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# THE GREAT WAR IN 1915

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# CONTENTS

ANTHOLOGY PREFACE <i>by Dalibor Denda</i> .....	9
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## **PART ONE**

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<i>Oleg R. Airapetov</i> OCTOBER 1915: RUSSIA AND BULGARIAN ENTRANCE TO THE WAR .....	17
<i>Efpraxia S. Pashalidou</i> DEFENDING NEUTRALITY ALL THROUGH 1915. AN ACCOUNT OF HELLENIC DILEMMAS AND POLICIES .....	24
<i>Ciro Paoletti</i> LOGISTICAL AND POLITICAL REASONS FOR THE ITALIAN NEUTRALITY AND THE ITALIAN INVOLVEMENT IN WORLD WAR I, JULY 24 1914 – MAY 24 1915 .....	35
<i>Ilkka Tapio Seppinen</i> FINLAND IN 1915: A NATION DID NOT KNOW, THAT IT WAS PREPARING FOR A CIVIL WAR .....	56

## **PART TWO**

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<i>John Peaty</i> THE SINAI CAMPAIGN. THE ATTACK ON THE SUEZ CANAL 1915 .....	69
<i>Krzysztof Kubiak</i> CAUTIOUS WAITING - CAMPAIGN 1915 IN THE BALTIC SEA .....	75
<i>Mario Christian Ortner</i> AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ARMY IN 1915 .....	86
<i>Dalibor Denda</i> SERBIAN ARMY IN 1915 .....	107
<i>Aleksandar Životić</i> POLEMICS ABOUT SERBIAN ATTEMPT TO DEFEND MACEDONIA IN 1915 .....	119

### **PART THREE**

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<i>Ljubinka Trgovčević</i> MUSAE ET ARMA. VISUAL ARTISTS DURING THE 1914-1918 WAR .....	133
<i>Julia Walleczek-Fritz</i> BEHIND THE FRONT LINE. RUSSIAN AND SERBIAN POWS AS FORCED LABOURERS IN AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN FRONT IN 1915 .....	147
<i>Vijoleta Herman Kaurić, Ljiljana Dobrovšak</i> LIFE IN CROATIA IN 1915 .....	165
<i>Snezhana Radoeva</i> BULGARIA AND SERBIA IN COLONEL VLADIMIR LAKSA'S REPORTS (SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 1915) .....	177
<i>Milan Gulić</i> DALMATIA IN 1915 .....	190
<i>Dunja Dobaja, Damijan Guštin, Vladimir Prebilič</i> NATIONAL COMMUNITY DURING WAR IN MULTINATIONAL EMPIRE: SLOVENIANS BEFORE AND AFTER ITALIAN DECLARATION OF WAR ON AUSTRIA-HUNGARY IN 1915 .....	210

### **PART FOUR**

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<i>Alexey Timofeev</i> RUSSIAN STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL GOALS IN THE BALKANS IN 1915 .....	231
<i>Yaroslav V. Vishnjakov</i> "SERBIAN GOLGOTHA" IN THE EYES OF G.N. TRUBETSKOY AND V.A. ARTAMONOV .....	242
<i>Biljana Stojić</i> FRENCH MILITARY MISSIONS IN SERBIA DURING 1915 .....	256
<i>Ferenc Pollmann</i> THE FALL OF BELGRADE 1915 – SEEN FROM THE NORTH .....	276

### **PART FIVE**

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<i>Christian Stachelbeck</i> THE 11TH BAVARIAN INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE BATTLE OF GORLICE-TARNÓW 2 MAY 1915 .....	283
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<i>Flavio Carbone</i> THE ROYAL CARABINIERI DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR: MYTH AND REALITY .....	294
<i>Konstantin Semenov</i> ALLAH'S RIDERS: COMBAT OPERATIONS OF THE CAUCASIAN NATIVE MOUNTED DIVISION IN THE CARPATHIANS IN JANUARY-MARCH 1915 .....	305
<i>Miljan Milkić</i> FROM OTTOMAN VASSALS TO SERBIAN SOLDIERS: MUSLIM POPULATION IN SERBIAN ARMY 1914-1915 .....	315
<i>Peter Chorvát, Miloslav Čaplovič</i> CZECHS AND SLOVAKS IN THE SERBIAN VOLUNTEER UNITS (1915-1916) .....	325
<i>Aleksandra Kolaković</i> WAR AND PROPAGANDA IN 1915: FRENCH INTELLECTUALS AND ACTUALIZATION OF SERBIAN ISSUES .....	330

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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**Biljana STOJIC**

## **FRENCH MILITARY MISSIONS IN SERBIA DURING 1915<sup>1</sup>**

*ABSTRACT: During the 1915 France sent to Serbia nine military missions with various tasks. One mission had an assignment to help Serbian defense on the rivers, the other was for several months to help Serbian Red Cross fighting against epidemic typhus, some of them were exploring the possibility of expanding the war operations outside the Serbian borders, etc. Many of these missions remained in Serbia to the end of resistance, even shared the misfortune of retreating with Serbian Army through Albania. Under the influence of difficult circumstances cooperation between Serbia and France during 1915 went through several phases, from the highest level of mutual respect to the misunderstandings and conflict situations caused by different approaches regarding the fate of Serbia and its army after the retreat. After return to France many of the missions' participants published their impressions of fateful events which they had witnessed. Using these valuable memoirs and journals, along with official diplomatic documents and reliable literature our aim in this paper is to present 1915 war year seen by the French military missions in Serbia.*

*KEYWORDS: Serbia, France, missions, Frigate captain Picot, General Pau, Major Vitrat, General Mondésir, Regent Alexander, Nikola Pašić, 1915.*

What initially was planned as a localized, Austro-Hungarian punitive war against Serbia, just a few days later became world war, and as such expanded throughout Europe. Aiming to protect themselves, the Great Powers were divided into two opposing blocks with the attention focused on the operations at their own door step, which positioned the war in the Balkans in the second plan. Even so, the interest for the war theater in the South East Europe did not completely vanish, as the ideas of strategic use of the Balkan Peninsula continued to occupy the minds of

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a part of the scientific project "Europe and the Serbs (1804–1918): Impetuses and temptations of the European Modernism" (N<sup>o</sup> 177031), financially supported by the Ministry for the Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.



war strategists on the both fighting sides. The number of these, we could call them visionaries, was not large, and in the most of cases they were not taken seriously by their colleagues and superiors. Nevertheless, they continued to believe that the Balkans was and will be the resolving key for the outcome of the current War.<sup>2</sup> Some of those visionaries were General Franchet d'Espèrey, commander of the Fifth Army, and his Chief of the Staff, Colonel Charles de Lardemelle. In November 1914 Colonel Lardemelle brought up the idea to the commander-in-chief that the Triple Entente should attack Central Powers through the Balkans.<sup>3</sup> He pointed out that the Balkans was not properly used in the ongoing war and that there laid a hidden strategic potential, which could be used to put pressure on the opposing block. General Espèrey agreed with his colleague and took an opportunity to present that idea to the President of the Republic Raymond Poincaré, who shortly afterwards undertook an army inspection. This "très séduisant" idea was appealing to the President who promised his support. After him the same was done by the Prime Minister René Viviani and Armand Briand, the Minister of Justice.<sup>4</sup> Within this inner circle, the supporters of the idea discussed two possible options for the plan's execution with the same goal: complete elimination of Austria-Hungary from the War which will immediately lower pressure on Serbia and Russia. The first option implied that the breaching point will be somewhere in the south of the Peninsula, most possibly in Thessaloniki, where France and Great Britain would send about 400–500 thousand soldiers. The second option anticipated the landing of the Allies troops somewhere in the North of the Balkans, presumably at the Danube's coastline, close to Serbia's border with Romania. Each option required inclusion of Romanian, Greek and, preferably, Bulgarian armies on the side of the Triple Entente. After the disembarking, the forces would march, along with the Serbian Army, in the direction of Budapest and Vienna.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Commandant M. Larcher, *La Grande guerre dans les Balkans. Direction de la guerre*, Paris 1929, p. 80; Žofir, *Ratni memoari*, Beograd, 1956, p. 420. General D'Espèrey after the War stressed that the Entente underestimated the importance of the Balkans in the outcome, even denied the importance of the Allied Eastern Army which was always concerned as a "poor cousin" of the great western armies (Capitaine F.-J. Deygas, *L'armée d'Orient dans la Guerre mondiale (1915–1919)*, Paris 1932, Préface du Maréchal Franchet d'Espèrey, 9).

<sup>3</sup> Commandant M. Larcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Poincaré, *Au service de la France—neuf années de souvenirs. Les tranchées 1915*, VI, Paris 1930, 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Commandant M. Larcher, *op. cit.*, Annexe N° 3. Extrait du projet établi en fin 1914, pp. 268-269.

To those who were against this, it was more than obvious that the plan relied more on the ideals than on the actual facts. This was the main reason why the Chief of the French Headquarters General Joseph Joffre categorically dismissed every possibility to support the so-called Balkan plan. He thought that the moment was not right for a high risk operation and that France could not afford to send even a couple of divisions which would greatly weaken its home defence. Also, he pointed out the fact that neither Greece nor Romania were members of the Entente, and, even more, that the negotiations with them were on a slippery path. Furthermore, General Joffre argued to his opponents not to forget that from the strategic point of view each Balkan state on its own did not have military significance to France. The Vardar valley was shared between Serbia and Greece, and the Orient Express railway line passed through Serbia and Bulgaria, the Danube fluvial route spanned equally in Serbia and Romania, and above all, the route was in complete control of the Austrian river fleet. The logical and strong geostrategic reasons notwithstanding, Joffre admitted that the Balkan plan was motivating, and thus he gave permission to Colonel Lardemelle to draft the plan.<sup>6</sup> In drafting the plan Colonel Lardemelle used the information from the reports of the French military attaché in Serbia Pierre Victor Fournier, and also information collected by Generals Débeney and Corn, during their mission to Balkans in 1913.<sup>7</sup> A convenient coincidence was that in December 1914 the Serbian army defeated the Austro-Hungarians for the second time, after which Colonel Lardemelle was full of confidence that the Balkan plan was achievable.<sup>8</sup>

After the plan was sketched, Paris presented it to London in January 1915. In the meantime, while France was working on the Balkan plan, Great Britain was drafting its own military plan which targeted the Ottoman Empire as the main opponent. When the Ottoman Empire in November 1914 entered the War on the side of the Central Powers, Great Britain was highly concerned for its colonial empire in the Middle Asia and India. That concern was familiar to France as well, mostly because of the French pretensions over Syria and Lebanon. Taking all this into a thoughtful consideration, the politicians and officers from

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<sup>6</sup> Commandant M. Larcher, *op.cit.*, 42-43; Žofr, *Ratni memoari*, Beograd 1956, p. 422.

<sup>7</sup> Le archive du Ministère des affaires étrangères à Paris (hereafter AMAE), Nouvelle série (NS), su-série Turquie, dossier 439, Missions militaires française, N° 2810/II, Ministère de la Guerre, le 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 1913; AMAE, NS, Turquie, doss. 439, N° 3337, Ministère de la Guerre, Paris, le 11 octobre 1913.

<sup>8</sup> Général Niox, *La Grande guerre 1914-1918. Simple récit*, Paris, 1921, p. 149; Capitaine F.-J. Deygas, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

France and Great Britain carefully analysed both proposed plans and decided to give support to the Great Britain's plan at the expense of the Balkan one.<sup>9</sup> The decision was made mostly under the British influence, but Russia as a third ally also had a prominent role in the deciding process. Keen to promote their own interests in the Middle East, Russians wanted to be involved, but only under the condition that they would be allowed to occupy Constantinople.<sup>10</sup> With the united support of the Triple Entente the Gallipoli operation started in mid-April 1915 and, in following months, dragged the attention of the Entente from the Balkans.

France, however, did not completely renounce its presence in the Balkans, where it had a huge amount of invested capital and many citizens to protect. In order to help Serbia in keeping resistance toward Austria-Hungary, during 1915 the French Headquarters organised and sent to Serbia nine military missions with various tasks.

The first French mission that arrived in Serbia was one naval mission, known as *Mission D*, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1914. The mission was composed of 10 officers and about 70 mariners and led by a Frigate captain Picot.<sup>11</sup> Picot and members of his mission were originally sent to Serbia just to collect information about the Serbian naval defence, but seeing that the Serbian Army was almost without a viable protection from the constant attacks of the Austrian monitors Captain Picot changed his mind and offered to stay.<sup>12</sup>

The same was done by British marine mission, led by Captain Cardale (in February 1915 replaced by Admiral Ernest Troubridge),<sup>13</sup> which arrived in Serbia also at the beginning of November 1914.<sup>14</sup> These

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Hart, *Gallipoli*, Oxford University Press 2011, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Arhiv Srbije (hereafter AS), francuska serija S/F, rolna № 4, № 106, Télégramme, Nisch, le 22 février 1915; Picot arrived in Serbia in the rank of Mayor, but thanks to shown leaderships skills the French Headquarters promoted him into the rank of Frigate captain on 8 May 1915 (AS, S/F, rolna № 4/I, № 167, Mission D. M. Picot nommé capitaine de Frégate, Paris, le 24 mai 1915).

<sup>12</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 54-61, Commandant la Mission D à M. le Ministre de la Marine, Topchiderskobrdo, le 25 janvier 1915; Lieutenant-Colonel de Ripert d'Alauzier, *Un drame historique. La résurrection de l'armée serbe Albanie-Corfou 1915-1916*, Paris, 1923, p. 35.

<sup>13</sup> Admiral Troubridge came to Serbia on 19 February and next day took command from Captain Cardale who returned to his previous assignments as a Chief of the British military mission in Greece (AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 103, Télégramme, Nisch, le 21 février 1915)

<sup>14</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 6, Télégramme, Nisch, le 6 janvier 1915.

two missions, along with Russian naval mission already present in Serbia, divided the area alongside the Sava and Danube into three sectors and organised the defence from the rivers.<sup>15</sup> The commander of Belgrade Defence General Mihailo Živković requested that French mission take position across Zemun, which was most severely beaten, but Picot insisted that mission should be placed in the sector of Topčidersko brdo, because of its equipment.<sup>16</sup> Mission came to Serbia basically without any long-range and heavy cannons, besides those that were brought as a gift to Serbia, so Picot demanded from France to send to Serbia additional staff, naval cannons and other necessary weapons.<sup>17</sup>

With the support of French, British and Russian officers, the Serbian river fleet shortly afterwards succeeded to restrain damage from Austrian monitors. Along with two other missions, French officers helped in cleaning the riverbed of the Sava and Danube from the Austrian bombs and replaced them with the bombs of their own. At first, Austrian bombings of Serbian capital were daily and so intensive that missions could operate only during the night. French *Mission D* was present in Belgrade during the whole year, and were only evacuated to Niš for the period of November and December 1914 during the operations on the Kolubara and Drina, and during Austrian occupation of Belgrade (December 2–15). From Niš the mission returned on 15 January, and right away continued with ongoing operations.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the other French missions, *Mission D* had luck to be evacuated from Serbia at the beginning of November 1915, before the retreat of Serbian Army even started. Eight members of this mission, accompanied by 126 members of the Russian medical mission passed through Bitola on 16 November despite the fact that Bulgarians were only 30 km far from the city.<sup>19</sup> The mission reached Thessaloniki, and was transported to France on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Russia also sent the ship and returned its mission

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<sup>15</sup> AS S/F, rolna № 4, № 9-10, A S.E.M. le Ministre de la Guerre, Nisch, le 12 decembre 1914.

<sup>16</sup> Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Dnevnik i izveštaj pukovnika Furnijea, francuskog vojnog atašea o bici na Drini, kolubarskoj bici i odbrani Beograda 1914“, *Vojno-istorijski glasnik* (hereafter VIG), 1985/2, pp. 271-303.

<sup>17</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 7, Télégramme, Nisch, le 6 janvier 1915; AS, S/F, rolna №. 4, № 54-61, Commnadmant la Mission D à M. le Ministre de la Marine, Topchiderskobrdo, le 25 janvier 1915.

<sup>18</sup> AS, S/F, rolna №. 4, № 54-61, Commnadmant la Mission D à M. le Ministre de la Marine, Topchiderskobrdo, le 25 janvier 1915.

<sup>19</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 5/V, № 53, Télégramme chiffré, Salonique, le 17 novembre 1915; AC, S/F, rolna № 5/V, № 61, Télégramme, Bitola, le 20 novembre 1915.

back to the country on the same day.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this was not the end of *Mission D*, in April 1916 Frigate captain Picot once again returned to the Balkans, and under the supervision of General Mondesir took command over the port of Corfu.<sup>21</sup>

In mid-February 1915 a mission led by General Paul Pau, French Army representative at the Russian Supreme Command (Stavka) and a former commander of the Alsace Army, came to Serbia. Despite the defeat of the Alsace army in 1914, as a veteran from the Franco-Prussian war, General Pau remained one of the most respected officers in the French Army. His mission to the Balkans had only a ceremonial significance, because General visited Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania on his way to St Petersburg. However, the Balkan leaders considered General Pau's mission to be far more important than its official rang stated. This attitude of the Balkan politicians was right, and a proof for that we can find in the memories of Raymond Poincaré. He wrote that before the departure of General Pau, they had a meeting during which Poincaré handed him the war decorations for the most prominent Balkan and Russian leaders. He also strictly instructed General to pay special attention on military prowess of the Serbian Army, its armament and morale of soldiers. Also, Poincaré wanted that during the meetings with Bulgarian and Romanian politicians, General to stress that those countries should join the Triple Entente in the fight against the Triple Alliance.<sup>22</sup>

With Poincaré's instructions, and accompanied by a small group of officers, General Pau arrived in Serbia on 19 February. Prince Regent Alexander welcomed him in Niš in together with Nikola Pašić, the President of the Government.<sup>23</sup> At the meeting with the Regent, General gave him the French military medal for bravery, and handed over the same medals for King Peter, Field Marshal Radomir Putnik, the Chief of the General Staff, and the rest of war decorations were reserved for the officers who distinguished themselves in the battles.<sup>24</sup> Wanting to respond in the same manner, the Regent sent a telegram of gratitude to

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<sup>20</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 5/V, № 62, Télégramme officiel chiffré, Salonique, le 20 novembre 1915.

<sup>21</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel de Ripert d'Alauzier, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>22</sup> Raymond Poincaré, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 100, Télégramme, Nisch, le 19 février 1915; *Srpske novine*, LXXXII, 13/26. februar 1915, 1; Krunoslav J. Spasić „Dnevnik i izveštaj pukovnika Furnijea, francuskog vojnog atašea o bici na Drini, kolubarskoj bici i odbrani Beograda 1914“, *VIG*, 1985/2, pp. 271-303.

<sup>24</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 114, Légation de la Republique français en Serbie à S.E.M. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Belgrade, le 28 février 1915.

the President Poincaré and decorated General Pau with the Order of Karadorđe's Star of the IV degree.<sup>25</sup> After the meeting with the Regent and a private talk with Pašić, during which they discussed the possibility of cooperation between the Triple Entente on the one and Serbian soldiers on the other side, the Serbian prime minister pointed out that collaboration was more than welcome, but he also underlined that Serbia could not fully give over the railway line Belgrade–Thessaloniki for the purpose of troop's transportation. This was its only connection with the outside world, more precisely its only food's and armament's support line. As a bigger obstacle for the military cooperation between Triple Entente and Serbia, Pašić underlined the problem of disunity among the Balkan states. Negotiations with Greece, Bulgaria and Romania were still indecisive, and without an inclusion of these states every Balkan campaign had a little chance for success.<sup>26</sup> General Pau left Serbia after a day and a half long visit, and departed for Sofia, further continuing his journey to Bucharest and St Petersburg. Serbian military and political leaders were highly pleased with the outcome of General Pau's visit; they estimated that it had a significant political, propaganda and moral importance for the Serbian Army and its commanders.<sup>27</sup>

General Pau visited Serbia once again on his return from Russia on 27 March. He spent just one night in Niš, and on the next day he left for Thessaloniki by train.<sup>28</sup> During his second visit, General Pau promised to his Serbian hosts that he would intervene in favor of Serbia and provide indispensable help in clothing, shoes and flours. The promised help to arrive to Serbia at the beginning of May through the Danube port town of Prahovo.<sup>29</sup>

During March and April of 1915 one of the largest French medical-military missions, the third one, led by Dr Jaubert and composed of hundred military doctors and paramedics, arrived in Niš. This mission came to Serbia on the request of the Serbian authorities. After the first battles with Austro-Hungarian Army in autumn 1914 a typhus epidemic broke out among Serbian soldiers and civilians. Serbia was ill prepared for the fight against this fatal disease alone, it lacked proper equipment,

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<sup>25</sup> *Srpske novine*, LXXXII, 13/26. februar 1915, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Commandant M. Larcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>27</sup> Andrej Mitrović, *Srbija u Prvom svetskom ratu*, Beograd 2014, p. 145.

<sup>28</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 191, Télégramme, Nisch, le 28 mars 1915.

<sup>29</sup> Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Dnevnik i izveštaj pukovnika Furnijea, francuskog vojnog atašea o bici na Drini, od januara do juna 1915. godine“, *VIG*, 1985/3, pp. 351-390.

trained doctors and required medications.<sup>30</sup> After it received the call through its legation in Belgrade on February 9, France immediately started to prepare help in medical equipment as well as to organize the mission, which was to reach Serbia divided into four groups (March 17, 24 and 31, and April 19).<sup>31</sup>

In agreement with Serbian Military Medical Service and Red Cross society, Dr Jaubert's mission divided Serbia's territory into 7 sectors<sup>32</sup> and without delay started to conduct vaccination for the soldiers and civilians against all types the of typhus and cholera. Sector's centres were placed in Nish, Kragujevac, Belgrade, Valjevo, Zaječar, Kruševac and Užice and they were headed by eminent doctors, mostly specialists in the field of bacteriology.<sup>33</sup> Thanks to the implemented measures French and the other foreign medical missions succeeded to completely suppress the typhus until the summer of 1915. After the suppressing of typhus most foreign missions left Serbia, but 97 French doctors along with Dr Jaubert decided to stay and to continue the work in active military service of Serbian Army.<sup>34</sup> After Serbia's defeat Dr Jaubert's mission withdrew with the majority of Serbian Army in the direction Peć-Andrijevića-Podgorica-Shkoder.<sup>35</sup> At the beginning of December, Fournier wrote a report to France that 57 doctors were present in Shkoder, one severely ill doctor was hospitalized in a city hospital, and 30 more were still retreating with the Serbian Army, and the rest of the mission did not have any contact with them. At the end of his report, Fournier stressed that the mission was in a state of complete

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<sup>30</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 90, Télégramme, Nisch, le 9 février 1915; AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 109, Télégramme, Nisch, le 24 février 1915.

<sup>31</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 67, Télégramme, Nisch, le 28 janvier 1915; AS, S/F, rolna № 4/I, № 79, Télégramme, Nisch, le 24 avril 1915.

<sup>32</sup> This division was referring to Serbia's territory before the Balkan Wars, while the fifteen regions obtained in the Balkan Wars were under the medical jurisdiction of the American mission organised by the Rockefeller Institute.

<sup>33</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4/I, № 79, Télégramme, Nisch, le 24 avril 1915; Among the French doctors was a famous bacteriologist from the Institute Pasteur Dr Charles Nicolle future winner of the Nobel prize for 1928 (Stanislav Sretenović, „Francuzi u Srpskoj Golgoti“, y: *Leksikon Prvog svetskog rata*, Beograd 2015, pp. 113–115).

<sup>34</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4/IV, № 13, Vice-Consulat à Skoplje à S.E.M. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Skoplje, le 8 septembre 1915; Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Dnevnik i izveštaj pukovnika Furnijea, francuskog vojnog atašea za Srbiju i Crnu Goru, od avgusta do oktobra 1915“, *VIG*, maj-avgust 1986/2, pp. 335-371.

<sup>35</sup> Milan Ž. Živanović, „O evakuaciji srpske vojske iz Albanije i njenoj reviziji na Krfu (1915–1916) prema francuskim dokumentima“, *Istorijski časopis*, XIV-XV/1963-1965, p. 239.

disorganisation: doctors didn't have medical material at all, it had to be abandoned in Kosovska Mitrovica. For all these reasons he asked that France revoke the mission.<sup>36</sup> Altogether, the evacuation period was for Serbia as well for the foreign citizens in Serbia the most challenging period in the war time, and as such, produced a lot of tensions and disagreements between especially this French mission and Serbian soldiers.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, despite all misunderstanding and quarrels that aroused in this last phase, the importance of the French medical-military mission in memory of the Serbian soldiers remained intact. The grudges did not remain for a long time in the minds of either side, therefore many of the French doctors from Dr Jaubert's mission declined the offer to return to France but chose to remain with Serbian Army in Albania and after that at Corfu.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Boravak srpskih trupa u Albaniji i njihov transport na Krf (decembar 1915–januar 1916)“, *VIG*, 1988/1, pp. 361–395.

<sup>37</sup> Some French doctors did not understand the seriousness of Serbia's current condition, so Dr Jaubert insisted that his personal assistant Miss Bingulac accompanied him during the retreat, but this request was categorically refused by Serbian authorities which considered Miss Bingulac as an Austro-Hungarian spy. In the dispute even attaché Fournier got involved and only after his intervention Dr Jaubert agreed to dismiss Miss Bingulac in Kosovska Mitrovica. After this outcome Dr Jaubert and most of his co-workers completely changed their behaviour toward the Serbian authorities during the evacuation. This hostile behaviour resulted in several incidents. In Shkoder and in port San Giovanni di Medua couple of French doctors demanded from Serbian officers that they also, as the other foreigners, must be prioritized in the evacuation process by Allied ships. Some of them even went so far and threw out of the boats Serbian refugees, no matter if they were women or children, claiming that it was for the sake of organisation and order. Truth to be told, there were numerous cases when the Frenchmen were victims. A common Serbian soldier could not understand why France and the Allies did not help Serbia to avoid defeat in autumn 1915. Some of them directed their rage towards foreigners who shared their fate. One of that cases happened in Raška on 8 November when one Serbian corporal attacked one of the French doctors, cursing the Frenchmen and French Army. Luckily, corporal was overwhelmed and doctor did not suffer any harm, but situations like this one created mistrust on both sides (Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Boravak srpskih trupa u Albaniji i njihov transport na Krf (decembar 1915–januar 1916)“, *VIG*, 1988/1, 361–395; Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Neprijateljska ofanziva protiv Srbije u jesen 1915. prema jednom francuskom izvoru (I deo od 10. oktobra do 10. novembra 1915)“, *VIG*, 1986/3, pp. 325-362).

<sup>38</sup> For the help provided in Serbia and after that in exile most of doctors in Dr Jaubert's mission were decorated by King Petar and regent Alexander (*Srpske novine*, LXXXIII, № 6, Krf, 21.april/3. maj, 1; General *Piaron de Mondésir, Albanska Golgota, Uspomene i ratne slike*, Beograd 1936, pp. 25–26; Biljana Stojić, Aleksandra Kolaković, „Francuske lekarske misije u Srbiji 1915. godine“, *Istorija medicine, farmacije, veterine I narodna zdravstvena kultura*, knj. 6, Zaječar 2015, pp. 79-87.



The fourth, equally important French mission that came to Serbia at the same period as the medical-military mission was the mission of the French pilots. The Aeroplane mission was sent to Serbia under the command of Major Roger Vitrat and in France's military documents was registered by its operative name Escadrille MF. S99 (MF was a type of aeroplane Maurice Farman, S for Serbia, and number 99 was mission's serial number).<sup>39</sup> Serbian Headquarters welcomed the arrival of Major Vitra in Niš on 23 March.<sup>40</sup> The rest of the mission arrived in April, so in total it was composed of 9 officers and 99 civilians. During the meeting with Serbian officers Major Vitrat accepted that Smederevska Palanka<sup>41</sup> would become a main base for hangars and repairing aeroplanes, and that the mission would operate in Belgrade area using airport Banjica.<sup>42</sup> The aeroplane mission brought eight Maurice Farman aeroplanes,<sup>43</sup> and four more arrived in Serbia during the summer. Planes had been prepared until 23 April and since then French pilots led surveillance and warfare missions over the territory Alibunar–Slankamen–Novi Sad–Bačka Palanka–Bijeljina and in Serbia on the airline Smederevo–Loznica. The mission acted independently, under the supervision of Serbian Headquarters, until the retreat.<sup>44</sup> During the evacuation French aeroplane mission was put under the command of the Serbian Third Army.<sup>45</sup> In Scutari on 3<sup>rd</sup> December when mission arrived the equipment

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<sup>39</sup> *Srpska avijatika 1912–1918*, I, Vojislav Vujović (urednik edicije *Istorija jugoslovenskog vazduhoplovstva*), Beograd 1993, 46-47; Boris Ciglić, *Krila Srbije. Vazduhoplovna komanda i avijatika srpske vojske 1912–1920*, Beograd 2009, 59. By decision of the Serbian Headquarters started on 4 May mission got the official name "French aeroplane escadrille" (Svetozar A. Đorđević, *Kroz ratne vihore. Prvi svetski rat i srpska avijatika*, Beograd 1967, pp. 48-49).

<sup>40</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 178, Pour le Ministre de la Guerre de la part de l'attaché militaire, Nisch, le 24 mars 1915.

<sup>41</sup> The citizens of Smederevska Palanka keep a memory on this mission vivid to present day. On 12 September 2015 the municipality along with *Society of war volunteers 1912–1918 and their descendants* revealed the monument dedicated to the mission and its French pilots (*Večernje novosti*, LXII, "Pilot Polan ponovo među Srbima", 13. septembar 2015, p. 29).

<sup>42</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 178, Pour le Ministre de la Guerre de la part de l'attaché militaire, Nisch, le 24 mars 1915.

<sup>43</sup> At that time one French escadrille consisted of six airplanes, plus two more as backup.

<sup>44</sup> *Srpska avijatika 1912–1918*, I, pp. 52-54; Svetozar A. Đorđević, *op.cit.*, pp. 50-51; Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Dnevnik i izveštaji pukovnika Furnijea, francuskog vojnog atašea za Srbiju i Crnu Goru, od avgusta do oktobra 1915“, *VIG*, maj-avgust 1986/2, pp. 335-371.

<sup>45</sup> In the late summer the Allies finally became aware that situation in Serbia was daily getting worse. In order to prevent Serbia's defeat the French Headquarters decided to send three more escadrilles to Serbia. That decision was realised on 25 September, and

consisted of 12 officers, 115 civilians and 6 members of the radio-telegraph service, which were assigned to the Aeroplane mission shortly before the evacuation.<sup>46</sup> Major Vitrat sent a report to the Serbian Headquarters on 9<sup>th</sup> December saying that despite all difficulties the mission still had five aeroplanes, but they all were in very poor condition, inoperative for the long surveillance missions from the height. The aeroplanes were without the machine guns, and other equipment, which was left in Prizren before the retreat. Vitrat suggested that planes could only be used for the postal transport along the coastline Scutari-Durres-Elbasan or Scutari-Durres-Valona.<sup>47</sup> For this purpose the planes were used until the mid-January 1916 when they have been transported to Corfu, and after that to Thessaloniki where they were integrated in reformed aeroplane brigade of the Serbian Army.<sup>48</sup> As for Major Vitrat and members of his mission, they were transferred to France on 26 December. Before the departure, the Serbian Headquarters decorated all of the mission's members with the highest honours.<sup>49</sup>

Aiming to improve its military system and make it more effective, the Serbian Supreme Command organized on 3 February 1915 an automobile command in Kragujevac headed by Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandar Derok. This was a very important step in the process of army modernisation but in order to put the automobile command to work Serbia did not have well enough trained chauffeurs and mechanics. In this situation Serbia once again turned to its Allies and asked France to send to Serbia 120 chauffeurs. Replying to this request France sent to Serbia one motorized mission, which arrived in Kragujevac during July of 1915.<sup>50</sup> This was the fifth French mission led by Sergeant Moylie who arrived in Kragujevac on 4 July, accompanied by the minister ambassador August Bopp. They had their first meeting with the Serbian authorities on 6 July during which they discussed the salary for the

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shortly after escadrilles *C.89 Serbie*, *V.90 Serbie* and *N. 91 Serbie* were sent to Serbia. These escadrilles, nevertheless, did not reach Serbia, because shortly after their arrival in Greece Serbia declared army's withdrawal and the missions stayed in Thessaloniki (Boris Ciglić, *op. cit.*, p. 67).

<sup>46</sup> Milan Ž. Živanović, *op.cit.*, p. 250.

<sup>47</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje I ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca (1915. godina)*, XIII, Beograd, 1927, p. 236.

<sup>48</sup> Svetozar A. Đorđević, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>49</sup> Boris Ciglić, *op. cit.*, p. 64. Most of the mission's members during the year were exempted of paying any taxes, and they were decorated for the various acts of bravery, such as the destroying of the enemy's planes in air combats (*Srpske novine*, LXXXII, 11/24. jun 1915, p. 1; *Ibid*, LXXXII, 1/14. avgust, p. 1).

<sup>50</sup> Dalibor Denda, *Automobil u srpskoj vojsci 1908–1918*, Beograd, 2008, pp. 63-64.

chauffeurs and other conditions for the employment.<sup>51</sup> The main problem for the proper employment of the mission was that 170 cars ordered from one American military company did not reach Serbia as planned. While waiting for the cars to arrive, mission's members were assigned to drive available cars, three squad leaders and 23 chauffeurs were allocated to be the ambulance drivers, and the mechanics worked in the army factory in Kragujevac.<sup>52</sup> The two months of leisure had as a result that mission's discipline was weakened; Sergeant Moylie didn't have leadership skills, and so in lack of a firm discipline incidents were quite frequent. Several mission's members were sanctioned for the intoxication, and the bar fights with Serbian soldiers were a common thing.<sup>53</sup> The expected car shipment arrived in September, and the French Automobile mission helped in their transfer from Thessaloniki to Serbia. Like the others, this mission as well remained in Serbia until the retreat, and was withdrawn in the same direction of Shkoder. On December 5 the attaché Fournier reported that in Shkoder 93 members from Automobile mission were present, two men were counted as missing and one was left in hospital in Kosovska Mitrovica before the retreat. In such a condition the mission could not provide any help to Serbia, because all the cars were destroyed before the evacuation in order not to fall into the hands of the enemies. At the end of December members of the Automobile mission were transferred back to France.<sup>54</sup>

During the summer of 1915 France sent to Serbia Captain Carbonnier as Fournier's deputy military attaché. Along with him came Lieutenant Pierre Léon Carlier<sup>55</sup> from the XIII Regiment of Infantry, the former French consul in Skopje from the period of the Balkan Wars, and

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<sup>51</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4/III-IV, № 122, 123, Télégrammes, Nisch, le 4 et 6 juillet 1915.

<sup>52</sup> Dalibor Denda, *Automobil u srpskoj vojsci 1908-1918*, pp. 65-67; Dalibor Denda, „Automobilska služba u srpskoj vojsci 1914/1915“, *Vojno-istorijski glasnik*, 2006/1-2, pp. 67-79; Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Dnevnik i izveštaji pukovnika Furnijeja, francuskog vojnog atašea za Srbiju i Crnu Goru, od avgusta do oktobra 1915“, *VIG*, maj-avgust 1986/2, pp. 335-371.

<sup>53</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4/IV, № 20, Télégramme, Nisch, le 20 septembre 1915; Dalibor Denda, *Automobil u srpskoj vojsci 1908-1918*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>54</sup> Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Boravak srpskih trupa u Albaniji i njihov transport na Krf (decembar 1915-januar 1916)“, *VIG*, 1988/1, pp. 361-395; Milan Ž. Živanović, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>55</sup> Before he came to Serbia Lieutenant Carlier worked as an assistant for the French military attaché in Sophia. Because of this assignment, he arrived in Serbia later than his colleagues at the beginning of October when diplomatic relations between France and Bulgaria broke after Bulgaria signed the ally treaty with the Central powers (Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Neprijateljska ofanziva protiv Srbije u jesen 1915. prema jednom francuskom izvoru (I deo od 10. oktobra do 10. novembra 1915)“, *VIG*, 1986/3, pp. 325-362).

Sergeant Hartog as Carbonnier's office assistant. The idea to appoint an additional military attaché was inspired by the example of Great Britain. In March British Government sent to Serbia Colonel Phillips wanting to gain more influence in the country. First attaché Colonel Harrison kept his current position as a man charged for all military questions, while Colonel Phillips got an instruction to reside in Kragujevac and closely work with Serbian Headquarters.<sup>56</sup> French attaché Fournier and Ambassador Bopp both considered this British move as a smart attempt in strengthening British position in Serbia and in the Balkans, and they thought that France should follow the example of its ally.<sup>57</sup>

Encouraged by Fournier and Bopp, Minister of War Alexandre Millerand, in agreement with Minister of Foreign Affairs Théophile Delcassé, informed the French Legation in Belgrade on 28 March that it was agreed to send to Serbia Captain Carbonnier from the Colonial Artillery as an additional military attaché, but in order to do that they needed a permission from the Serbian Government. Fournier and Bopp presented the biography of the candidate to Jovan Jovanović Pižon, Pašić's deputy, who was content with this decision and welcomed Captain's arrival.<sup>58</sup> During the meeting with Pižon, Fournier and Bopp presented to him the list of Carbonnier's potential duties, among which were: liaison officer between Schneider-Creusot and Serbia, he would take care of the military equipment which Serbia got from France or ordered from French military factories, also, Carbonnier was to be appointed as coordinator for the French missions in Serbia, which could through him make requests for the additional weapons or staff, etc. During the same meeting they agreed that Captain should be positioned in Niš, while attaché Fournier would maintain his place near the Headquarters in Kragujevac.<sup>59</sup> In the available documents we did not find the exact date of Captain's arrival in Serbia, but that must have happened during the summer. These three officials were on the Fournier's list, composed on 28 October in case of a need for an evacuation, so we can presume that they were evacuated via Shkoder and after that returned to France.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> During the summer the first attaché Harrison was very ill, so Colonel Phillips took most of his responsibilities.

<sup>57</sup> Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Dnevnik i izveštaj pukovnika Furnijea, francuskog vojnog atašea o bici na Drini, od januara do juna 1915. godine“, VIG, 1985/3, pp. 351-390.

<sup>58</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4, № 193, Le Ministre de la Guerre à M. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, le 28 mars 1915.

<sup>59</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 4/II, № 8, Télégramme, Nisch, le 2 avril 1915.

<sup>60</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 5/V, № 5, Mission militaire française auprès du Grand Quartier Général Serbe. Rapport fait au Ministre Millerand, le 28 octobre 1915.

By the end of summer 1915 the old idea of the Allied troops landing in the Balkans started to attract renewed attention among the French military circles. It was more than obvious that operation at Gallipoli peninsula was a complete disaster, and so the Allies started to search for a strategy that would cover up this failure. The military circles in France brought to life the old colonel Lardemelle's idea of sending the French and British soldiers to the Balkans. Unlike the previous year at this moment the Balkans plan got the support even from General Joffre, Chief of the Headquarters. After thoughtful consideration the Triple Entente power agreed that Thessaloniki will be more favourable place for the disembarking than the Danube bank, but before the execution of the plan it was necessary to do some preparations for the troops arrival to the Balkans. First of all, French War Office wanted to establish a direct communication with Serbian Headquarters in the same way as it already had done with Italian Supreme Command. So, on 18 September French Ministry of War notified the Serbian authorities that it made one Liaison Mission composed of Lieutenant Colonel Girrard, Sergeant of Infantry Revol and Lieutenant Sarraut (as officer for liaison). They were charged to establish direct communication between the two War Offices. Mission departed Marseille on 29 September and reached Serbia in the first half of October.<sup>61</sup> But shortly after the mission's arrival Austria and Germany started a united attack from the north, supported by Bulgaria from the East. In that condition direct liaison between Serbia and France was useless, like the other missions, Liaison mission was evacuated along with Serbian army and people. For protection, during the evacuation six members of this Liaison Mission were assigned to Aeroplane mission under the command of Major Vitrat and both missions were transported together back to France.<sup>62</sup>

At the same time when the Liaison mission was created, the French Headquarters took one step further and formed another, eighth in a row mission, composed of military engineers, with a task to help in improving road and rail communications between Serbia, Greece and Romania. This mission was created and sent on Serbia's initiative which asked for help to recover the road and rail network between Serbia, Greece and Romania. Serbia desperately needed help of France and its Allies, but every time when Serbia asked France to send its soldiers to the Balkan front it got the same answer – the lack of the good roads and

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<sup>61</sup> AS S/F, rolna № 4/IV, № 19, Ministre de la Guerre à M. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, le 18 septembre 1915.

<sup>62</sup> Krunoslav J. Spasić, „Boravak srpskih trupa u Albaniji i njihov transport na Krf (decembar 1915–januar 1916)“, *VIG*, 1988/1, pp. 361–395.

rail network required for troops transportation and supply. Anticipating the change in Paris's and London's attitude towards the Balkans, Serbia tried to encourage both Governments to pursue in that direction, even by showing good will to hand over to Allies the control over the railway line Niš–Thessaloniki.<sup>63</sup> At the meeting on 29 August Jovan Jovanović Pižon succeeded to persuade Bopp and Fournier that France should invest in railway line between Serbia, Greece and Romania. Undoubtedly, Serbia engaged a lot of other official and unofficial representatives abroad in favour of this idea. Anyway, through different ways this idea finally got to France's authorities who estimated that it was a really appealing proposition because if this plan was going to succeed France would get land connection with Russia.<sup>64</sup>

The mission was formed in a short time, and on 8 September it was on its way to Serbia. It was composed of about 30 members, mostly engineers and miners, and led by Colonel Bousquier, commandant of 260<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.<sup>65</sup> Before coming to Serbia Colonel Bousquier had a meeting with Greek politicians in Athens, during which Bousquier brought up the idea that Greece should take control over the railway lines from the Austrian railway corporations. Greeks agreed with this demand and asked for military backup from France in order to fulfill the task.<sup>66</sup> From Athens the mission arrived in Niš in mid-September and immediately started its work. Right at the beginning Serbia showed the greatest interest for the construction of the railway line Gevgelija–Niš–Danube, from where the line would be reconnected to Romanian rail and further to Russian network system.<sup>67</sup> This was a bit modified plan already known in Serbian political circles as the Danube or Balkan railroad. Unfortunately, the project did not go further than the

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<sup>63</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 3 VI (août 1915 – février 1918), № 138-139, „L'Avenir Balkanique“, le 12 juin 1916.

<sup>64</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 3 VI (août 1915–février 1918), № 38, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères à M. Le Ministre de la Guerre, Paris, le 31 août 1915; Dragoljub R. Živojinović, *Nevoljni ratnici: velike sile i Solunski front 1914–1918*, Beograd 2008, 83-84.

<sup>65</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 3 VI (août 1915–février 1918), № 43, Note du Direction politique et commerciale, le 4 septembre 1915. A few months earlier Colonel Bousquier stayed in Greece as a member of another French mission, so he was familiar with ground characteristics and generally with the Balkans (Krunoslav J. Spasić, “Neprijateljska ofanziva protiv Srbije u jesen 1915. prema jednom francuskom izvoru (I deo od 10. oktobra do 10. novembra 1915)”, *VIG*, 1986/3, pp. 325-362).

<sup>66</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 3 VI (août 1915–février 1918), № 45, Le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères à Ministre français à Athènes, Paris, le 6 septembre 1915.

<sup>67</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 3 VI (août 1915–février 1918), № 48-49, Ordre concernant la Mission militaire de Serbie, Paris, le 7 septembre 1915.

theoretical level due to the worsening political situation in Serbia. The mission was forced to give up before it truly started. After the retreat, France reassigned this mission under the control of General Piarron de Mondésir. Mondésir and French Ministry of War at first considered the idea to employ this mission for the construction of the road between Durres and Elbasan aiming to facilitate the march of Serbian Army along the Albanian coast, but because of the mistrust of the Italians, French authorities decided on 11 December to send this engineering mission to Thessaloniki to employ it to work on the city fortification.<sup>68</sup>

The last two missions which are described in this paper were closely related to the decision of France and its Allies to bring to life an old plan of Colonel Lardemelle concerning a disembarkation of the Allied armies in the Balkans. The decision was reached at the joined meeting of the French Government and Supreme Command on 28 September. At that meeting the authorities announced the creation of the Allied Army of the Orient (*Armées alliées en Orient*) under the command of the French General Maurice Sarrail. The Allied Army of the Orient consisted of the French and the British troops that were evacuated from the Gallipoli operation. The army's landing started in Thessaloniki on 5<sup>th</sup> October, but unfortunately, a united Austro-German attack on Serbia started the day after that.<sup>69</sup> This was the third and the most ferocious Austro-Hungarian attempt to crash its southern neighbour. Serbia expected this attack throughout the whole 1915, so that was why it so persistently asked for help from its Allies and tried to convince them to pay more attention to the warfare in the Balkans. One week later, Bulgaria joined the forces with the Central Powers and, unannounced, attacked Serbia from the East and South on 14 October. The Bulgarian troops succeeded to reach Skopje by 23 October, and to break every connection between the Army of the Orient and the Serbian troops.<sup>70</sup> While the troops of the enemies forcefully advanced, the Allied Army in Thessaloniki was rather inactive and indecisive. Under Serbian pressure General Sarail unwillingly ordered two campaigns (19 October and 3

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<sup>68</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, XIII, p. 290.

<sup>69</sup> During the period of disembarking (5 October–28 November) France disembarked 65.000 and Great Britain 85.000 men. Among the first French officers sent to Thessaloniki was General Lardemelle, the creator of the Balkan plan. He was the commander of the 122th French infantry division. Unfortunately he did not stay long at the command position; after the defeat in Romania he was replaced by General Gérôme and recalled to the battlefield in France (Bogumil Hrabak, Dragoslav Janković (prir.), *Zapisnici sednica Ministarskog saveta 1915–1918*, Beograd 1976, pp. 150-151; Milan Ž. Živanović, *op. cit.*, p. 234; M. Larcher, *op. cit.*, p. 80; Žozef Žofr, *op. cit.*, p. 420).

<sup>70</sup> Žozef Žofr, *op. cit.*, 420; Milan Ž. Živanović, *op. cit.*, 231, 234.

November) up to the North of Macedonia, but both were nothing more than tactically calculated attempts to frighten the Bulgarians in their breakthrough. Two campaigns of the Allied armies not only had not achieved their goals, but instead they provoked Bulgaria to send additional troops to Northern Macedonia that cut off Serbia's route for the evacuation.<sup>71</sup>

The Serbian army under the command of General Petar Bojović made a final effort to break through the enemy lines in Northern Macedonia, but after the four days long battle (16–20 November) it was forced to give up and retreat to the Kosovo valley. At the joint meeting of the Serbian Headquarters and the Government held in Prizen on 24 November it was decided that Serbia was not going to declare an official defeat, instead it would evacuate the army and all governmental institutions to the neutral territory where they would be put under the protection of the allies. At that moment the only available way for the evacuation was the most inhospitable one, that went through Northern Albania and Montenegro towards the Adriatic coast.<sup>72</sup>

In order to prepare the terrain in North Albania and arrange the food and medicine supply system the Entente powers decided to create three commissions (French mission in Brindisi, British Adriatic Mission and Allied commission in Rome) at the meeting in Chantilly (6–8 December) with the task to provide any necessary help for Serbia's refugees. General Joffre, the head of the French General Headquarters pointed out on this occasion that Allies were the most responsible for Serbia's fall and therefore had to do everything to regain a betrayed trust of their war ally. In order to do that General emphasized that France, beside the above mentioned three commissions, would create one additional military mission with an assignment to coordinate between the commissions and the Serbian authorities.<sup>73</sup>

General Joffre and General Joseph Gallieni, the War Minister, agreed that the leader of this mission should be General Piarron de Mondésir,

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<sup>71</sup> Petar Opačić, *Srbija između Antante I Centralnih sila 1915–1917*, Beograd, 2009, pp. 144–145; Andrej Mitrović, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>72</sup> This decision was tough and it cost Serbia a thousand lost lives of the soldiers and civilians who followed the army into the exile. At the Peace Conference at Versailles the Yugoslav delegation submitted the document indicating that during the evacuation process through Albanian mountains Serbia lost 150.000 soldiers and further 77.278 were counted as missing, presumably dead. These figures are approximate. The exact number of Serbian losses during this operation has not been determined until the present time (Milan Ž. Živanović, *op. cit.*, p. 240, 242).

<sup>73</sup> Berislav Visković, „Britanska jadranska misija“, *Pomorski zbornik*, 1979/17, pp. 403–413; Petar Opačić, *op.cit.*, p. 154.



who was well known in Serbia from the period of the Balkan Wars.<sup>74</sup> Mondésir accepted the task entrusted to him without hesitation, he received instructions on 6 December and by 12 December the mission was already on its way to Brindisi and the Albanian coast. General Mondésir personally chose all of the mission's members, which in the end counted 10 officers, 6 secretaries, 10 adjutants and 1 topographic interpreter.<sup>75</sup> When the mission was sent, France did not have accurate information about the circumstances in Albania, so at first, the mission of General Mondésir had a simple task to examine the condition of Serbian Army after the evacuation and consequently propose the measures for its further military use. At the time when Mondésir's mission was created, the Serbian army and civilians, divided into groups, already started to arrive in the Albanian ports. Three commissions which were entrusted with a task to organize the gathering of troops and providing food and medical care for them did not do properly their job, which resulted in the suffering and dying of the Serbian soldiers and civilians on the Albanian coast until the arrival of the officers from Mondésir's mission.

While Mondésir was staying in Brindisi because of the direct phone and telegraph connections, his officers were sent to Durrës, Valona, San Giovanni di Medua and other Albanian ports, the places where the Serbian soldiers and civilians were gathered.<sup>76</sup> They immediately established contacts with the Serbian commanders and soldiers, and listened to their objections and needs. They also, without a formal authorization, took command over the supply channels. Although this was not their responsibility, working on their own Mondésir's mission filled the gaps produced by the misunderstanding between the Allied commissions.<sup>77</sup>

These initiatives increased the mission's responsibilities, thus including General Mondésir in all decisions considering the Serbian

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<sup>74</sup> In May 1913, at that time in the rank of Colonel, Mondésir led one of many French missions which were sent to the Balkans with the aim that the officers learn about the war operations, tactics and armaments of the belligerent states in the Balkan Wars (Biljana Stojić, *Francuska i Balkanski ratovi (1912-1913)*, 185-188 (PhD thesis in manuscript)).

<sup>75</sup> The officers were: Colonel Douchy, Lieutenant-Colonel D'Allauzier, Lt. Col. Collardet, Lt. Col. Broussaud, Commander of Escadrille Caoudanne, Lt. Leboucq, Lt. Granddidier, Lt. Barjaud, Battalion commander Blanc and Captain D'Aubigny (AS, S/F, rolna № 5/V, № 142, Le Ministre de la Guerre à M. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, le 8 décembre 1915).

<sup>76</sup> AS, S/F, rolna № 5/V, № 172, Le Ministre de la Guerre à M. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, le 11 décembre 1915.

<sup>77</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel de Ripert d'Alauzier, *op. cit.*, 38.

Army. Along with the French, British and Serbian authorities he, too, arranged transportation of Serbian soldiers to safe locations, so that they could recover and reorganize. This operation started on 11 January and it had been finalized until the end of March 1916. With the transfer of the majority of Serbian soldiers to the Greek island Corfu the second phase of General Mondésir's mission began.<sup>78</sup> He became „the island's absolute sovereign”, with a jurisdiction to conduct reorganization of the Serbian Army in whatever direction he found suitable.<sup>79</sup> Even so, the Serbs were pleased with this decision of the Allies and they were satisfied with Mondésir's work. All of the important decisions Mondésir made in agreement with the Regent and other Serbian authorities. Together they decided to transfer the whole Serbian Army when the recovering period was completely finished, rejecting the request of General Sarrail that a group of soldiers would be transferred immediately after recovering to Thessaloniki and promptly integrated into the troops of the Allied Army of Orient. According to Mondésir's reorganization plan submitted to General Joffre on 14 February, the Serbian Army, while being a part of the Allied army, would act independently under its own command officers. General Joffre accepted the proposed plan, which was put in the motion at the end of March. A delegation chosen by General Mondésir prepared the terrain nearby Thessaloniki for the arrival of the Serbian Army, which started in March and ended in April.<sup>80</sup> Transportation of Serbian soldiers from Corfu to Thessaloniki was the third and the last phase of General Mondésir's mission. In agreement with General Joffre he left his position at the Serbian Army on 23 April 1916 and transferred command to his deputy Colonel Douchy.<sup>81</sup> After the General's departure, Serbs had just words of gratitude for him and all the efforts made for the Serbian Army were highly praised even after the War.<sup>82</sup> In April 1916 the Prince Regent decorated him with the Order of the White Eagle First rank and the Order of Karađorđe's Star with swords. The other members of the mission also received decorations according to their rank.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca. Opšte odstupanje srpske vojske- prebacivanje iz Albanije na ostrvo Krf, IV faza*, Beograd 1928, p. 1-2.

<sup>79</sup> Piaron de Mondezir, *Albanska golgota. Uspomene i ratne slike* (preveo sa francuskog Ljubiša Milovanović), Beograd 1936, p. 70, 73.

<sup>80</sup> Piaron de Mondezir, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p. 87.

<sup>82</sup> Biljana Stojić, „General Pijaron de Mondezir i *Srpska Golgota*“, u: *Vek Srpske Golgote (1915–2015)*, knj. 1, Kosovska Mitrovica 2016, pp. 405-425.

<sup>83</sup> *Srpske novine*, LXXXIII, 14/27 april 1916, p. 1. General Mondésir retired in 1919, but remained a welcome and honoured guest in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes

Nine French military missions, whose achievements were presented in this paper, were a representation of one side of the Franco-Serbian relations during the Great War. We had to exclude, perhaps unjustly, from this overview all those French civilians who had been in Serbia long before the outbreak of the War, and who remained in Serbia until its occupation in autumn 1915. Some of them were journalists, school and university teachers, and others were representatives of the French military industry and companies with French capital, such as the copper mine Bor. Counting them, we estimate that in 1915 in Serbia more than thousand French citizens remained. Most certainly that was one of the largest foreign colonies in Serbia at that time. Most of them came to Serbia to give help, but were caught in trap by the enemies along with the Serbian Army and civilians. Thus, these Frenchmen shared the misfortunes of a state defeat and retreat though Albania. This episode was the most challenging time of war for both sides, but despite all unpleasantness the Serbs felt high gratitude to Frenchmen, whose help was for certain the largest after the help of Russia. Without the support of the French Naval Mission Serbia would not have been able to establish an effective defence at the river banks and without the help of doctor Jaubert and all the doctors from his mission Serbia would not have succeeded to restrain the epidemic of typhus. Above all without the assistance of General Mondesir, who arranged the transportation and the supply system, the Serbian Army would have hardly survived 1915.

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in the period after the Great War. He visited Belgrade for the last time on 11 November 1930, when the memorial of gratitude to France was unveiled. On that occasion King Alexander I decorated him with the newly established Order of The Yugoslav Crown (Piaron de Mondesir, *op.cit.*, p. V-VI; *Politika* „Polazak francuske zvanične delegacije iz Pariza“, 10. novembar 1930, p. 3; *Politika*, „Naša Golgota i plemenitost naših saveznika“, „General Pieron de Mondesir – šef francuske vojne misije u Albaniji“, „Srbi i Francuzi na Krfu“, „Dva pisma generala Mondesira“, 11. novembar 1930, p. 3, 5, 6).