

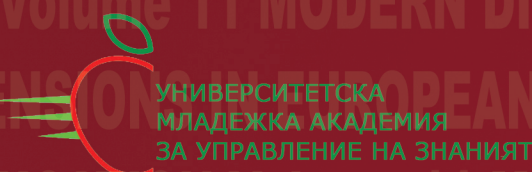
Volume

11

MODERN DIMENSIONS in EUROPEAN EDUCATION

**UNIVERSITY OF LIBRARY STUDIES  
AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES**

**UNIVERSITY YOUTH  
KNOWLEDGE ACADEMY**



# MODERN DIMENSIONS

in **EUROPEAN EDUCATION**

AND **RESEARCH AREA**

**PROCEEDINGS**

**Volume 11**

**ЗА БУКВИТЕ**  
**О ПИСМЕНОСТЪ**

**MODERN DIMENSIONS  
IN  
EUROPEAN EDUCATION  
AND  
RESEARCH AREA**

**Volume 11  
2023**  
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**СЪВРЕМЕННИ ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ  
НА  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКОТО ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛНО  
И  
НАУЧНО ПРОСТРАНСТВО**

**Том 11  
2023**  
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The Scientific conference and the proceedings are realized within a project funded under Ordinance, funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and Contract № PCHFNP-2023-07 on the topic: “Financing of scientific event of the University Youth Knowledge Academy (UNYKA)”.

All papers are original work of the authors, and the opinions expressed are theirs.

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University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, 2023  
ISSN 2367-7988

**MODERN DIMENSIONS  
IN  
EUROPEAN EDUCATION  
AND  
RESEARCH AREA**

**PROCEEDINGS**

*with Papers of the Seventeenth International Traveling Seminar of ULSIT*

“Modern Dimensions in the European Educational and Research Area.

Bulgarian-Cypriot Cultural Communications”

30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023

University of Cyprus, Nicosia

Bulgarian Cultural Center – Limassol

**Academic Publisher “Za bukvite – O pismeneh”  
Sofia • 2023**

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# THE PEOPLE WENT TO BRING FREEDOM WHERE THERE WAS SLAVERY

Arsini Kolev

*University of Library Studies and Information Technologies*

**Abstract:** 2023 marks the 111<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Balkan War. The aim of the present text is to try to present the Bulgarian attitude and state of mind on the eve of 1912. In addition to the mobilization of citizens organized by the state, the voluntary desire for inclusion in the military actions of Bulgarians from the country and beyond its borders stands out, as well as Bulgarian Jews.

*The methodological toolkit that was used in the writing includes an interdisciplinary approach, applicable in different areas of humanities and covering methods such as analysis of bibliographic resources and publications published in electronic sources, synthesis of the information array, historical approach and field observation.*

*The activity of institutions such as archives, museums, libraries and others as a fundamental factor for the development of historical memory and national identity in man is also examined.*

*The paper examines the importance of marking the annual celebrations of events and personalities related to Bulgarian history and how institutions are the country with the main role in creating a strong connection between our history and society.*

**Keywords:** Balkan war, freedom, lands, people, Jews, archive, celebrations

## Introduction

In 2023, 111 years have passed since the fateful year 1912, when Bulgarians with hope and a fighting spirit united in a national cause and when the Balkan countries began the attempt to resolve the Eastern question, because thirty-four years after the congress in Berlin on the peninsula were not enough to abate the sufferings, pains and disappointments caused by the great powers.

For this reason, the Balkan War of 1912–1913 was an event of great importance for the history of Bulgaria in the 20th century, and through numerous studies of the period, historians prove to us that the Bulgarians' national identity and self-awareness were never controversial, they were “throw” into the war without thinking about themselves, and their consciousness was occupied by the dreamy cause of national unification of people and lands.

Therefore, its long-term consequences influenced the political, socio-economic and cultural development of the region for decades, and some of the results are still the subject of scientific and even public discussion. There are also problems with the preservation of our historical memory.

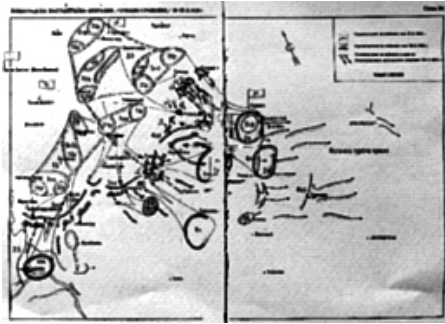
The public attitude towards popularization and the patriotic feeling in the citizens is increasingly blurred and is not present in the public consciousness, and this is most strongly noticeable during upcoming anniversaries and the organization of celebrations on this occasion of events and personalities that are part of Bulgarian history. In recent years, world globalization has also led to the trend of gradual erasure of national values, memory and identity.

## The Balkan war of 1912–1913 and the bulgarian jews

On the onset of the Balkan War 1912–1913, Bulgaria was at the peak of its military power, because during this period the Bulgarian army was re-armed with new military equipment. This was the result of several reasons – the economic development of the state, assimilation and deepening of military theory, as well as the ambition and spiritual condition of the people.

Bulgarian spirit and enthusiasm were at such a high level that they exert a huge influence on the development of Bulgarian military art. It was this steadfast Bulgarian spirit that amazed the foreign correspondents covering the Bulgarian military actions. In the newspaper *Birzhevy Vedomosti*, the Russian representative wrote: “I saw old men of sixty years who came to the

military authorities with their oxen and the old men of their families, asking – not begging, but insistently asking – that they, the old men, should be counted with the wagons, that their oxen should be taken, and their sons, their grandsons to be immediately sent to the border. I also saw women – mothers and wives, who sent off their sons and husbands with the firmness and calmness of the ancient Roman women. I saw scenes of incredible ascent and of almost epic self-denial and self-sacrifice.” [1]



**Fig. 1.** The Lozengrad offensive operation (counter battle)  
21 – 25.H.1912.

In his book “The Feat”, Kiril Kosev emphasizes that: the Bulgarian people went to war, dominated only by the thought, desire and aspiration to help their sons and daughters in Macedonia and Odrinska Thrace to be freed from Turkish slavery, to unite them together in one country. [2]

And Vasil Kolarov, in an interview with Rabotcheski Vestnik, said that “The Bulgarian people went to bring freedom where there was slavery, justice where injustice reigned, culture where barbarism reigned”. [3]

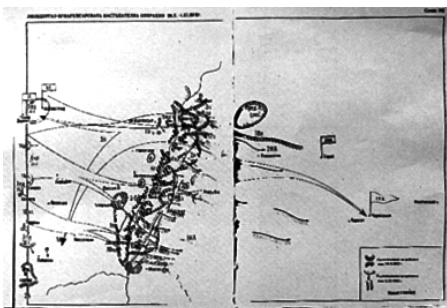
In addition to the mobilization of citizens organized by the state and sending them to the front, the desire for voluntary inclusion in the military actions of citizens from the country and abroad had increased. This is shown by the numerous telegrams sent to Sofia. Some of them: from Burgas – “500 Macedonian-Edirne Bulgarian emigrants,

living here, wish to take part in the upcoming war.

I am asking for the order to form a special detachment and send us, after arming, where we need to be.” For all voivodes, M. Bodkov; from Dobrich – “Ready flag clothing, ready 50 people... St. Popov; from Ruse – “What are you doing, 500 people are waiting for your order, order rifles and cartridges, don't forget me. Address Rumenchew.” Georgi Popov and many others. [4]

The military victories achieved by the young Bulgarian army directed the attention of the youth to officer service and many of them enrolled in the military school. A large number of Jewish youths, most from wealthy families, also chose a military career over studying abroad.

The first to graduate from the school in 1889 was Rahamim Moshon Garti. He was also the first Jewish officer promoted to the rank of second lieutenant. Guided by his example, seven more Bulgarian Jews graduated by the end of the 19th century – Avram Israel Refetov, Yosif Tajer, Yosif Herbst, Moreno Moshe Graziani, Dr. Sasson Moshe Alkalai, Avram Perets Tajer and Moreno Yako Moreno. All of them participated in the Balkan War with the self-confidence of worthy Bulgarian citizens.



**Fig. 2.** Luleburgaz-Bunarhisar offensive operation  
29.H. – 1.XI.1912

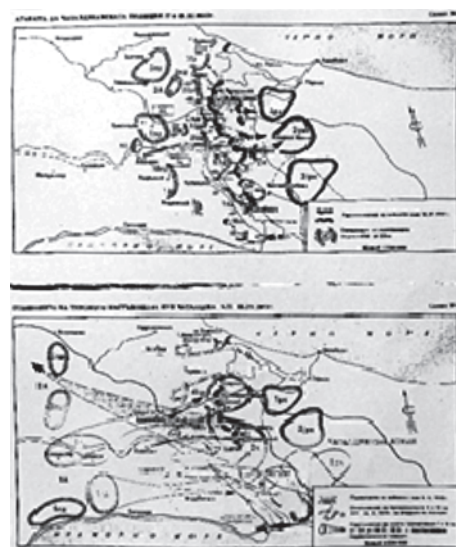
By 1911, the School for reserve second lieutenants and 16 more young Bulgarian Jews became reserve officers, among them the brother of the poet Dora Gabe - second lieutenant Israel Gabe. And 5,400 Jews were mobilized in the army – soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers who fought for the cause of the Bulgarian people.

It is important to note that no other ethnic group had produced such a large number of active and reserve officers. And this was not because the number of Jews living in Bulgaria at that time was a predominant group, but rather the result “rather of the inherited and preserved best traditions of democracy and religious tolerance among the Bulgarian people.” [5]

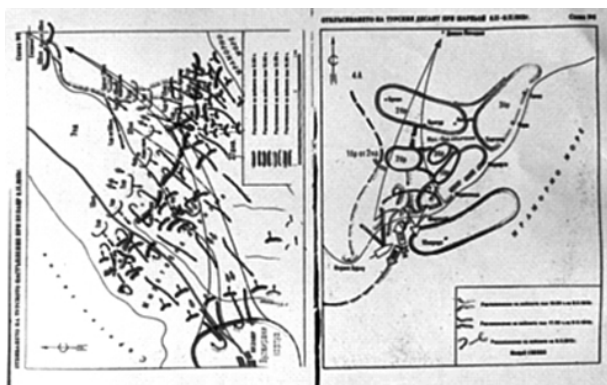
And acts of heroism are not rare. We must not forget “Private Azarya Chiprut from Karnobat”, who “on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1912 at Bunar Hisar, with several other people from the company, threw themselves against the enemy to save the regimental flag.” In the Battle of Chataldzha (10<sup>th</sup> November, 1912), nine soldiers of Jewish origin who were guarding the regimental commander died. And in total, 236 fighters of Jewish origin died in the two Balkan wars – 3 officers, 8 non-commissioned officers and 225 privates. [6]

Years later, Major General Petar Dervingov, a fellow graduate of Joseph Herbst, said: “The Bulgarian Jews, numbering about 40,000 men, women and children, died as many as Greece and Turkey separately in their war of 1897.”

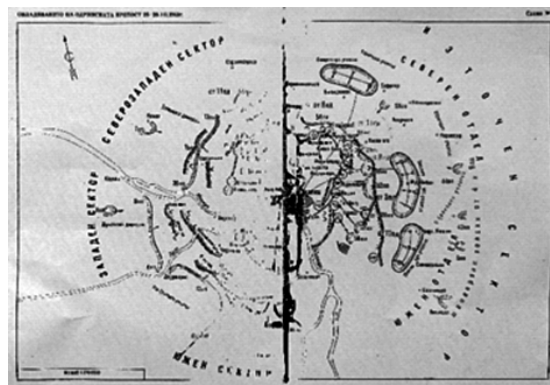
And today it can certainly be claimed that in this period there was no Bulgarian officer of Jewish origin who was not a knight of the Order of Bravery, and Colonel Avram Tajer shares: “I am proud to note the fact that until now there is no Bulgarian Jew, who has been guilty of treason, treason or desertion.” [7]



**Fig. 3.** The attack on the Chataldzhan position on 17 and 18.XI.1912; The repulse of the Turkish advance at Chatalja 5.II. – 13.IV.1913



**Fig. 4.** The repulse of the Turkish advance at Bulaire 8.II.1913; The repulse of the Turkish landing at Sharkoy 8. – 9.II.1913



**Fig. 5.** The capture of the Edirne fortress 25 – 26.III.1913

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that during the war, Bulgarians and Jews jointly defended the freedom of Bulgaria, because “they are not alien to the morals, spirit and ideals of the Bulgarian people and they fought and died as heroes on the battlefields in the name of their homeland.” [8]

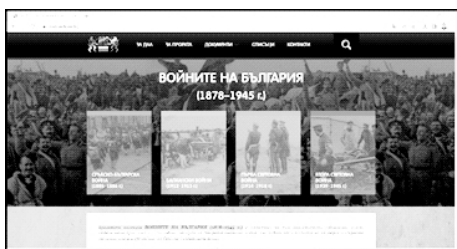
A large part of the military actions are reflected in archival documents and photographic material. For example, the following photos show schemes of: Lozengrad offensive operation (counter battle) 21–25.X.1912. Fig. 1; Luleburgaz-Bunarhisar offensive operation 29.H. – 1.XI.1912. Fig. 2; The attack on the Chataldzhan position 17 and 18.XI.1912 Fig. 3; The repulse of the Turkish advance at Chataldzha 5.II. – 13.IV.1913. Fig. 3; The repulse of the Turkish advance at Bulair 8.II.1913 Fig. 4; The repulse of the Turkish landing at Sharkoy 8 – 9.II.1913. Fig. 4; The capture of the Edirne fortress 25 – 26.III.1913. Fig. 5. [9]

### Celebrations on the occasion of the Balkan war 1912–1913

The whole of Bulgaria participates in the celebrations in a different way and pays homage and respect to those who died in the wars of Bulgaria. On the eve of commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of the war in 2012, senior government officials take part in the celebrations and processions, wreaths and flowers are laid in front of the monuments.

### Celebrations on the occasion of the Balkan war 1912–1913



**Fig. 6.** The archival collection  
THE WARS OF BULGARIA  
(1878–1945) (DAA)

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Dozens of military monuments are restored on this occasion. In his interview, Ivo Antonov, chief expert on military monuments at the Ministry of Defense, notes the trend, in addition to restoration processes on the monuments, and to intensifying the search for Bulgarian military cemeteries in neighboring countries. [10]

For its part, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church holds memorial services in memory of the dead, and the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, presents a digital collection “100 years of the Balkan Wars”, which is part of the exhibition “Faces of War”.<sup>1</sup>

In 2015, the State Agency “Archives” presented a huge array of digitized documents. They are included in the archival collection “Wars of Bulgaria” (Fig. 6). The collection itself is a set of four sections – Serbian-Bulgarian War (1885–1886); Balkan Wars (1912–1913); First World War (1914–1918) and Second World War (1939–1945) – available at <https://wars.archives.bg/>.

In the information about the project, it is written that among the main ideas and goals are to popularize a number of archival documents concerning the Bulgarian military periods stored in the state archives, and for them to reach the general Bulgarian public and to support the development of the Bulgarian state, as well as attitude towards ancestral memory.

In the panel “Balkan Wars (1912–1913)” (Fig. 7.) we find very detailed information divided into relevant sub-panels. The reader can familiarize himself with lists, documents and photos. Each archival unit is digitized in high quality, a short annotation and the claim data of the document are attached – for easier search and use by readers.

The general part of the panel presents us with the historical background of the event. Key

moments in the history of the Bulgarian state on the eve of the war, during the hostilities and the performance of the Bulgarian military forces and the post-war period are indicated.

The celebrations dedicated to the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Balkan War took place more modestly, under the post-covid measures and fears of the citizens. Government officials and society celebrated the anniversary, as well as many cultural institutions – museums, archives and libraries. [11]

The National Museum of Military History celebrated 110 years of the Balkan War with the exhibition “Sofia – 100 People in the Balkan War”. It was dedicated to the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Balkan War and presented a lesser-known aspect of what happened more than a century ago. Along with the most glorious moments in the history of the Bulgarian Army, the exposition narrative also focused on the role of the capital as the center of the political and military power of the country, and the victorious march of the army was seen through the combat path of the military units genetically connected to Sofia. Among the Jews who died in the wars, the most were from the capital – 65 people.



**Fig. 7. BALKAN WARS (1912–1913) (DAA)**

Visitors had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the city immediately before and during the war, to learn about the role of Bulgarian politicians and military personnel in the events, to understand why the slogan “Now or never!” turns into “All or nothing!” at the end of the war. [12]

How the 111<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be marked with remains to be seen.

### **Conclusion**

Let's not forget that the Balkan War was the first “for the young Bulgarian army, but nevertheless, the Bulgarian spirit reached the heights of its apogee in its development. The Bulgarians, in the dream cause of unification of the Bulgarian people and lands, head to the battlefield with hope and folk dances. After this united Bulgarian hope came disappointment, unfortunately the Balkan War did not solve the Bulgarian national question, but achieved the liberation of some of its enslaved territorial parts.

714,000 people of all ethnicities were mobilized for the Balkan War, a husband, father or son was sent from every Bulgarian family. In addition to territories and dreams, we lost over 170,000 Bulgarian citizens who fell victim to the national cause.

### **Acknowledgments**

This research would not have been possible without the financial support of the following project: “From Hope to Disappointment (the idea of the heroic) 1909–1914“, financed by the National Science Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria – Contract No. KP-06-M65/4 of 16.12.2022 with the project manager Assist. Prof. Antoniy Stanimirov, PhD.

### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Available at address // <https://www.nationallibrary.bg/www/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/100-godini-ot-balkanskite-voini.pdf>. [viewed 10.04.2023].

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## НАРОДЪТ ТРЪГНА ДА ЗАНЕСЕ СВОБОДА ТАМ, ДЕТО ИМАШЕ РОБСТВО

**Резюме:** През 2023 г. се навършват 111 години от Балканската война. Целта, която настоящият текст си поставя е да се опита да представи българската нагласа и състояние на духа в навечерието на 1912 г. Освен организираната от държавата мобилизация на граждани се откроява доброволческото желание за включване във военните действия на българи от страната и отвъд нейните предели, както и на български евреи.

Методологичният инструментариум, който е използван при написването включва интердисциплинарен подход, приложим в различни направления на хуманитаристиката и обхващащ методи като анализ на библиографски ресурси и публикации, обнародвани в електронни източници, синтез на информационния масив, исторически подход и наблюдение на терен.

Разгледано е също така дейността на институции, като архиви, музеи, библиотеки и други като основополагащ фактор за развитието на историческата памет и националната идентичност в човека.

Докладът разглежда важността на отбелязването на годишните чествания от събития и личности свързани с българската история и как институциите са страната с основната роля за създаване на силна връзка между нашата история и обществото.

**Ключови думи:** Балканска война, свобода, земи, народ, евреи, архив, чествания

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