



Το θέατρο επιχειρήσεων της Θεσσαλονίκης στο πλαίσιο του Α΄ Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου

The Salonica Front in World War I

ΔΙΕΘΝΕΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΟ ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟ
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ / PROCEEDINGS



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ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑΣ

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Εκδόσεις Επιστημονικών Βιβλίων & Περιοδικών

ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ 2018

 UNIVERSITY STUDIO PRESS

Εκδόσεις Επιστημονικών Βιβλίων & Περιοδικών

Πρώτη έκδοση: Θεσσαλονίκη, Δεκέμβριος 2018 ISBN 978-960-12-2430-5

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IN MEMORIAM

Dušan T. Bataković
(1957 - 2017)



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ΑΝΤΙ ΠΡΟΛΟΓΟΥ

Με αφορμή τις εκδηλώσεις μνήμης για τον Α΄ Παγκόσμιο πόλεμο, που οργανώνονται ανά τον κόσμο με την ευκαιρία της συμπλήρωσης ενός αιώνα από τη διεξαγωγή του, η επιστημονική κοινότητα της Θεσσαλονίκης τίμησε με τον προσήκοντα τρόπο ένα γεγονός, το οποίο σημάδεψε ανεξίτηλα την ιστορία της πόλης και της ευρύτερης περιοχής.

Με γνώμονα το παραπάνω σκεπτικό, το Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, το Πανεπιστήμιο Μακεδονίας και το Ίδρυμα Μελετών Χερσονήσου του Αίμου, τρεις καταξιωμένοι επιστημονικοί φορείς της πόλης, με την ενεργό συμμετοχή του Γενικού Προξενείου της Γαλλίας στη Θεσσαλονίκη, αποφάσισαν την απο κοινού οργάνωση ενός διεθνούς επιστημονικού Συμποσίου με θέμα: *"Το θέατρο επιχειρήσεων της Θεσσαλονίκης στο πλαίσιο του Α΄ Παγκοσμίου πολέμου"*. Στόχος των εργασιών ήταν να αποτιμηθεί και να αναδειχθεί η στρατηγική σημασία του μετώπου της Θεσσαλονίκης μέσα στο ευρύτερο επιχειρησιακό πλαίσιο, το οποίο του αναλογεί.

Οι εργασίες του Συμποσίου πραγματοποιήθηκαν μεταξύ 22 και 24 Οκτωβρίου 2015 και κινήθηκαν γύρω από τους ακόλουθους θεματικούς άξονες:

1. Τις συνθήκες διάνοιξης, το φθινόπωρο του 1915, του θεάτρου επιχειρήσεων.
2. Τη σύνθεση, οργάνωση και επιμελητεία των αντιμαχόμενων στρατιωτικών δυνάμεων έως το τέλος του πολέμου.
3. Τη θέση που το θέατρο επιχειρήσεων της Θεσσαλονίκης καταλαμβάνει σε επίπεδο ευρύτερου πολεμικού σχεδιασμού από τους αντίπαλους συνασπισμούς.
4. Τη σύνδεση και αλληλοεξάρτησή του με τα γειτονικά θέατρα αλλά και με τις πολιτικές εξελίξεις στην ευρύτερη περιοχή.
5. Τις πολεμικές επιχειρήσεις σε ξηρά, θάλασσα και αέρα (Οκτώβριος 1915 - Νοέμβριος 1918).
6. Τη συμβολή του θεάτρου επιχειρήσεων της Θεσσαλονίκης στην τελική έκβαση του πολέμου (Σεπτέμβριος - Νοέμβριος 1918).
7. Τη Συμμαχική στρατιωτική παρουσία στην Κεντρική Ευρώπη, στη Μεσημβρινή Ρωσία και στην Κωνσταντινούπολη μετά το πέρας του πολέμου (1918 - 1923).
8. Τη διαχείριση της μνήμης.

Ταυτόχρονα, οι εργασίες του Συμποσίου αποτέλεσαν μια πρώτου μεγέθους ευκαιρία, προκειμένου να αναδειχθεί η μεγάλη σημασία του θεάτρου επιχειρήσεων της Θεσσαλονίκης μέσα στο πλαίσιο διεξαγωγής του πολέμου, κάτι που, δυστυχώς, έχει υποβαθμιστεί από τη διεθνή ιστοριογραφία.

Εκτός από τους 38 συνέδρους από 13 διαφορετικές χώρες, τις εργασίες του Συμποσίου παρακολούθησαν 275 προπτυχιακοί φοιτητές, 40 μεταπτυχιακοί φοιτητές και υποψήφιοι διδάκτορες, 35 πανεπιστημιακοί καθηγητές, εκπρόσωποι διπλωματικών αποστολών, πολιτικών και στρατιωτικών αρχών, επιστημονικών φορέων, σωματείων και συλλόγων καθώς και πλήθος κόσμου.

Η Οργανωτική Επιτροπή εκφράζει τις θερμές της ευχαριστίες προς όλους όσοι συνέβαλαν στην επιτυχή διεξαγωγή του Συμποσίου: τον Δήμο Θεσσαλονίκης, ο οποίος το έθεσε υπό την αιγίδα του, τις διοικήσεις των τριών οργανωτικών φορέων, τους Ειδικούς Λογαριασμούς Κονδυλίων Έρευνας του Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης και του Πανεπιστημίου Μακεδονίας, την Τράπεζα Πειραιώς, τις Πρεσβείες του Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου και της Αυστρίας στην Αθήνα, τα Γενικά Προξενία της Γαλλίας και της Ομοσπονδιακής Δημοκρατίας της Γερμανίας στη Θεσσαλονίκη, τη Γαλλική Αρχαιολογική Σχολή Αθηνών, το Γαλλικό Ινστιτούτο Θεσσαλονίκης, την Επιτροπή Κοινοπολιτειακών Τάφων, τον Όμιλο Μουζενίδη και την επιχείρηση Χατζόπουλου. Επίσης, θερμές ευχαριστίες οφείλονται στον εκδοτικό οίκο University Studio Press καθώς και στον κύριο Δημήτριο Κάρα για την επιμέλεια των αγγλικών κειμένων. Χωρίς τη συνδρομή των παραπάνω, θα ήταν αδύνατη η διοργάνωση του Συμποσίου και ο ανά χείρας συλλογικός τόμος.

Η Mission Centenaire 14/18, θεματοφύλακας των επετειακών εκδηλώσεων με αφορμή τη συμπλήρωση ενός αιώνα από τη διεξαγωγή του Α΄ Παγκοσμίου πολέμου, πρόσφερε την πιστοποίησή της, ενισχύοντας, χάρη στην πρωτοβουλία αυτή, τη διεθνή διάσταση και προβολή του Συμποσίου.

Η Οργανωτική Επιτροπή του Συμποσίου, αποφάσισε ομόφωνα να αφιερώσει τις εργασίες στη μνήμη όλων όσων η μοίρα έστειλε στο θέατρο επιχειρήσεων της Θεσσαλονίκης, προκειμένου να πολεμήσουν, πολλοί εκ των οποίων άφησαν την τελευταία πνοή στη συγκεκριμένη γωνιά της γης.

Η οδυνηρή και αναπάντεχη απώλεια του εκλεκτού επιστήμονα, συναδέλφου και φίλου Dušan T. Bataković, η οποία μεσολάβησε από την εποχή της διεξαγωγής του Συμποσίου, οδήγησε αναπόφευκτα την Οργανωτική Επιτροπή στο να αφιερώσει στη μνήμη του τον παρόντα τόμο.

FOREWORD

On the occasion of the centennial commemorations of World War I held around the world, the scientific community of Thessaloniki paid tribute to WWI armistice with an event that left an indelible mark on the history of the city and the surrounding region.

In a joint effort, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUn), the University of Macedonia (UoM) and the Institute for Balkan Studies (IMBA) -three of the city's most notable scientific bodies- in cooperation with the Consulate General of France in Thessaloniki, organised an International Conference entitled: **“The Salonica Front in World War I”**. The aim of the conference was to assess and highlight the scale of the strategic importance of the Salonica Front within the wider military context of the war. The Conference took place between 22nd and 24th October, 2015 and focused on the following thematic areas:

1. The opening of the Salonica Front in the autumn of 1915.
2. The organisation and logistics of the opposing military forces from the beginning to the end of the War.
3. The importance of the operational theatre of Thessaloniki for both the Entente and the Central Powers.
4. The political and diplomatic consequences of the Salonica Front and other Fronts in the area.
5. The military operations on land, sea, and air (October 1915-November 1918).
6. The contribution of the operational theatre of Thessaloniki on the final outcome of the War (September-November 1918).
7. The military presence of the Entente forces in Central Europe, Southern Russia, and Constantinople, following the end of the War (1918-1923).
8. Memories, perceptions and the legacy of the Salonica Front.

At the same time, the conference papers were a rare opportunity to call attention to the significance of the military theater of Thessaloniki in the context of the war, which, unfortunately, has been largely neglected or debased in international historiography.

Besides the 38 delegates from 13 different countries, the Conference was attended by 275 undergraduate students, 40 Master's students and Ph. D. candidates, 35 university professors, representatives of diplomatic missions, political and military authorities, scientific bodies, associations and societies, as well as a large audience.

The Organising Committee would like to express our thanks and sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to making this conference a success: the Municipality of Thessaloniki, which granted auspices to the conference, the administrations of the three

organisational bodies, Special Account for Research Grants (S.A.R.G.) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the University of Macedonia, Piraeus Bank, the Embassies of the United Kingdom and Austria in Athens, the Consulates General of France and the Federal Republic of Germany in Thessaloniki, the French (Archaeological) School at Athens, the French Institute of Thessaloniki, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), Mouzenidis Group, and Chatzopoulos Company. Likewise, warm thanks are due to University Studio Press publishing house, as well as to Mr. James Karas for proof-reading the English texts. The conference and the ensuing collective volume would not have been possible without the kind assistance of all mentioned above.

Mission Centenaire 14/18, responsible for the commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War, provided certification for the conference, thus reinforcing its international dimension and promotion.

The Conference Organising Committee unanimously decided to dedicate the papers to the memory of all those whose fate it was to be sent to fight in the military theatre of Thessaloniki, many of whom left their last breath in this particular corner of the earth.

The Organising Committee wish to dedicate this collective volume to the memory of the eminent historian, colleague and friend Dušan T. Bataković, whose unexpected loss so deeply saddened us.

Personal Impressions from the Salonika Front during the Great War

Dalibor Jovanovski

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ο εορτασμός της 100ής επετείου από την έναρξη του Α΄ Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου στη νότια Βαλκανική και πιο συγκεκριμένα η διάνοιξη του Μακεδονικού (Θεσσαλονίκης) Μετώπου, παρέχει την ευκαιρία να επανεξετάσουμε τα γεγονότα εκείνα, τα οποία δεν έφεραν τίποτε καλό στην περιοχή. Όταν οι μελετητές διερευνούν τους πολέμους και τις στρατιωτικές δραστηριότητες στα μέτωπα, χρησιμοποιούν ως επί το πλείστον τα επίσημα κρατικά έγγραφα. Ωστόσο, ο βίος των απλών στρατιωτών ή των άλλων που συμμετείχαν στις στρατιωτικές ενέργειες σπανίως έλκει την προσοχή των ειδικών μελετητών. Αυτό βεβαίως δεν σημαίνει ότι οι εκτιμήσεις των ανθρώπων που συμμετείχαν στις μάχες έχουν μικρότερη αξία από εκείνη των επίσημων κρατικών εγγράφων. Για το λόγο αυτό, η έρευνά μου επικεντρώθηκε στην αποτύπωση των απόψεων όσων συμμετείχαν στις στρατιωτικές δραστηριότητες στο Μακεδονικό Μέτωπο. Ειδικότερα, χρησιμοποιούνται βιβλία που γράφτηκαν από στρατιώτες και άλλους συμμετέχοντες στις στρατιωτικές επιχειρήσεις, οι οποίοι πολέμησαν στο στρατόπεδο της Entente. Στα βιβλία αυτά μπορεί να βρει κανείς πολύ ενδιαφέρουσες περιγραφές για πόλεις όπως η Θεσσαλονίκη, η Έδεσσα ή η Δοϊράνη. Μπορεί τέλος να διαβάσει ενδιαφέρουσες περιγραφές του μετώπου των επιχειρήσεων, των ανθρώπων και της καθημερινής ζωής.

The marking of the centennial of the World War I campaign in the southern Balkans, more precisely the opening of the Macedonian (Salonica) Front, is an opportunity to revisit research into these events that brought nothing but harm to everyone in the region. Most often, research on war and front campaigns is conducted by examining official state documents produced by the governments of the warring states, their General Staffs or diplomatic offices. Ordinary soldiers or other participants in campaigns are much less frequently in the focus of scholarly research. Of course, this does not mean that the views of direct participants in such campaigns related to the situation on the ground have lesser value than official state documents. The views of ordinary participants in the Macedonian (Salonica) Front campaign are the topic of my paper. My research covers books written by soldiers and other participants in the campaign fighting on the side

of the Entente forces. In these writings, we find very interesting descriptions of towns and cities, such as Salonica, as well as interesting descriptions of local populations and everyday life. In this paper, I also focus on descriptions of allies and enemies, more precisely portrayals of the Serbian and the Bulgarian soldiers, and accounts of disease, such as malaria, which are recounted by participants in the Macedonian Front campaign. In terms of inquiry into the views of direct participants in the battles on the Macedonian (Salonica) Front about events, allies, enemies, ordinary people or everyday life, two new theses are of interest to our topic: a PhD and an MA thesis, recently defended in England and in Thessaloniki respectively.¹

Salonica – More often than not, Salonica was the first place soldiers encountered as they arrived on the territory engulfed by the campaigns of the Macedonian Front. It has to be noted that Salonica and Bitola distinguished themselves from other townships on the Macedonian Front by their appearance and orderliness. These were cosmopolitan cities, previously important administrative centers in the Ottoman Empire, now officially belonging to two neighboring states – Serbia and Greece. In effect, there was one big difference between these two cities, which became apparent precisely during the campaign. Salonica remained far removed from the winds of war, while Bitola was thoroughly destroyed by the operations of war that unfolded in its vicinity. It is true that Salonica fell prey to the great fire of 1917, but this devastation cannot be compared with the loss of human life in Bitola. The writings of people who found themselves in Salonica during the war reveal that Salonica left a positive impression on them.

In her letters, Amelia Peabody Tileston, an American who cared for the wounded Serbian soldiers, also mentions Salonica. She found the city a most interesting place: if one had nothing to do, one could spend weeks just watching the people pass and never tire of the ever-varying panorama; very interesting, a place where one could spend weeks looking at its citizens and the wonderful surroundings.²

For Luigi Villari, Salonica was without any doubt the most interesting of all “war capitals”.³ He felt that were it not for malaria, the backward civilization and the lack of safety in the immediate hinterland, Salonica might have become an important agricultural and perhaps even industrial center. Evidently, the Italian officer was bothered by the summer heat which he found intolerable. Even the

1. R. Richardson, *Home away from the home front: the British in the Balkans during the Great War*, PhD thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, London 2014; J. Tomašević, *Ο Α' Παγκόσμιος πόλεμος και η Ελλάδα στα μάτια του «ξενιτεμένου» σερβικού στρατού*, Φιλοσοφική Σχολή, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Θεσσαλονίκη 2013.

2. *Amelia Peabody Tileston and her Canteens for the Serbs*, Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston 1920, 58.

3. L. Villari, *The Macedonian campaign*, T. Fisher Unwin Ltd, London 1922, 156.

sea did not contribute to render the heat in Salonica tolerable. He found the hotels few and dire, albeit before the fire he came across some good but expensive restaurants.⁴ Still, his penchant for good restaurants was probably satisfied with the opening of the French and British messes in town.⁵ When it comes to everyday life in Salonica, Villari's book on the Macedonian Front campaign is also interesting because it provides sketchy information about newspapers published by the allies at that time. Villari wrote about *L'Opinion*, *Echo de France*, the *Balkan News*, *La Voce d'Italia*, and mentions that three Serbian and two Russian papers were also published.⁶

In August of 1916, E. P. Stebbing, an officer of the British Army, arrived in Salonica. He shared his impressions of the city in his book about the Macedonian Front. In his view, had it not been for the war, Salonica would have been an ordinary Mediterranean town - interesting and picturesque with its long tortuous streets. He found the seashore especially interesting, and enjoyed shopping in the marketplace.⁷

For Richard Harding Davis, Salonica is an interesting city, which he describes as a city that can be divided into two parts - modern and Turkish. At night, Salonica with its electric lights was as bright as Broadway, "but a Broadway with one half of the streets in darkness"⁸ He, much like others who were in Salonica at the time, mentions the ethnic diversity of the city which was augmented by the presence of the armies of the Entente. He found it odd that if you buy a newspaper from a newsboy, two passers-by will stop but if you buy a package of cigarettes, five people will look over your shoulder.⁹

For A. Donovan Young, Salonica was a continental and cosmopolitan city, marking a turning point between East and West, giving an atmosphere typically Eastern one moment and obviously Western the next.¹⁰ In 1917, he returned to Salonica once again, after having spent time on the front line. His arrival in the city came several days after the Great Fire in Salonica. His impression of the city had changed. To him, old Salonica had never been such a sad and hopeless sight. He observed that all notable buildings in the city had become a heap of ruins¹¹. Douglas Walshe's first impressions of Salonica are very interesting: the city was a wonderful hotchpotch, a hell of debauchery, heat and confusion¹². Much like

4. *Ibid*, 159.

5. *Ibid*, 161.

6. *Ibid*, 162.

7. Е.П. Стебинг, *На фронтом во Македонија*, Селектор, Скопје 2011, 55.

8. R. H. Davis, *With the French in France and Salonika*, Duckworth & Co., London 1916, 107.

9. *Ibid*, 111.

10. A. Donovan Young, *A subaltern in Serbia and Some letters from Struma Valley*, Drane's Danegeld House, London, 14.

11. *Ibid*, 140.

12. D. Walshe, *With the Serbs in Macedonia*, London, New York MCMXX, 26.

Mann, Walshe also saw Salonica as a city where both East and West can be found. This was a city that did not sleep, and left one breathless. Commotion and mystery ruled the city – Rolls-Royces ran into donkeys.¹³ Walsh shared his observations in the *Balkan News* – a British newspaper published in Salonica that catered to the soldiers. It is evident that this newspaper was a boon for the bored soldiers but it provided news from the entire world besides the Balkans.¹⁴ H. Collinson observes that over twenty newspapers were published in Salonica - in Greek, French, Turkish, Italian and Judeo-Espagnol - but only one, The *Balkan News*, in English, and he was its editor. Hence, it is not at all surprising that he speaks in such superlatives about this newspaper, where, thanks to the wireless, the English/British soldier could read what Mr. Lloyd George had the day before.¹⁵ When we sum up all that Owen and Walshe had to say about this English newspaper in Salonica, the words of its editor come as no surprise: “when many years hence the last veterans of the Great War are telling stories to their grandchildren, quite a number of them will talk about the *Balkan News*”.

The editor of the Salonica paper The *Balkan News*, H. Collinson Owen, was also the official correspondent from the Middle East and has a positive view of Salonica. In his book dedicated to the events of World War I on the Macedonian Front, he gives us a wonderful illustration of why this Mediterranean city was so special. For him, inhabitants of Salonica might sometimes wonder why anybody should ever want to visit their city, but for some people, after six months spent in the up-country and on the front, coming to Salonica incited great joy. He himself admits to feeling pleasantly excited to enter the town again, and see people, tramcars and shops¹⁶. That’s why his shock after the Great Fire of Salonica in August 1917 should not come as a surprise.

Salonica depicted for us by A. J. Mann is interesting from another angle. Wars do not bring progress, only destruction and regress; nonetheless, at times, and in order to increase their influence, foreigners devoted themselves to the education of the local population and to archaeology. This was the case with the French. According to Mann, they formed several French-Serbian and French-Greek schools of instruction in Salonica, Florina, Edessa and Bitola¹⁷. They were also engaged in archaeology: “Their Service Archéologique conducted excavations of prehistoric sites at Gona, Sedes, Zeitenlick, Petit Karabou, Hortja; drew up maps: collected pottery, ancient mosaics and Turkish tombstones; made a de-

13. *Ibid*, 28.

14. *Ibid*, 34.

15. H. Collinson Owen, *Salonica and after. The sideshow that ended the war*, Hodder and Stoughton, London MCMXIX, 51.

16. *Ibid*, 40.

17. A.J. Mann, *The Salonika front*, A. & C. Black Ltd., London 1920, 86.

tailed study of ramparts and churches of Salonica and the historical treasures of Mount Athos".¹⁸

Allies and enemies – War campaigns, death, injury, and destruction cannot leave any human being indifferent. Such circumstances can alter perceptions of the enemy who might have been a friend in the past, as well as perceptions of allies who in the past might not have been held in high regard. In this context, I point to the case of Serbia and the Serbs. The events of May 1903, when the Obrenovic dynasty was violently overturned and the throne of King Alexander was assumed by Peter Karadjordjevic, sparked outrage in Europe. In Great Britain, for example, newspapers were full of negative comments and cartoons, while the Government cut off diplomatic relations.¹⁹ However, three years later diplomatic relations were restored.²⁰ Without going into a deeper analysis as to why relations were restored, suffice it to say that the British did not forget the events of 1903 and the murder of King Alexander and his wife, even during World War I.²¹ Douglas Walshe, writing about Serbia notes: "When the war began most of us thought of the Serbs only as Balkan barbarians. Did not one of our most popular war-prophets placard the country with the tactful counsel: "To hell with Serbia"? - for which, to do him justice, he has apologized like a man. That horrible murder of Alexander, last of the Obernovitch line, and his Queen, Draga, was practically all we knew of Serbian history, and it stuck in our gizzards".²² But this did not stop them from expressing feelings of compassion towards their ally in war. For Walshe, on many occasions, Serbian soldiers were not very elegant or neat; they did not shave like the officers or British soldiers. But, they were very good in handling arms. Their officers had a much better appearance. This Briton had a very positive opinion of the commissioned officers of the Serbian Army. For example, he thought that Field-Marshal Mishic was a brilliant tactical commander. He also mentions General Vasic, who spoke English, and General Stepanovic, whom he thought to be an excellent tactician. Walshe notes the following about the Serbian army: "The Serbian army has made itself a most efficient war machine, and everybody not up to this job has been ruthlessly scrapped".²³ Flora Sanders, much like others who came from countries forming the Entente, had a positive opinion about the Serbian soldier. She admits that the more she saw the Serbian

18. *Ibid.*

19. An excellent description of the May events, the coup d'etat in Serbia, and British reactions to it can be found in S. Markovich, *British perception of Serbia and the Balkans 1903-1906*, Dialogue Associations, Paris 2000.

20. For the restoration of diplomatic relations between Britain and Serbia see: A. Раствовић, Британски краљ Едвард VII и дипломатски бојкот Србије, *Историски часопис*, XL VIII (2001), 165-184.

21. Eg. Sir Valentine Chirol in his pamphlet *Serbia and the Serbs*, Oxford pamphlets, 1914, discusses the events of May 1903, remarking that they have contributed to the failure of Serbia to regain its good name.

22. Walshe, *With the Serbs in Macedonia*, 231.

23. *Ibid.*, 235.

soldiers, the more she admired their qualities, and dismissed their faults. She elevates the humane traits of the Serbian soldier.²⁴ Thus, she tells us how the Serbian soldiers did not molest a wounded Bulgarian soldier, and compares this demeanor with that of the Bulgarian soldiers who would kill wounded soldiers. In a way, this comparison tells us that she viewed the Serbian and Bulgarian soldiers differently. This is also observed in the segment of the book where she writes about the attitude of the Serbian soldiers towards Bulgarian prisoners after their advance on the Macedonian (Salonica) Front. For her, the Serbian soldier was a fighter who was willing to enter enemy territory with a mailed fist, but the idea that they would have revenged themselves by killing and torturing women and children, as the Bulgarians did in Serbia, was not to be thought of.²⁵ She thought Serbian soldiers treated Bulgarian prisoners kindly, mentioning examples of how they shared with them the cigarettes and their water.

H. Collinson Owen had good words to say about the Serbian soldier. According to him, it was impossible not to be impressed by the Serbian soldier.²⁶ As a journalist, he noticed that history, especially medieval history, was very important to the Serbian soldiers. He deemed that going to battle with the names of the medieval heroes on their lips was very important to them. This British journalist also thought that the three greatest Serbian commanders were Stepanovic, Mihic and Vasic. He thought general Vasic to be a great soldier, but also unpretentious as a person, notwithstanding his two victories over the Austrians. General Vasic left an impression on him because of his knowledge of the English language, and Stepanovic, in addition to his military skills, left an impression by dressing as a simple soldier.²⁷

In her letters, American Amelia Peabody Tileston does not hide her sympathy towards the Serbs and the Serbian soldier. Thus, we note her compassion towards Serbian wounded soldiers and their gratitude for her work.²⁸ For her, Serbian soldiers were very nice, most patient, brave, and uncomplaining.²⁹

The Italian Villari also thought that the Serbs fought heroically and with a force of desperation on three fronts. He deemed that of all peoples who participated in the Great War, the fate of the Serbs was the most tragic.³⁰ His book was published in 1922, *i.e.* after the formation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It is well known that this new state, created as the result of Serb

24. F. Sandes, *The autobiography of a woman soldier*, Frederick A. Stokes Company Publishers, New York, 26.

25. *Ibid*, 161.

26. Owen, *Salonica and after*, 133.

27. *Ibid*, 139-139.

28. Amelia Peabody Tileston and her Canteens for the Serbs, 67-68.

29. *Ibid*, 85.

30. Villari, *The Macedonian campaign*, 85.

participation in the Great War on the side of the Entente and the dissolution of the once powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire, maintained problematic relations with the Kingdom of Italy, which like Serbia, was victorious in World War I. The reasons for this lie in the territorial problem in the Adriatic. Very soon, the relations between the two victorious states, Italy and Serbia, which became a part of the new Yugoslav state, became tense. But this did not prevent Villari from writing positively about the Serbs. He emphasizes that the current misunderstanding with the Yugoslavs should not be used as justification to forget the heroism of the Serbs.³¹

In his book dedicated to the British forces that participated in the battles on the Macedonian Front, George Ward Price, war reporter for the *Daily Mail*, also writes about the Serbian allies. His words are testimony to the complete change of British perception towards Serbia and the Serbs. Needless to say, this is due to their military alliance. All allies are good, although this may not actually be the case, and all enemies are bad. Suffice it to say that it was the British who came up with the adage: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Price notes that following the arrival of the Serbian army in Salonica, soldiers leaving their country under the pressure of the Austro-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian armies wanted very much to form close friendships with soldiers from the other armies of the Entente. They showed eagerness to become more closely acquainted with them, and their own hospitality and frank, open ways caused a particularly close feeling of friendship to spring up between the Serbs and our English soldiers.³² Through such camaraderie and friendship, the ordinary British soldier became acquainted with Serbian customs, which were surely unknown to them before. Interestingly, Price writes that the Serbian “slava” – a sort of regimental festival and feast as he calls it - became a new feature in the social life of Salonica. Describing the way the Serbian soldiers celebrated these festivities, he does not hide his admiration for the spirit of the Serbian soldier. And yet, the British journalist remarks that in spite of their unbroken spirit, Serbian soldiers were also men of flesh, blood and emotion. Just like all other men, they missed loved ones. He writes of a Serb officer who missed his family, and grieved at the fact that he had no word of the fate of his loved ones.³³

In terms of the sorrow felt by soldiers, I will also mention a comment made by Stebbing. Writing about the losses the armies suffered, he muses over the fact that sorrow brings people together more than happiness. Thus, wrote Stebbing, sorrow forged a stronger tie between Serbian and English soldiers at moments when the British forces suffered great losses. He felt very grateful for the

31. *Ibid.*

32. Ц. Вард Прајс, *Сказна за Солунската армија*, Селектор, Скопје 2010, 148.

33. *Ibid.*, 150.

sympathy expressed by the Serbs in that dark hour.³⁴ Not only did he feel gratitude towards the Serbs during such difficult times, in his writings he also expresses his respect for the courage of the Serbian soldier, who, according to him, spread fear on Kajmakchalan, and led to the fall of Bitola.³⁵

Contrary to the sympathy he felt for the Serbian allies, Price's opinion of the Bulgarian soldiers was quite different. Although he writes that he feels no special resentment towards the Bulgarian enemy³⁶, upon reading his notes one cannot fully agree with this observation. For Price, the Bulgarian soldier was not exemplary – physically he is a sturdy fellow, as ugly as sin, with Mongolian writ plainly on his unshaven face.³⁷ The allusion to Mongolian features is more than clear.

Amelia Peabody Tileston's letters give little information about her perception of the Bulgarian soldier. Most probably, she came in contact with Bulgarian soldiers captured by the Entente forces. Still, after visiting the areas that after the end of the war came under the control of Bulgarian forces, she expresses contempt towards them for burning villages, carrying off everything, and leaving the inhabitants to starve and freeze. She took an even harsher stance towards Bulgarian officers whom she found fearfully arrogant, insolent and quite intolerable.³⁸

In Villari's writings, the Bulgarians are depicted as very calculating. According to him, although many in the Entente felt that Bulgarian sympathy towards Russia was widespread, they quickly forgot everything that the Russians had done for them in the past.³⁹ He feels that the Bulgarians might have perhaps done more on the front, the result of which might have been the conquest of Salonica, but that they were not enthusiastic over the idea of throwing themselves headlong into an offensive while they knew that city was reserved for the Austrians.⁴⁰ The Italian officer also felt that by the end of the war the Bulgarians no longer wanted to fight for the Germans.

The description of the Bulgarian soldier is most often negative, especially in terms of their cruelty, albeit sometimes witnesses also note a different kind of attitude of the Bulgarian soldiers towards the enemy. Seligman deemed that the Bulgarian soldier fought a clean fight against the British and the French, but that "in his treatment of the Serb and the Greek he was as ruthless a savage as his former ally and master, the Kaiser, could have expected from the most cultured German".⁴¹

The campaign, the damage that resulted from it, and the daily encounters

34. Стебинг, *На фронтот во Македонија*, 233.

35. *Ibid*, 289.

36. Прајс, *Сказна за Солунската армија*, 31.

37. *Ibid*, 31.

38. *Amelia Peabody Tileston and her Canteens for the Serbs*, 136

39. Villari, *The Macedonian campaign*, 21.

40. *Ibid*, 122.

41. V.J. Seligman, *The Salonica side-show*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London 1919, 197.

with injury and death, including that of friends and loved ones, must have affected the way these enemies on the front looked upon each other. But, was it always like this? In this context, I will point to a different attitude expressed by a Serbian soldier, from Macedonia by origin, towards the other *i.e.* Bulgarian side, where his brother fought. The Serb soldier, Ljubomir Terzioski went to a Serbian school, while his brother, Venedik, my great-grandfather, went to a Bulgarian school. In World War I, they fought on opposite sides. This was quite frequent among Macedonian families – one brother in the Serbian army, the other in the Bulgarian army. Undoubtedly, this affected how Ljubomir saw the Bulgarian soldier. This is recorded in his diary, parts of which were published by his son, a Macedonian historian, in 1988. On 17 April, 1918, after a clash with the Bulgarian forces, Ljubomir writes, “Who is fighting whom? What is human kind, or rather its degenerate kind, applauding when something like this happens?! At whom is this aimed – at the Bulgarians, among whom is my own brother, a sibling of the same mother and father [...] Should I applaud his demise, or he mine!? What does he gain from the victory of those over there, and what do I gain from the victory of these over here? Both he and I, if we are to stay alive, will be slaves to death, and the rest of our days will be spent in slavery and mourning of the millions who have been recklessly thrown away in the abyss of the trenches at the whim of a few. What is the difference between a Serb and a Bulgarian who kills like this [...] is this the aspiration of all Serbs and Bulgarians, or it is the aspiration of individuals in both ranks, to whom our fate and lives have been delivered and entrusted. What about the Austrians, Germans, French, Italians, English [...] they are all people like us, they all live short lives, just like us. Is it not better that we all be brothers, as indeed we are, and to have one federal state without borders, like Switzerland [...]”.⁴² Ljubomir’s emotional words remind me of the stories recounted in my family about the two brothers fighting in opposing armies on the Macedonian Front. The two brothers were constantly on the lookout for each other. The accounts they shared with their children tell us they were always asking and making sure the other one was alive. If the Serb army took Bulgarian prisoners, Ljubomir inquired about his brother. And vice versa. When the Bulgarian army took Serbian prisoners, Venedikt asked about his brother. When either side made advances on the battlefield, the two searched among the bodies of the fallen soldiers checking to see whether one or the other was among the dead. Finally, after the end of the war, they met up and continued living in one house.

It is easy to conclude that the portrayal of the Serbian soldier by Entente combatants on the front was sometimes idealized. This is typical for an allied force that fought courageously for country, honor and glory. Such was the case

42. R. Terzioski, “Proboj Solunskog fronta (iz ratnog dnevnika jednog makedonskog učitelja)”, *Istorija XX veka*, br. 1-2/ 1988, Beograd 1988, 163-164.

in the Great War, but towards the end of the 20th century that changed. The Serbian soldier was no longer the same as during the Great War, and most probably, neither was the interest.

Malaria – Illness was a serious peril on the Front, in terms of the health and well-being of the soldiers, but also in terms of combat readiness on both sides on the Front. On the battle lines, every soldier was vital. The territory of the Macedonian Front where the battles were fought was predisposed to some diseases, especially malaria, which was widespread in the swamplands. Here, I render some comments made by participants about the predicament of malaria.

Amelia Peabody Tileston remarks that many of the soldiers suffered from malaria. It should be noted that she herself was also taken to a hospital in Salonica, having fallen ill from this disease.⁴³ Even though Amelia was infected, in her letter we see that she is not at all perturbed by this predicament; on the contrary, she felt she would recover.⁴⁴ This did not mean that her state was not serious; doctors were concerned about her health, since the illness had weakened her heart. She recovered and continued to care for the soldiers. The American also comments on the danger of a relapse for a protracted period of time.

For Harold Lake, malaria was the greatest foe of the Entente armies.⁴⁵ He published his book dedicated to the British effort on the Macedonian front in 1917, and the information he provides about malaria is very interesting. He remarks that when soldiers were sent to Salonica, in addition to all other battles, they were also committed to a war against the mosquito.⁴⁶ These were carriers of the disease. As precautionary protection from this dangerous disease, soldiers were given quinine therapy, which was not very popular but nonetheless essential.⁴⁷ He also remarked that relapses were possible but that organisms already used to it were better at coping.

For Price, Macedonia was one of the most malaria prone places in the world. This was due to the vast wetlands in the region, and the abundance of mosquitoes. Although, as he writes, extensive preventive measures were taken, including medication and drying up wetlands, the troops nonetheless succumbed to this disease. He felt that the worst of it was that once infected, malaria stayed with you. Seligman also notes that malaria, together with dysentery, was the greatest health risk for the soldiers.⁴⁸ He felt that even soldiers not infected by malaria were “affected by an appalling lassitude”.⁴⁹

43. *Amelia Peabody Tileston and her Canteens for the Serbs*, 99

44. *Ibid.*

45. H. Lake, *In Salonica with our army*, Andrew Melrose Ltd, 1917, 176.

46. *Ibid.*, 207.

47. *Ibid.*, 208-209.

48. V.J. Seligman, *The Salonica side-show*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London 1919, 105.

49. *Ibid.*

Mud and malaria – this is how the journalist H. Collinson Owen begins the chapter of his book in which he discusses the topic of malaria, which affected soldiers on the front, and not only there. As many other Britons, he knew there was malaria in Macedonia; however, as he himself admits, no one could foresee that so many strong soldiers would be struck down on the front lines.⁵⁰ In his assessment, this illness was very serious and dangerous. We find in his book interesting information about the way the British military authorities attempted to deal with this predicament. Interestingly, he notes that in 1917 naval operations forced Britons to keep all malaria-stricken soldiers in Macedonia, instead of transporting them to Malta or England. Also, Owen gives interesting statistical data about malaria-stricken soldiers and the transport of some of those soldiers to England or Malta. Thus, we are able to note a growing number of soldiers stricken with malaria, from 29,594 in 1916, to 67,059 in 1918. Conversely, there is a drop in the number of people transported to Malta and England, from 21,902 in 1916 to 3,257 in 1917, which, as Owen previously notes, is due to the unsafe and hazardous sea routes.⁵¹

Local Population – Participants on the Front also described the local population in their writings, their way of life and traditions.

Soldiers coming to the Macedonian Front found the reclusiveness of the people very peculiar. Clearly, cities like Salonica were the exception. For Harold Lake, people were different. He writes that local villagers answered his questions to the best of their ability, but that doors remained closed and eyes averted. These are people accustomed to war.⁵² The Englishman found local homes very poor. This, he thinks, is due to absence of security in this war troubled land “for this is the law of Macedonia, that you shall not build yourself a secure and costly home which your enemy may at any time destroy or take for himself; you shall not plant great fields or any more than is strictly necessary for yourself lest your enemy come and reap your rich harvest [...] It is better and safer to have so poor a house that it is not worth the burning [...]”⁵³ So, it should not come as a surprise that he finds the average inhabitant of Macedonia so curiously inaccessible. He lives in terrible little villages, and seems to watch our progress with sullen, incurious eyes. He may stand upright for a time to watch the passing of our men, but soon he bends once more to his toil as though the matter did not concern him.⁵⁴

Edmond Bouchie de Belle also describes the local inhabitants. According to him, the people do not possess the joyous energy of the West, nor the sluggish indifference of the East; they are simply harsh and sad.⁵⁵ According to this French

50. Owen, *Salonica and after*, 175.

51. *Ibid*, 290.

52. Lake, *In Salonica with our army*, 11.

53. *Ibid*, 12-13.

54. *Ibid*, 185.

55. E. Бушије де Бел, *Македонија и Македонците*, Македонска книга, Скопје 1992, 54.

soldier, not even the beautiful traditional costumes the women wore could conceal their forlorn expression. Only on rare occasions might a young girl of fifteen flaunt her slim figure. De Belle noticed that the life of the local inhabitants consisted mostly of agriculture, which he saw as slow and arduous, with lots of time squandered on organization and transport.⁵⁶ In his book, he records an interesting custom, which to a man unaccustomed to the local traditions might seem very peculiar. Edmond noticed that the cult of the dead is at the center of religious life of the people – cemeteries were visited frequently, not only for burial ceremonies. He sees this as being an ancient pagan ritual from the time of Euripides. It obviously left a big impression on him, as he writes: “Sitting on large tombstones placed on top of the bolstered foundations of the grave, relatives and friends eat the food prepared for the funeral, not forgetting to set aside a plate for the deceased”.⁵⁷

Foreigners – soldiers and others who came to the Macedonian Front were surely not familiar with local traditions, especially the relationship between men and women, also influenced to a large extent by the Ottoman legacy. I presume this must have come across as very peculiar to de Bell. In his book, he remarks that eastern customs and the proximity to Muslims have restricted the freedom of women, who were expected to comport themselves with the utmost restraint. Even though this French soldier noted that younger women were not as inhibited, he comments that they still went out rarely and were very aloof and reserved towards even the most innocent of advances, which Frenchmen found very disappointing.⁵⁸ It is evident that local traditions took foreigners, in this case French soldiers, by surprise; undoubtedly, civilians were also not indifferent to the presence of foreign troops in their vicinity, as the experience and traumas of the Balkan wars were still fresh. One can only imagine the surprise of young local women at the presence of foreign troops in areas where they lived.

When foreigners came to the region, they observed and sought to understand how some of the customs of the local people came about. Some of their comments should not have been very pleasant for the local inhabitants to hear. Price, for example, notes that local laborers are not by any means a pattern of industry. This, he believes, is due to the centuries of massacres that have taught the ordinary person to avoid the semblance of riches, and in consequence have made the villagers of the rich soil of Macedonian the laziest.⁵⁹ In terms of the population and their habits, Walshe found one habit of the local men quite interesting. This is the string of beads men carried, a habit noted in Salonica, Bitola, Florina, Edessa and other towns. Men toyed with their beads while they walked and talked. Many Englishmen found this most irritating, while others thought of the devout Catholic

56. *Ibid*, 55.

57. *Ibid*, 57.

58. *Ibid*.

59. Прајс, *Сказна за Солунската армија*, 286-287.

and were a little shocked.⁶⁰ Soldiers often came in contact with the population that lived near the front, and it was not unusual for the soldiers to visit their homes, which were modest and poor. Thus, Walshe found that the house of a local inhabitant he visited resembled a roughly built shed.⁶¹ He also gives the reason for such poor appearances of the Macedonian houses. He stipulates that during the days of Turkish rule nobody dared to make much show of wealth for fear of extra extractions. But he also observes that this was not the case with the peasantry.⁶²

Leisure – The average person is known to say that war never brings anything good – not to the victor, and especially not to the vanquished. At the onset of war, soldiers are known to exhibit euphoric moods, hoping for quick victory and speedy return to their loved ones. But, very soon they face reality. Wars can be protracted and bloody. Soldiers, but also other participants in war, are away from dear ones. Very often, as in the case of the armies on the Macedonian Front, they found themselves in a completely different part of the world, a long way from their families. After all, soldiers are but human beings. At times when they were not on the front lines, they found time for leisure, which must have made the burden of the war easier to bear.

Foreigners who came to the Macedonian Front had habits of their own, in which they wanted to indulge during time of rest and recuperation. However, the region was a different place. British traditions had no place here. Seligman comments: “I began to realize that tennis in Macedonia is not played under the same condition as, say, in the center court at Wimbledon”.⁶³ This Englishman’s comment is a little bit odd, especially having in mind the traditions and customs of the region, not only in the area of the Macedonian front. Evidently, the newcomers knew absolutely nothing about this. So what of it? Soldiers surely did not want to be on the Macedonian Front, but that did not stop them from pursuing their usual fun and leisure activities. Seligman hands us down a very good description of the games they played – games of bridge, and also golf, which is as far removed as possible from the tradition of the people that lived in the area of the campaign, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation.

New Year celebrations in the course of World War I were probably occasions when soldiers and others engaged on the front could relax. They all formed their own impressions. Amelia Peabody Tileston comments that she had a good time for New Year’s in the company of about twenty guests – Serbian, Italian, French, English and Russian. They spoke several languages, some spoke only in their mother tongue, and all of that “made a fearful mental strain”.⁶⁴

60. Walshe, *With the Serbs in Macedonia*, 187.

61. Walshe, *With the Serbs in Macedonia*, 208.

62. *Ibid*, 209.

63. Seligman, *The Salonica side-show*, 29.

64. Amelia Peabody Tileston and her Canteens for the Serbs, 109.

Christmas and New Year were also celebrated on the front line: however illogical or unsettling that may seem, the soldiers were, after all, ordinary people who wanted to believe and indeed believed that the war would be over soon and that they would be going home again. In Ljubomir Terzioski's diary, we find information on how the Serbian soldiers celebrated Christmas on the front – "Christmas [...] the soldiers are with heavy heart and deep in thought, most probably remembering how they celebrated this day in the village and in church [...] A bottle of cognac is opened and soldiers make a toast: 'God willing, next year we will celebrate this festive day at home' [...] On our left wing, an artillery duel has begun. Across from us, several howitzers launch grenades. These holiday greetings were probably sent to the Bulgarians, and now they are sending them back to us".⁶⁵

Was it worthwhile? Because of the loss of human life, all wars and campaigns, regardless of their success or lack thereof, inevitably lead to the question of whether it was all worth it. In his book on the Macedonian Front, Price asks the question: Has Salonica been worth while?⁶⁶ He also gives us the answer. Notwithstanding his remarks to the effect that the goals of the Allies in the Balkans in the autumn of 1915 were not achieved, his answer to this question remains positive. He concludes:

1. If the Allies had not come to Salonica, the Germans would have overrun and mastered the whole of the Balkan Peninsula;
2. Germany would have established a submarine base at Salonica, and even made of it a Mediterranean Kiel;
3. The Entente forces in the Balkans held up a relatively greater number of the enemy; and
4. The forces of the Entente have given back Monastir to the Serbs, and kept them together as a nation.⁶⁷

Lake, writing on the same question, noted: "When question is "What are you doing?" The only possible answer is "Bothering Bulgars". When it is "What are you going to do?" I can only imagine and suggest that is our business in life to go on bothering the Bulgars".⁶⁸

Finally, we conclude that observations and comments made by participants in the battles of the Macedonian (Salonica) Front are a very interesting and essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the events in the southern Balkans during World War I. They diverge from official documents written by diplomats or other high ranking military officials, but give a very interesting description of events, towns and cities, and of the average man, and as such are quite necessary for the understanding of the Great War in this part of Europe.

65. Terzioski, *Proboj Solunskog fronta*, 161.

66. Прајс, *Сказна за Солунската армија*, 19.

67. *Ibid*, 22-23.

68. Lake, *In Salonica with our army*, 268.