

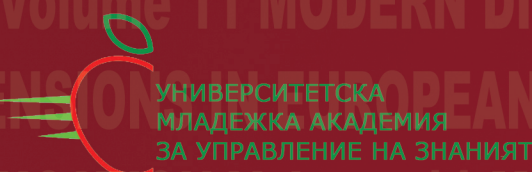
Volume

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

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IN
EUROPEAN EDUCATION
AND
RESEARCH AREA**

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НА
ЕВРОПЕЙСКОТО ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛНО
И
НАУЧНО ПРОСТРАНСТВО**

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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE SEVENTH RILA INFANTRY DIVISION 1912–1913

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Abstract: *The Bulgarian Seventh Rila Infantry Division formed by Decree No. 88 of Tsar Ferdinand I, received its baptism of fire during the Balkan War. Its units engaged in some of the most important strategic battles on their way to Thessaloniki. At the cost of many adversities on the muddy battlefields, the soldiers did their combat task. A large part of them also showed heroism during the battles of the First World War and the Second World War. Its commanders are famous throughout Europe as some of the best commanders of the 20th century. Today, in the city of Dupnitsa, a street is named after the glorious Seventh Infantry in honor of the division, as well as numerous memorial plaques, military monuments and other commemorative signs, symbols of the eternal memory and appreciation of the Bulgarian people.*

Keywords: *7th Infantry, Rila, military history, battles, Balkan War, Balkan Union*

Introduction

The infamous Seventh Rila Infantry Division was officially formed by Decree No. 88 of 30th December, 1903 of Tsar Ferdinand I of Bulgaria. The well-known colonel Stefan Toshev (1859–1924) was appointed as its commander. The Seventh Rila Infantry Division included the following subdivisions and has the following structure: headquarters in the town of Dupnitsa, three infantry brigades, two artillery regiments, one company, quartermaster company, a divisional infirmary, six field hospitals, etc. The combat staff of the Seventh Rila Infantry Division in September 1912 (officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers) numbered 37,355 people. During the Balkan War, Major General Georgi Todorov was appointed commander of the division. [1]

Research methodology

The scientific paper aims to trace the historical events related to the Seventh Rila Infantry Division, to achieve this goal, various sources of information – books, publications, electronic sources and Internet resources – have been examined and analyzed to detail the facts as much as possible. This, in turn, made it possible to generate new perspectives on Bulgarian history and, in particular, the military actions during the Balkan and Inter-Allied Wars. To achieve this, the following methods were used – initial review of the sources, historical and general analysis, comment on the results.

Exposition

Historical prerequisites

Initially, the idea of the Balkan Union, respectively the Balkan War, was the highlight of the aspiration for the final consolidation and distribution of the former territories until recently part of the Ottoman Empire on the Balkan Peninsula. The Balkan Union (Kingdom of Bulgaria, Kingdom of Serbia, Kingdom of Greece and Kingdom of Montenegro) was created precisely for this purpose – final push of the Ottoman Empire from the territory of the Balkan Peninsula. The occasion is well-known – the Balkan crisis of 1908–1909. On 22nd September, 1908, Prince Ferdinand I announced the following with a manifesto in the city of Tarnovo: [...] “*WE PROCLAIM THE UNION ON 6th SEPTEMBER, 1885. BULGARIA FOR AN INDEPENDENT KINGDOM*”. [2] The manifesto declared the independence of the Kingdom of Bulgaria, practically any political, economic and financial dependence on the Ottoman Empire was rejected, sharply violating the agreements fixed in

the Treaty of Berlin, drastically harming the interests of the Great Powers. Austria-Hungary used the occasion quite skillfully and annexed the Ottoman possessions on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This caused an extremely unstable political situation in the Balkans.

The situation in the Balkans in 1912 was pre-war. In the same year, the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Serbia signed a secret¹ treaty (Bulgarian-Serbian Treaty, 1912) for mutual military assistance between the two countries. Ivan E. Geshov, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bulgaria and Milovan Milovanovic, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Serbia put their signatures on the contract, the intermediary during the signing was the Russian Empire. This act marked the beginning of the Balkan Union, which subsequently became a military anti-Ottoman coalition that led to the achievement of some of the greatest military victories in the early 20th century. The declaration of the Balkan war caused a wide public resonance not only in the Balkans, but also throughout Europe. [3]

The feats of the Seventh Rila Infantry Division in 1912

The 7th Infantry, directly commanded by Major-General Georgi Todorov, also fell into the combat maneuvers that the Bulgarian army began on the extreme right flank. According to the agreed maneuvers, the division acted as a combat part of the composition of the 2nd Union Army, whose commander was General Stepan Stepanovich, which included the Timoshka Division, in order to block the Ottoman Western Army. [4]

In the period 5th – 27th October, 1912, the Seventh Infantry was assigned a combat task to control the area around the town of Kyustendil. That is why General Todorov divided the division into three separate columns. The distribution is as follows: The left column consists of two companies belonging to the 26th Pernish Infantry Regiment with commander Atila Zafirov, who had to conquer Mount Povien Kamen (1181 m above sea level) [5] in Osogov mountain and to head towards Kochani. For this purpose, the regiment had to maintain contact with the 14th Serbian regiment, which was to head towards Sultan Tepe peak. The second brigade, commanded by colonel (then) Spas Chilingirov, was supposed to capture the village of Tsarevo (now Delchevo, North Macedonia). The 3rd brigade with the commander, Major General Georgiev, was supposed to capture Gorna Dzumaya (now the city of Blagoevgrad). The 13th Rila Infantry Regiment and the remaining two companies from the 26th Pernish Regiment were left in reserve. [6]

The other companies from the right and middle columns engaged in battle with the Ottoman border guard, liberating Tsarevo Selo. On this day (5th October) the main combat duty was that of the left column. With measured and accurate artillery fire, our warriors managed to break the Ottoman resistance at the village of Barakovo. In 1912, the Rila River was the border between the Principality of Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. The two columns made a flank attack and quickly overran both flanks of the Ottomans and they left their positions, retreating quickly. The Bulgarian squads head towards Gorna Dzumaya and at the end of the day they took control of it. For the next few days, the division stood still. On 6th October, the Thirteenth Infantry Regiment crossed the border. On 9th October, the 26th Infantry Regiment occupied Mount Povien (elevation 1181). The Timoshenko division attacked the Ottoman units and captured Stracin. Several bloody battles ensued as part of the Ottoman forces attempted to stabilize their positions. The Bulgarian units carried out a counterattack and forced the enemy to retreat to Krupnik. [7]

The attempt of the Ottoman forces to force the left bank of the Struma river ended in failure as it was stopped by artillery fire and they were forced to retreat to the village of Serbinovo and as General Spepanović was in command he issued an order to General Todorov to continue the attack and captured Kochani. On 9th October, the 3rd Brigade engaged the Ottoman Strum Corps and quickly captured the Oran Gorge, although Ottoman forces briefly captured Simitli. As a result of artillery fire and a successful counteroffensive by the Bulgarian units, the Ottoman forces' attempt to advance to the city of Dupnitsa was foiled. [8] On 11th October, in the battle for Kočani, the units of the Seventh Rila Division engaged in direct combat with the Ottoman 16th Infantry Nizam Division and won a decisive victory, which secured a flank for the Serbian troops' advances towards

Kumanovo. Subsequently, the Nizam's division withdrew to Veles. Between October 12–13, the Battle of Krupnis took place, in which the 3rd Brigade defeated the Strum Corps and captured the position at the Kresnen Gorge. In the town of Shtip, the predominantly Bulgarian population joyfully welcomed the Bulgarian units and rejected the Ottoman rule.

The advance to Thessaloniki

Since General Mikhail Savov felt unfriendly influence on the combat activity of the 7th Rila Infantry Division from the side of the Serbian command, he ordered General Todorov to very quickly organize the combat units of the division and head for the city of Thessaloniki, and the division Demir Hisar had to be overcome as well. Due to bad weather conditions, the movement of the division was delayed. It was not until 22nd October that the division began to advance and on 23rd October they neutralized the left rear guard, which aimed to ensure the retreat of the Strum Corps, which at that moment was preparing to be transferred by train to Thessaloniki. [9]

At the same time, the Greek army under the command of Prince Constantinos I quickly neutralized the few Ottoman forces at Elasona and Enidze Vardar, and practically the Ottoman combat units were surrounded by the allied forces. On 25th October, Prince Constantinos I held special negotiations with Hasan Tahsin Pasha. On 27th October, the 3rd Brigade entered into battle with the last remaining units of the Strum Corps near the village of Aivatovo, which is located 12 kilometers from Thessaloniki. In the Battle of Aivatovo, all Ottoman resistance was finally broken. On 28th October, Prince Constantinos I entered Thessaloniki as the victor. At the same time, Major Georgi Atanasov was joyfully welcomed to the city. Tension arose between the Bulgarian and Greek parts. On 29th October, Prince Boris arrived in Thessaloniki and was greeted joyfully by the Bulgarians of Thessaloniki. Thanks to the courage and audacity of the glorious Seventh Rila Infantry Division, after almost a month of fierce fighting, it proved to be one of the most combat-capable divisions during the Balkan and Inter-Allied Wars. It achieved glorious victories for the unification of the Bulgarian lands. [10]

The Bulgarian shopi in the Seventh Rila Infantry Division

The fighting ranks of the Seventh Rila Infantry Division were mostly Bulgarians-shopi people from the regions of Transko, Breznishko, Pernishko, including from the cities with a Bulgarian population – Bosilegrad, Piro, Tsaribrod and so on. On the page of the State Agency “Archives” in the digital collection “Archives speak” digitized lists of the dead Bulgarian – expatriates from the Trna okolaia have been published. The list is long – 28 pages with names of those who fell for the freedom of Bulgaria. Thanks to these lists, we can learn the names of the heroes who fought fierce battles on the battlefields. [11]

The distinguished colonel Haralambi Toshkov

Colonel Haralambi Grigorov Toshkov was born on 16th February, 1868 in the town of Trun. He graduated from the 10th grade of the Military School in Sofia. He initially served in the Second Reserve Regiment. He was the commander of a company of the 14th Macedonian Infantry Regiment during the Balkan War. After that, he commanded a company from the 54th infantry regiment that participated in the battles against the Kingdom of Serbia. After the outbreak of the First World War, he commanded the 41st Sofia Infantry Regiment, which was part of the First Sofia Infantry Division, better known in Bulgarian military historiography as the “Iron Sofia Division”, which took part in battles in the Romanian campaign and on the Macedonian front in World War I. [12]

The personal impressions of an ordinary soldier

In the book of George St. Georgiev – “One of the First Division. Memoirs of a participant, the author describes Colonel Haralambi Toshkov as: *“Slim, bony, tall, with a black mustache and a small sharp beard [...] Further on, more detailed information is given about the personal*

characteristics of Colonel Toshkov. unsurpassed ardor. Everything strong and captivating had gathered in the quietest, most humble, most humble man. [...] [13]

Georgi Georgiev also describes the origin of the notable Colonel Toshkov [...] “*This Bulgarian was a Bulgarian. Everything from Bulgaria. Everything about Bulgaria. Although he was from Trančani, and not a Sofia shop, he was a real shop. He spoke to the Shopi as Shopi, because he felt himself, he himself was a Shopi person, because we were Shopi, a Sofia Regiment of Shopi, composed almost exclusively of Shopi, and those who were not, they also felt themselves! The commander of the 1st Shopi regiment – shop! The commander of the 41st Shopi regiment – shopi! Regiment for regiment! Shopi for shopi!* [14]

This is how Georgiev describes Colonel Haralambi Toshkov in his book. In 1920, Colonel Toshkov was dismissed to the reserve. He died on 20th September, 1932 in the city of Sofia. Today, his grave is located in the Central Sofia Cemetery, plot № 4. [15] In his home town of Trun, there is still no memorial plaque or bust to attest to the veneration of his memory. Let’s hope that this will happen in the future and we will appreciate General Haralambi Toshkov with dignity.

Conclusion

The combat successes of the Seventh Rila Infantry Division are proof of the great courage and dedication of all officers and soldiers belonging to its units. At the cost of many adversities and bad weather conditions the division reached the city of Thessaloniki, breaking the Ottoman fighting units and their resistance. This is an important proof of the display of high fighting spirit and honor shown during the strategic battles for the Balkan Union. The traces left by Rila Infantry Division soldiers are clearly written in golden letters in the Bulgarian military history.

Acknowledgments

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NOTES

¹ Secret annex to the treaty of friendship and alliance between the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Serbia. CDA. F. 313K. Op. 1, a.e 2236. l. 6–7. Transcript. [See digital copy at: <http://isda.archives.government.bg:84/Process.aspx?type=Document&agid=41&flgid=5092254&ilgid=5107529&aelgid=10947532&dlgid=10640848>.

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ПО СЛЕДИТЕ НА СЕДМА ПЕХОТНА РИЛСКА ДИВИЗИЯ 1912–1913 Г.

Резюме: Създадената с Указ № 88 на цар Фердинанд I Български Седма Пехотна рилска дивизия получава бойното си кръщение по време на Балканската война. Нейните подразделения участват в едни от най-важните стратегически боеве по пътя им към Солун. С цената на много лишения и несгоди по калните бойни полета, Рилци достигат до поставената им бойна задача. Голяма част от тях се доказват и по време на сраженията през Първата световна и Втората световна война. Нейните командири се прочуват в цяла Европа, като едни от най-добрите командири на XX век. Днес в град Дупница в чест на славната Седма Пехотна е кръстена улица. Поставени са също така множество паметни плочи, построени са военни паметници. Те са символи на вечната памет и признателност на българския народ.

Ключови думи: седма пехотна, рилци, военна история, сражения, балканска война, балкански съюз

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