost, the temperatures being permanently below 0 degrees Celsius. In the slight fire exchanges with the enemy it is answered with fewer blows to save ammunition. On 24 November, at the command of the *Digora* Division, decorations are given for officers, sergeants and soldiers who distinguished themselves in the battle of Nalchik²⁶.

At the end of 1942, the German military command, convinced that it could no longer remain in the Caucasus, organized the withdrawal in stages starting from the night of 31 December 1942/1 January 1943. General Auleb, by an Order of January 19, 1943 appreciated: “The 2nd Mountain Division withdrew 200 kilometres through continuous fighting, with a spirit of sacrifice worth noting, facing the greatest difficulties under the command of its heroic and brave commander, General Ion Dumitrache”²⁷.

The withdrawal was made on the route: the Taman - Crimea - Simferopol peninsula, rebuilding the troops for the military campaign of the summer of 1943. Between 13 July 1942 and 15 April 1943, the 2nd Mountain Division lost 11,000 people²⁸. For his achievements, Ioan Dumitrache was advanced to the rank of Division General (1 January 1943) and received the Order “Mihai Viteazul”²⁹, class II



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²⁶ Florin Cristescu, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Apud Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

²⁸ *Ibidem.*

²⁹ The “Mihai Viteazul” Order was established by the Royal Decree no. 2 968 from 26 September 1916. The initial sign of the Order was composed of a gold-plated cross, enamelled blue, with the centre on the obverse the crowned figure of King Ferdinand I, and on the reverse the year “1916”. Class III and Class II had the cross surmounted by the golden royal crown; in the third class - the crown had a dimension of 20 mm in length, and in the class - II - of 28 mm. The third class had a 40 mm cross and was worn on the left side of the chest; The second class, with the size of the cross of 60 mm, was worn in command and the first class, also of 60 mm, was worn as a brooch on the left side of the chest. The 1941 model had the figure of King Mihai and the year “1941”. The sign for the 1938 model received two crossed swords between the arms of the cross. The ribbon of the Order was of dark red-cherry mill, 37 mm wide, with on each side a 3 mm wide gold wire band. In 1936, the bearers of the Order received a kind of uniform consisting of a cloak and a cap similar to that worn by the great voivode Mihai Viteazul. It was worn by the knights of the Order on all official occasions, when the officers were required to hold the ceremony, as well as to all the national or patriotic celebrations organised by the State (Eugen Stănescu, Iulia Stănescu, Gavriil Preda, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-9).



Between July and October 1943, the 2nd Mountain Division carried out wear and tear battles with the Soviet army and partisan detachments. General Ioan Dumitrache received, starting on 24 July 1943, a leave of absence in the country for 25 days.

At the end of May 1944, the General Staff reorganised the mountain divisions into operational commands. The 2nd Mountain Division Command was transformed into the 102nd Mountain Command, being deployed, at the end of August 1944, in Deva garrison.

(High Decree no. 353 of 15 February 1943), already having the same Order, class III. The Commander of the Mountain Corps, Army Corps General Gheorghe Avramescu, signed Order no. 1 519/R on 14 May 1943 to *“go to the garrison of Bucharest, being urgently called to the Carpathians, in the interest of service. Departure today 15 May 1943. Travel by plane”*³⁰.

On 5 and 6 June 1943, the 2nd Mountain Division was inspected by Marshal Ion Antonescu. His appreciation paid tribute to the great mountain hunters: *“The 2nd Mountain Division was covered with glory in the Caucasus and deserves the gratitude and admiration of the country, thanks to all the staff led with honour and dignity by General Ioan Dumitrache”*³¹.

Between July and October 1943, the 2 Mountain Division carried out wear and tear battles with the Soviet army and partisan detachments. General Ioan Dumitrache received, starting on 24 July 1943, a leave of absence in the country for 25 days³². The fame enjoyed by the 2nd Mountain Division can be found in the letter of Marshal Ion Antonescu of 18 November 1943³³:

During the winter of 1943, the Soviet Army decimated the warriors and combat assets of the 2nd Mountain Division. At the insistence of Marshal Ion Antonescu, the German Military Command accepted the withdrawal of troops from Crimea (11 April – 12 May 1944) by sea and by air. The units of the 2nd Mountain Division entered the peace garrisons, receiving areas of responsibility, developing intervention plans to objectives, against social disturbances, against paratroopers and partisans³⁴.

At the end of May 1944, the General Staff reorganised the mountain divisions into operational commands. The 2nd Mountain Division Command was transformed into the 102nd Mountain Command, being deployed, at the end of August 1944, in Deva garrison. From 1 August 1944, Ioan Dumitrache was appointed to the command of the Mountain Corps, which, from 23 August, went to annihilate the German troops in the area of Braşov.

³⁰ A.M.Vn., *General Ioan Dumitrache Collection*, p. 6.

³¹ Apud Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³² A.M.Vn., *General Ioan Dumitrache Collection*, p. 7.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

³⁴ Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.



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On 31 August the troops of the Mountain Corps went on the offensive in cooperation with the 33rd Soviet Army Corps, the subordinate of which was the 1st Romanian Infantry Division “Tudor Vladimirescu” (established on the Soviet territory, on 2 October 1943, consisting of Romanian prisoners). On 1 September 1944, the Mountain Corps Command led by experienced General Ioan Dumitrache and the 1st Mountain Division, commanded by General Grigore Bălan, were in the border cover disposition, between Întorsura Buzăului and Homorod³⁵.

On 8 September, the city of Sfântu Gheorghe and, on 28 September, the city of Târgu-Mureș were liberated. By 15 October, the Mountain Corps expelled the German and Hungarian forces from the “Intrândul Secuiesc”. The mountain divisions liberated the cities of Sfântu Gheorghe, Baraolt, Târgu-Mureș, Aiud, Gilău, Cluj, Huedin, Beiuș, Vașcău and Oradea. Starting on 15 October 1944, the 1st Mountain Division, the Mountain Command and the corps units were withdrawn in Brașov and Sinaia, and the 2nd and 3rd Mountain Divisions continued the offensive on the territory of Hungary³⁶. On 24 October 1944, Major General Ioan Dumitrache arrived in Brașov, making himself available to the General Staff. The Mountain Corps and the 1st Mountain Division were withdrawn from the combat disposition, to be disbanded based on the measures adopted by the Allied Soviet Control Commission.

On 22 November 1944, Major General Ioan Dumitrache was decorated by King Mihai (High Decree no. 2254) with the Order “Mihai Viteazul” 3rd class with swords “for the way in which he distinguished himself in the heavy but successful actions during the period 24 August - 12 October 1944, undertaken in Brașov, Sfântu Gheorghe, Târgu Mureș, Gherla, for the liberation of Transylvania – Continuous in the field, in the middle of the troops, encouraging them, proving, besides personal courage, a firmness of character worthy of all the praise”³⁷.

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Huedin, Beiuș,
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Oradea.*

³⁵ Gheorghe Suman, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

³⁷ A.M.Vn., *General Ioan Dumitrache* Collection, p. 9.



ACCUSATIONS, PERSECUTIONS, PRISON

Unjustly accused by the Soviet Military Command of committing war crimes³⁸, General Ioan Dumitrache was arrested. With Order no. 455 on 26 February 1945, the Military Court of Cassation and Justice, the General Prosecutor's Office ordered: *"In compliance with Order N. R./Cabinet of the Minister/Nr. 7/1945 personally confidentially,*

I have the honour to ask you to order the immediate arrest under guard of that Command, [the Mountain Corps] of Division General Ion Dumitrache.

The officer will only be able to leave the premises only with the written approval of the Minister of War.

The record regarding this guard is attached in copy.

General Prosecutor,

General Magistrate

*C. Păiș*³⁹.

The real reasons for his arrest were: the heroic behaviour of the soldiers of the 2nd Mountain Division in the Caucasus, for which it was nicknamed "Divizia de Cremene", the refusal to continue the fighting on the territory of Hungary and the criticism of the war orders given by the Soviet commanders in "Intrândul Secuiesc".

On 7 March 1945, the Moscow Radio station transmitted the Informative Note by which General Dumitrache was accused of ordering, in October 1942, the killing of 600 prisoners, partisans, women and children at Nalchik, as well as of ordering the transport of materials to the country. The false accusations were denied by the testimony of the 127 persons who participated in the trial⁴⁰.

The real reasons for his arrest were: the heroic behaviour of the soldiers of the 2nd Mountain Division in the Caucasus, for which it was nicknamed *"Divizia de Cremene"*, the refusal to continue the fighting on the territory of Hungary and the criticism of the war orders given by the Soviet commanders in *"Intrândul Secuiesc"*⁴¹.

He was rehabilitated on 15 August 1946 and transferred to the command of the Mountain Corps, and on 1 September 1947, he was advanced to the rank of Army Corps General and kept in reserve, having the right to receive a pension⁴². In the fall of 1948, the *Securitatea* resumed the persecutions, the general being called more frequently for interrogations.

³⁸ The Dumitrache *Securitate* File.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Constantin Chiper, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

⁴¹ Florian Bichir, *Interogatoriul generalului Ion Dumitrache, comandant al Diviziei 2 Vânători de Munte, "Document"* - Bulletin of the Military Archives, year XIX, no. 3 (73)/2016, pp. 77-85.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

On 3 February 1949, Ioan Dumitrache was detained at the disposal of the *Securitate* in Bucharest, being investigated between February 1949 - October 1950⁴³. Without trial and conviction, he was imprisoned in Aiud and Jilava Prisons. The Prosecutor of the Bucharest Court – Instruction Cabinet – War Criminals issued, on 7 October 1950, a Certificate signed by the Chief Prosecutor: *“It is true that General in reserve DUMITRACHE IOAN was left free by us on 6 October 1950 in the matter he was preventively arrested”*⁴⁴.

He settled in Braşov, living retired, forgotten and devoid of material resources, worried about writing his memoirs. The typed text was donated to the Braşov Museum of History and Archaeology.

LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

On the occasion of the celebration of a quarter of a century since the liberation of the country and the Day of the Armed Forces, the General in reserve Ioan Dumitrache received, on 5 March 1970, an exciting and respectful letter from Ştefan Paşcanu, from Târgu Mureş⁴⁵:

“Dear General Dumitrache,

The quarter of a century that passed made us remember and tell the deeds of arms carried out to defend the homeland. In order to be better documented, your precious help was requested, for which we ask you to receive the warmest and most sincere thanks.

We have no words to appreciate the extraordinary content of the file, including the military operations carried out by the brave Mountain Troops under your skill, command and strategy.

Remarkable and true pearls of literature and authentic patriotism are the orders of the day issued by you. after the glorious battles waged in the Mureş area, along the thousand-year-old Ardeal.

We started holding a series of presentations on this topic related to the anniversary of the Liberation of the homeland and the anniversary of our Armed Forces, among which a large meeting you were invited to attend and to make a speech.

Regardless of our will, the great meeting did not take place and we learned that you were kind enough to come to our city.

⁴³ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁴ A.M.Vn., *General Ioan Dumitrache* Collection, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Horia Dumitrescu, Marilena Sima, *Generalul de corp de armată Ioan Dumitrache (1889 - 1977). Contribuții, “Cronica Vrancei”* XIX, Vrance Museum, 2014, pp. 369-393.



In the evocations related to the 25th anniversary of the Liberation and the anniversary of our Armed Forces, in our exhibitions, we honour and we will always do so the name, the luminous figure of the strategist, of the great patriot, of the man, General Ion Dumitrache.

It is good. The land of the country knows our steps. The word country is encrusted with living flesh. It is our saints who have fallen for it.

It would be true and just that the survivors of the bloody days should pay more attention, with more gratitude, not so much to our person as to the valuable contribution we can bring to the patriotic education of the youth in propagating the love of the ancient soil, in the fight against the forgetfulness of the fierce clashes with the enemy, of the great blood tribute paid for the difficult today and the happier tomorrow of our homeland and our people.

Dear General,

In the evocations related to the 25th anniversary of the Liberation and the anniversary of our Armed Forces, in our exhibitions, we honour and we will always do so the name, the luminous figure of the strategist, of the great patriot, of the man, General Ion Dumitrache.

Returning your precious material, we thank you wholeheartedly for your kindness in making it available to us. It will be the most valuable piece, the most expensive material for our work not always carried out in the best conditions and, in some cases, maybe not understood properly.

Please receive our homage and warmest and sincere wishes for you to be fine and healthy for many years in the future.

Best regards to your Lady

Yours sincerely,

War veteran. Antifascist"⁴⁶.

The survivors of the 1916 promotion B active and reserve infantry and administration officers met on Sunday, 28 May 1972, in the former premises of the Military Infantry and Administration School in Bucharest, to celebrate the 55th anniversary since the first officer degree was obtained. The 40 participants sent him a letter, signed by all, expressing their homage to the one who led them in the battle and was a model of their conduct and virtues in life:

"Well respected General,

The survivors of the 1916 Promotion B, active and reserve infantry and administration officers, assembled today in the former Military Infantry and Administration School in Bucharest to celebrate

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 12-13.



the 55th anniversary since their promotion to the first officer rank, with the sincere and deepest regret that – because of reasons exceeding our desire and possibilities – we could not have you among us, in this festive and dear to us circumstance, we send you a warm and respectful greeting and assure you of the most pleasant memories of life and our sincere gratitude, for all that you have given us, as a gift, from your mind and soul, for the most perfect and thorough formation of us for life and for the noble and beautiful career of apostolate and sacrifice, which we embraced with affection and fulfilled with honour. -

We all wish you, with all our heart, that fate will continue to reserve many happy returns of your venerable age!”⁴⁷.

He died on 6 March 1977, being buried in the Groaveri Cemetery in Braşov. Today, in Braşov, two small neighbouring streets bear the names of generals Dumitrache and Mociulschi, two great personalities of the Romanian Army.

Among those who expressed condolences were Gheorghe Mihail^{48*}. On a business card, General Mihail wrote:

“Army General Gh. Mihail

Former Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces

Former Chief of the Armed Forces Great General Staff

I express sincere condolences for the death of my dear comrade General Dumitrache, a brave general, who helped me in the heavy responsibility I had on 23 August 1944.

Versailles – France

22 March 1977”⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 14-15 verso.

⁴⁸ *Gheorghe Mihail (13 March 1887 – 2 February 1982). Second Lieutenant (1907), Major (1917), Brigadier General (1935), Adjutant Division General (1939). Commander of the Special Infantry School (1929 - 1930), Chief of Staff of the General Inspectorate of the Army (1936 - 1937), Chief of the General Staff (August - September 1940, August - September 1944), Inspector General of the Infantry (1944 - 1945) and the Army (1945 - 1947), Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of National Defence in the government of Constantin Argetoianu (28 September - 23 November 1939), Vice-President of the Council of Ministers (4 July - 24 August 1940). He participated in the First World War, being wounded in the Battle of Mărăşeşti. On 23 August 1944 he was appointed Chief of the General Staff. He coordinated the operations to cover the frontiers, to liquidate the German armed forces and to disarm the large units of the Wehrmacht in Romania (23 - 31 August 1944). See C. Căzănişteanu, V. Zodian, A. Pandea, *Comandanţii militari. Dicţionar*, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1983, p. 220.

⁴⁹ A.M.Vn., *General Ioan Dumitrache Collection*, p. 16.



INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS: MOUNTAIN TROOPS DAY – 2 NOVEMBER 1991, BRAȘOV

The celebration of the Mountain Troops Day, on the 75th anniversary since the establishment of the first units⁵⁰, took place at the Military Circle in Brașov, on 2 November 1991.

The program included the Symposium with the theme fighting traditions of the mountain troops of the Romanian army, the premiere presentation of the films *Vânătorii de munte/Mountain Troops* – brief history and *Manevra/Manoeuvre*, the unveiling of the triptych where the Mountain Troops monument was to be located. After the Symposium, during a festive event, there were handed the commemorative plaques, badges and diplomas “75 de ani de la înființarea vânătorilor de munte în armata română”/75 years since the establishment of the Mountain Troops in the Romanian Armed Forces⁵¹.

Invited to these events, Mrs. Aurica Dumitrache received a Diploma awarded to the post-mortem general Colonel Ion Dumitrache for his entire military career⁵²:

General Ioan Dumitrache remains one of the most perennial and illustrative military personalities with whom the Romanian Armed Forces has pervaded History.

General Ioan Dumitrache remains one of the most perennial and illustrative military personalities with whom the Romanian Armed Forces has pervaded History.

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⁵⁰ According to the Order of the Great Headquarters no. 294/3 November 1916, the School of Skiers – established on 30 September 1916 in the barracks of the 4th Regiment Roșiori in Bucharest, with a staff of 1,000 soldiers – was transformed into the Mountain Troops Corps, a fighting unit organized by three battalions, totaling 1,980 soldiers. At the command of this unit was named captain Virgil Bădulescu (Gheorghe Suman, *op. cit.*, p. 179).

⁵¹ A.M.Vn., *General Ioan Dumitrache Collection*, pp. 17-18.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 19.

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