

# FROM SERBIA TO JUGOSLAVIA

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BY GORDON GORDON-SMITH



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# FROM SERBIA TO JUGOSLAVIA

*Serbia's Victories, Reverses and  
Final Triumph :: 1914-1918*

BY

GORDON GORDON-SMITH

WITH A PREFACE BY

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MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF THE SERBS, CROATS AND  
SLOVENES TO THE UNITED STATES

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## FOREWORD

AS Secretary General of the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs it fell to my lot to receive together with the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Monsieur L. Patchou, the famous Austro-Hungarian ultimatum, which the Austro-Hungarian Minister, Baron Giesl von Gieslingen, handed to us on July 25, 1914.

On that fateful day only three Ministers of the Serbian Cabinet were in Belgrade. An electoral campaign was in full swing, and all other members of the Cabinet were absent from the Capital.

As soon as the interview was over, Monsieur Patchou and myself hurried to an adjoining room where the other two members of the Cabinet were waiting and began to peruse hastily the document which had just been handed to us.

The first one to break the silence which followed the reading of the ultimatum was the Minister of Public Instruction, Monsieur L. Yovanovitch, who got up, walked the length of the room and then said in a voice broken with emotion: "There remains nothing else for us to do but to fight and to die."

These tragic words were a summing up of the terrible situation with which my country had suddenly been confronted. The terms of the ultimatum, the humiliating demands which it contained and which

were such as had never before been addressed to an independent country, showed very clearly that they had been formulated with a view to making it impossible for Serbia to accept them, and to the end of giving a pretext to Austria-Hungary to declare war.

The Austro-Hungarian Minister had said, when handing the ultimatum, that his instructions were to leave Belgrade with the personnel of his Legation at the expiration of the time limit, if by that time the Serbian Government did not return a satisfactory reply. That could mean only a rupture of diplomatic relations, and such a rupture following such an ultimatum could only mean war.

It is only recently that the most positive proofs have been disclosed that Austria-Hungary and Germany had already made up their minds that whatever the conciliatory reply of Serbia their monstrous intention was to declare war.

Nothing else indeed remained for Serbia to do but to fight. She did fight, but she did not die. On the contrary she emerged with renewed vitality, stronger than ever, because of the realization of the aspirations of all the Jugo-Slavs to be united into one Kingdom. The allied victories of 1918 in which Serbia, as the whole world knows, played an important military rôle, resulted in the liberation of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes whom Austria had held for a century under her cruel yoke. Serbia lived, but Austria-Hungary, who had meant to strike a death blow at her small neighbor, collapsed.

Such a result could, of course, never have been



achieved had Serbia been left to fight alone. But even with the later developments of the conflict which placed at her side great and powerful allies, she is entitled to claim a most important share in the struggle for the common cause of Liberty, Right, and Justice.

This book will show the reader what that share has been. The writer, Mr. Gordon Gordon-Smith, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in Nish during the war, was attached to the Serbian headquarters and has followed personally and closely the Serbian campaign. This fact, coupled with Mr. Gordon-Smith's previous experience as war correspondent, makes him a very valuable and able witness. I have no doubt that the reader will follow with interest and profit the narration of the heroic efforts which, after a terrible struggle against a formidable enemy, against typhus, starvation, and privations of all sorts, led the Serbs over the snow-covered mountains of Albania, across the sea to Corfu and to Salonika, from where, with the help of their valiant allies, they fought their way back to their country, to Freedom, and to Union with their brethren in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

No less interest will attach to the political peripeties of the struggle, before and during the war, which Mr. Gordon-Smith relates very ably and with great inside knowledge of the facts.

Some criticism will be found concerning the attitude and policy of Serbia's Allies, especially with regard to Bulgaria. The desire of the Entente Powers

to get Bulgaria on their side was in itself natural. But their great mistake was to consider that, so far as Bulgaria's probable action was concerned, there could be only two alternatives: either that Bulgaria would side with the Entente, or that she would continue to remain neutral. The third alternative, which actually happened and the certainty of which we Serbians, knowing well our neighbor and her designs, were constantly pointing out, was always dismissed as unbelievable.

But notwithstanding the consequences for Serbia of this error, they have been compensated for by the unfaltering aid which subsequently enabled her to obtain such a complete victory over her enemies and to realize her legitimate and long cherished aspirations.

S. Y. GROUITCH,

*Minister of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.*

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## PART I

FROM THE DANUBE TO DURAZZO—THE GERMANO-  
AUSTRO-BULGARIAN ATTACK ON SERBIA



TO THE ARMY OF THE  
“NATION THAT CAN NEVER DIE”  
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED  
BY THE AUTHOR





## INTRODUCTION

**I**N the whole history of the World-War there was no more tragic episode than the second Serbian campaign, a campaign which terminated in the over-running, by Germany and her Allies, of the whole of Serbia.

It was an episode tragically glorious for the armies of King Peter, but one which certainly will not, either diplomatically or militarily, be counted among the successes of the Quadruple Alliance. It was characterized, on the side of the latter, by a series of errors which had as their result the retreat into foreign territory of the Serbian Army and the abandonment of the ill-starred Gallipoli enterprise, rendered hopeless by the triumph of the Central Powers in the Balkans.

In order to have a clear idea of the political and military consequences of the second Balkan campaign we must study the situation which existed at its commencement. To completely understand this we must in turn go back to the "beginning of things," *i.e.*, the political and military constellation of the Balkan States as the result of the preceding wars.

The first of these was the war of the Balkan Confederation against Turkey. In the course of the year 1912 the Balkan States achieved what had long been regarded as impossible, the formation of a League

against the common enemy, Turkey. With this end in view, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro signed an offensive and defensive treaty of alliance and on September 30th, 1912, mobilized their armies. Twenty-four hours later the Sultan also mobilized his forces. Exactly a week later Montenegro declared war on Turkey and was, on October 18th, joined by her Allies.

After a campaign of three months' duration the success of the armies of the Balkan League was such that Turkey, on December 3rd, signed an armistice at Tchataldja. A Peace Conference was held in London but no agreement could be reached and hostilities were resumed. On April 20th a second armistice was negotiated and a fresh Conference held which, this time, reached a successful conclusion, the Treaty of London being signed on May 30th, 1913. The victory of the Balkan League was complete, Turkey was practically driven out of the Balkans, the Allies seizing all her territories right up to Tchataldja, a few short miles from Constantinople.

This marvellous result was not received with unmixed satisfaction by all the Great Powers. Germany and Austria regarded it with ill-concealed displeasure. The latter State saw its dream of extending its territories to the Ægean shattered by the seizure by Serbia of the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, the narrow tongue of Turkish territory which ran up to the frontier of Bosnia and promised a path of invasion when the break-up of the Turkish Empire should offer an opportunity for Austria to realize her am-

bitions of seizing Salonica. Germany saw her communications with the Ottoman Empire (which the Kaiser had for twenty years been drawing more and more into the orbit of German political ambitions) seriously menaced by a Confederation of the Balkan States and the consequent creation of a military force which would be perfectly capable, not only of holding its own against Austria-Hungary, but of wringing concessions from that country for the freeing of the sections of the Balkan race still under the yoke of the Dual Monarchy.

It was clear both to Vienna and Berlin, that the close union of the Balkan peoples, forged in "blood and iron" by their brilliant and victorious campaign against Turkey, must, at all costs, be broken up. This campaign had indeed been almost too successful. It had succeeded beyond the wildest hopes of the Confederation, and the amount of captured territory far exceeded its previsions and expectations. This was the opportunity of the Central Powers. They at once began to intrigue, to sow dissension among the Balkan Allies by awakening appetites and desires which could only be realized at the expense of the common peace.

They found a favourable *terrain* at Sofia. The Bulgarian nation, intoxicated by its victory, lent a willing ear to the insidious counsels of the Ballplatz and put forward excessive claims for territorial concessions in the conquered Turkish Provinces. These were resisted by the Serbians who took their stand on the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of Alliance in which the main principles of the division of the conquered territory

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were laid down. It was further provided in that Treaty that in case of disagreement, the points in dispute should be submitted to the arbitration of the Tsar of Russia, whose decision both sides agreed to accept.

It soon became clear that Bulgaria had no intention of fulfilling this part of her treaty obligations, and during the negotiations kept raising difficulty after difficulty. At the same time, she kept secretly massing her forces so as to be in a position of superiority should there be an appeal to armed force.

Then came the crowning act of treason. During the night of the 29th to 30th June, 1913, the Bulgarian troops, without the slightest warning, made a sudden attack on their Serbian and Greek Allies. Fortunately for Serbia her soldiers come of a sturdy race, and the first moment of surprise past, they defended themselves with vigour. Twenty-four hours later, both they and the Greeks, furious with wrath at this treacherous attack, took the offensive in their turn. Their generous indignation so fired their courage that the Bulgarians were driven from position after position. Bulgaria's difficulties became her enemies' opportunity. Roumania, which had long demanded a rectification of her frontier with Bulgaria and the cession of the Dobrudja province, took advantage of her embarrassments to press her claims, and when these were resisted, she too mobilized her army, forcibly seized that province and marched on Sofia. Turkey, too, saw a chance of avenging at least

a part of her defeat, and invaded the territory she had just lost and recaptured, Adrianople.

Threatened thus from all sides, and with the Roumanian army a few miles from the gates of Sofia, Bulgaria was forced to sue for peace, and on August 6th, 1913, the Treaty of Bucharest was signed, and peace was once more re-established in the Balkans. This was interrupted for a few weeks by hostilities between the Serbians and the Albanians which began in September and led to a slight extension of the Serbian frontier in the direction of Albania.

But though the Central Powers were thus disappointed in their expectations as to the results of the second Balkan War, they had succeeded in their main object which was the breaking up of the Balkan Confederation. They had sowed seeds of undying hate between the Bulgarians and the other Balkan States and created, at Sofia, a new centre for Austro-German influence. The fashion in which Bulgaria had openly flouted the wishes of Russia and insulted the Tsar by rejecting his offices as arbiter between the Balkan peoples had completely estranged the Petrograd Government. Bulgaria's German-born King was known to be a zealous agent of German influence and secretly hostile to the Powers of the Entente. So notorious was this that Serbia and Greece, for their common protection, signed a strictly defensive Treaty of Alliance, each undertaking to come to the assistance of the other if attacked by a third Power. This treaty was negotiated by M. Boshkovitch (afterwards Serbian Minister in London) and M. Coromilos, and was

signed by M. Boshkovitch and M. Venizelos. Such was the situation in the Balkans during the months which preceded the outbreak of the world-conflict. It must be carefully kept in mind, as it explains much regarding the action of the Central Powers and renders still more astounding the errors of the diplomacy of the Quadruple Alliance.

But if outward peace reigned in the Balkans the Serbians had no doubt as to the sentiments of the Central Powers, especially Austria-Hungary, towards them. Austria, which had had nearly half her army mobilized during the Balkan conflict, was a constant menace and the Belgrade Government knew that an attack from that side was daily becoming more and more probable, an attack which everyone saw would be the signal for a general European conflagration. All that was wanting was the pretext. This was found in the assassination on June 28th, 1914, at Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. This was alleged by Austria to have been plotted in Belgrade with the knowledge and connivance of Serbian officials. Then followed the famous ultimatum, probably the most insolent diplomatic document ever penned, presented by the Austrian Minister at Belgrade to King Peter's Government. It was clear that it was not meant to be accepted. Germany and Austria had decided that the hour for the war they had long been plotting had struck. The action of the Ballplatz was merely intended to *déclancher le mouvement*.

The declaration of war by Austria-Hungary on

July 28th, 1914, was immediately followed by an attempt to invade Serbia.

From the very first the inability of the Austrians to overcome the resistance of the Serbs was manifest. All their attempts to cross the Danube and the Save were repulsed. It was only when they made a further attempt from the Bosnian side of the Save that they succeeded in passing on to Serbian territory and captured Shabatz. But their success was shortlived. A few days later, by the battle of Tzer the Serbs drove back the invaders and hurled them in confusion across the Save and Drina.

Unfortunately for Serbia this effort exhausted their stock of munitions. When the Austrians realized this they returned to the attack. As the Serbs were without shells for their artillery or cartridges for their rifles they were forced to give way and had to retreat from north-western Serbia to Rudnik. This entailed the evacuation of Belgrade. This discouraged the army and thousands of men returned to their homes. At the psychological moment, however, the Allies were able to come to the aid of the Serbs and reprovise them with munitions. Instantly the whole situation changed. The Serbian Army under Field-Marshal Mishitch (who showed on this occasion a great spirit of initiation and decision) had shrunk to less than one hundred thousand men. They attacked the 400,000 Austrians on the Rudnik-Soubovor line with such vigour that they hurled them back in confusion. In a few days Serbian territory was cleared of the Austrians. A proof of the national spirit was seen in the

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fact that the army, which was less than one hundred thousand strong when it began the attack, counted a quarter of a million bayonets by the time it reached the Drina, the Serbian peasants streaming back to the colours the instant they heard that munitions had arrived. Over 60,000 prisoners were taken by the Serbs, together with an immense amount of war material, guns, munitions, pontoon trains, field telegraph material, baggage train, food stuffs and war stores of every kind.

So complete was the catastrophe that the Austrians, for the time being, abandoned all further attack on Serbia and that country could enjoy a much needed period of comparative repose. But the trials of the nation were not yet at an end. An epidemic of typhus, which had broken out among the Austrian troops at Valjevo during the occupation, began to spread all over the country. The Serbian soldiers, exhausted by three years' campaigning, fell victims to it by thousands. In the towns and villages, crowded with fugitives from the invaded districts, the disease made frightful ravages. It was the terrible variety known as spotted typhus. The existing sanitary organizations proved utterly unable to cope with the outbreak. Hundreds died on public roads and in the streets of towns, in fact, scenes were witnessed such as had not been chronicled since the outbreaks of the Black Death in the Middle Ages.

The Serbian Government appealed for aid to their Allies, who responded nobly to their call. France, Britain and Russia sent hundreds of Red Cross Units.



The Scottish Women's Ambulance, and the organizations under Lady Paget, Mrs. Hankin Hardy, Dr. and Mrs. Berry and Mrs. St. Clair Stobart worked night and day among the stricken people. They fought the outbreak foot by foot with admirable courage. Many doctors and nurses fell victims to their devotion. But science and heroism prevailed. Slowly but surely the number of cases diminished, and by the end of April the last traces of the epidemic had been stamped out. But the toll of victims was enormous, over 70,000 succumbing to the terrible scourge, and this in a country whose population had died by tens of thousands in three years of ceaseless war.

Meanwhile the war was being continued with undiminished vigour on other European fronts. In France, after the victory of the Marne, the Germans had "dug themselves in." A line of trenches such as the world has never seen, had been constructed from the North Sea to the Swiss frontier. These were manned by two million men on either side and the position reduced to one of "stalemate."

(That this was so was proved by the failure of the efforts made by both sides to break through their opponent's lines. The German attack at Ypres had as its only result the practical annihilation of the Corps of Prussian Guards. The British attempts to break through the German lines at Neuve Chapelle and Loos did not completely succeed. The French attack in Champagne, though made after weeks of careful preparation, only resulted in the capture of a few square miles of territory. The Germans were driven

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back but their line remained unbroken. The German attempt to force the French lines at Verdun was equally unsuccessful, though preceded by a preparation in which every expedient known to military science was used.)

On the Austro-Italian frontier a similar situation existed. After months of tireless effort the Italian Army had not advanced twenty miles into the enemy's country. The French and Italian lines of trenches were linked up by the formidable line of fortifications which the Swiss Army had thrown up to discourage any attempt on the part of France or Germany to reach each other across the territory of the Confederation. An uninterrupted line of trenches, therefore, ran from the North Sea to the Adriatic.

On the other side of the Adriatic the line of defence of the Allies was continued by Montenegro and Serbia to the point where Serbian territory reached the Roumanian frontier. Roumania, though neutral in the struggle, had, like Switzerland, practically mobilized her army since the beginning of the war, and fortified her frontiers from end to end.

On the other side of Roumania began the Russian line of entrenchments running from Bessarabia to the Baltic. Germany and Austria were thus surrounded by a circle of steel on which bristled ten million bayonets. It was for the Central Powers a question of life and death to break this *encerclement* which was slowly but surely strangling them. France, Italy and Russia (in spite of a momentary German success in the latter country, which has only had the effect of widening,

but not breaking the circle) were daily increasing the pressure. Turkey, cut off from all communication with the Central Powers and from the outside world, was daily in danger of collapse. This would have meant the fall of Constantinople, the opening of the Dardanelles, and the reprovisioning of Russia with munitions and war stores of all kinds, the want of which had rendered possible the momentary success of Austro-German arms in Poland.

It was clear to the meanest intelligence that the prevention of this was a vital question for the Central Powers. The Ottoman Government was running short of munitions, and if the supply was not renewed the success of the attack on the peninsula of Gallipoli was certain. With the entry of the British Fleet into the Sea of Marmora the fate of Constantinople was sealed.

In order to prevent this Germany and Austria, in the spring of 1915, began to mass troops in Hungary with a view to forcing their way through Serbia to Constantinople. In the month of July the French aviation service attached to the Serbian Army reported the commencement of this concentration. The Belgrade Government saw the danger. The military position in Serbia, in spite of the fact that every instant of the six months' respite from actual warfare had been utilized to rest and recruit the army, to call out and train the new "classe," to refill the depleted arsenals, and to accumulate food stuffs and war stores of all kinds, was a critical one.

When, therefore, in July, 1915, it became evident

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that the country was threatened with a fresh attack and that this time the Austrian Army was to be reinforced by German troops, the Serbian Government was of opinion that it could no longer resist the aggression single-handed. It therefore appealed to the Allies for help.

It is from this moment that the greatest military and diplomatic failure made by the Allies in the present war dates. Instead of themselves sending the military aid demanded by the Serbians, the Russian, British and French Governments declared they would obtain this from Bulgaria. This reply caused consternation in Serbia. It was in vain, however, that M. Pashitch and his colleagues pointed out that Bulgaria was their worst enemy, that she had at the instigation of Austria and Germany, neutralized the effects of the victorious war against Turkey, by abandoning her Greek and Serbian allies, and had treacherously tried to stab them in the back; their objections were brushed aside and the Allies began negotiations with the Sofia Government. Serbia was to be left to defend the Danube against the coming Austro-German invasion while Bulgaria was to be induced to march on Constantinople as the ally of the Entente Powers.

In order to get Bulgaria to do this the Allies offered to obtain for her from the Bucharest Government the retrocession of the Dobrudja Province, wrested from her by Roumania, after her defeat by Serbia and Greece; from Serbia, a large portion of Macedonia and the cession by Greece of the towns of Cavalla, Drama and Seres. If the Allies had desired

to deliberately cool all enthusiasm for their cause in these States they would not have proceeded otherwise. M. Radoslavoff, the astute Bulgarian Premier, pretended that a basis of settlement might be found on these lines and embarked on a series of deliberately long drawn-out negotiations.

It was at this moment that I left Switzerland, where I then had been following the progress of the French campaign in Alsace, for the Serbian capital which had been temporarily established at Nish. *En route* I stopped at Rome to see M. Coromilos, the Greek Minister to the Quirinal. M. Coromilos had been Minister of Foreign Affairs during the war with Turkey and during the Greco-Serbo-Bulgarian War which followed it. He it was who negotiated the famous treaty creating the Balkan League, which made the victory over Turkey possible, and later, the Greco-Serbian Treaty which Greece failed to observe when the occasion arose. He has a knowledge of Balkan affairs such as few European statesmen possess.

I found him aghast at the policy being pursued by the Allies. "What does it all mean?" he asked me. "*We* know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Bulgaria is pledged up to the hilt to the Central Powers. She has asked and obtained from them a loan of 250,000,000 francs in gold; she has come to terms with Turkey, the Power the Allies expect her to attack; and has received from her a cession of territory. She is, to our certain knowledge, preparing night and day for war. We keep sending dispatch after dispatch, telegram after telegram to this effect to London, Paris

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and Petrograd. The Serbian and Roumanian Governments are doing the same, but nothing we can say or do has the slightest effect. The Allies inform us that Bulgaria is the most loyal, honest and upright nation in the world, and that her support of their cause is beyond all question. We know that the contrary is the case, but MM. Sazonoff, Delcassé and Sir Edward Grey turn a deaf ear to all we say. It is the most extraordinary situation I have ever seen and can only end in disaster."

Ten days later I saw M. Venizelos in Athens and he confirmed every word M. Coromilos had said. "We are completely at a loss," he declared, "to understand the aberration of the Allies. But to all the Balkan Governments tell them they turn a deaf ear. They drag on negotiations with our worst enemies when a child could see that they are being fooled by the wily Bulgarian Premier, who is acting under orders from Berlin and Vienna. He is dragging out the pretended negotiations in order to give the Central Powers time to concentrate their armies against Serbia."

When I reached Nish I found that consternation reigned. The Government was in despair at the diplomatic action of the Allies. Then the moment arrived when, the Austro-German armies being concentrated, Bulgaria threw off the mask and mobilized her army. And then came the crowning error of the Allies. Field-Marshal Putnik, the Chief of Staff of the Serbian Army, telegraphed to London, Paris and Petrograd asking permission to march the Serbian army

across the frontier and attack the Bulgarians before they had completed their concentration. He declared the Serbian Army would be in Sofia in five days. Bulgaria being disposed of, Serbia could then turn her full strength against Austria and Germany.

Not only was permission refused but it was declared that the Allies had the astonishing conviction that the Bulgarian mobilization was not directed against her and she was warned that if she broke the Balkan Peace she would do so at her own risk and peril. On receiving this extraordinary communication, M. Pashitch, the Serbian Premier, in his loyalty to the Quadruple Entente, showed himself even *plus royaliste que le roi* and ordered the Serbian Army, in order to avoid all danger of a Serbo-Bulgarian "incident," to withdraw five kilometres from the Bulgarian frontier (thereby giving up the important position of Saint Nicholas which the Bulgarians occupied without firing a shot) and announced that any Serbian officer who should provoke any frontier incident would be pitilessly shot. Having thus tied the unfortunate Serbia hand and foot the Allies looked on helplessly while the Central Powers and their Bulgarian ally proceeded to cut her throat.

A week later came the inevitable crash. Three hundred thousand Austro-German troops began a tremendous attack upon the Danube front, while four hundred thousand Bulgarians were hurled across the western frontier. Field-Marshal Putnik with his two hundred and fifty thousand Serbs performed prodigies of valour. For two long months he faced overwhelm-

ing odds. Cut off from all communication with the outside world the Serbs fought with the courage of despair. But human strength has its limits and on November 24th, all that remained of King Peter's army left Serbian territory and began its fateful march across the mountains into Albania. The triumphant invaders were masters of Serbia. Direct communication was established between Berlin and Constantinople and thousands of tons of ammunition were poured into Turkey. The first result of this was the abandonment by the Allies of the now hopeless enterprise in the Dardanelles. A month later Montenegro fell, Albania was invaded, and the remnants of the Serbian Army driven to take refuge in Corfu.

Such were the fruits of the incredible errors of the diplomacy of the Allies. The Salonica expedition, as far as the saving of Serbia was concerned, was foredoomed to failure from the first. It was *la moutarde après le dîner*, as our French friends would say.

But it is when we consider what would have happened if the Allies had listened to the counsels of the Balkan Governments that the colossal nature of the errors committed becomes apparent. As far back as July, when the Austro-German menace first became apparent, the Serbian Government urged the Allies to send a quarter of a million men to the Danube front. If this had been done the Austro-German armies would have found themselves opposed by half a million men (250,000 Anglo-French troops and 250,000 Serbs). With such a guarantee Roumania would at



once have come into the war on the side of the Entente. This assurance was given M. Pashitch, the Serbian Premier, in the spring of 1915 by M. Bratiano, the Roumanian Prime Minister. This would have meant an additional 600,000 men at the disposal of the Allies, making a total of eleven hundred thousand bayonets on the Danube front. Under these circumstances M. Venizelos, who was then in power, would have forced King Constantine's hand and 300,000 Greeks would have swelled the forces of the Allies.

If this had taken place, Bulgaria would not have dared to move, or, if she had, would have been disposed of at short notice. The result would have been the creation of a fourth front for the Central Powers which they could not have defended with less than a million men. *And these they had not got.* Then would have followed the march across the Hungarian *pusta* to Budapest.

Once the Allies were in possession of the Hungarian capital the position of the Austrian Army facing the Italians in the Trentino would have become untenable. The Italian Army would have poured across into Austrian territory. With Vienna menaced from two sides Austrian resistance would have been broken and Germany would have been face to face, single-handed, with Europe in arms, and defeat in a few weeks or at most months would have been certain.

That this result was not achieved is due to the fact that the diplomats of the Allies allowed themselves to be deceived by an astute politician like M. Radoslavoff and his unscrupulous German-born

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sovereign. One of the bravest and most liberty-loving nations of Europe was, for the time being at least, wiped out of existence and abandoned to the horrors of invasion and occupation. The French nation at once drew the logical conclusion from the errors committed. M. Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, resigned. But this did not satisfy the French parliament and the Viviani Ministry, as the result of the errors of the Balkan policy, was driven from power. But strange to say no such fate overtook the British cabinet which continued in office perpetuating the errors it had made in Serbia by its handling of King Constantine and the Athens Government.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SERBIAN ARMY

**T**HE Serbian Army at the outbreak of the second campaign consisted of about 250,000 men. It was divided into five armies. The First Army was under the command of the Voivode, or Field-Marshal, Zhivoïn Mishitch, the Second under the Voivode Stepanovitch, the Third under General Yurishitch-Sturn, the Defence of Belgrade under General Zhivkovitch and the Troops of the New Territories (with centre at Uskub) under General Petar Boyovitch.

The composition of these armies varied according to circumstances, divisions being transported from one army to the other as necessity arose. Thus the famous Division of the Shumadia (so-called because it was recruited in the country of that name) commanded by Colonel Bozha Terzitch (afterwards Serbian Minister of War) at the beginning of the campaign formed part of the Second Army. Later it was transferred to the Third Army, and finally, toward the end of October, was sent to join the Defence of Belgrade. Each active Division (First "Ban") had its divisions of reserve known as Second and Third "Ban."

The recruiting of the Serbian Army was purely

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territorial, the men of the Defence of Belgrade being drawn from the capital and the environs, those of the Division of Shumadia from the country of Shumadia, the Division of the Danube from the country on that river, the Division of Timok from the province of that name on the Roumanian frontier, etc. The men of a company often came from the same village and a regiment from the same district. The only exception to this rule was the Combined Division (commanded by General M. Rashitch) which was composed, as its name implies, of men from every part of Serbia. It was counted as one of the *corps d'élite* of the Serbian Army.

This system of recruiting the army made for great cohesion among the troops, as the men, being closely allied by race and in many instances blood relations, stood shoulder to shoulder in moments of stress and danger in a manner they might not do if drawn together from far distant provinces. It further allowed of speedy mobilization in a country none too well provided with railways and other means of rapid transport and concentration.

The system, at the same time, had its drawbacks. Serbia is essentially a country of peasant proprietors, and the Serbian Army is to an overwhelming degree a peasant army. A peasant army has always a double patriotism, one local, the other national. As long as his farm lies behind him the Serbian peasant fights like a lion, but once he is being forced to retreat beyond it and it is in the occupation of the enemy, half his interest in the struggle is gone. I do not for a moment

mean to say that he ceases to fight bravely, as his *national* patriotism is also very great, but there is a diminution in his *élan*. That is why the tactics imposed on the Serbian General Staff by the Allies, after the Austro-German forces crossed the Danube, were the worst possible for such an army. Their instructions were that Field-Marshal Putnik should keep contact with the enemy and delay their advance as much as possible in order to give the Allies in Salonica time to come to his assistance. In other words, they were to try a Serbian repetition of the tactics of General Joffre before the victory of the Marne. They were warned on no account to risk everything on a pitched battle.

These were tactics entirely foreign to the nature of the Serbian soldier. He is eminently suited for the attack. He is most formidable with the "bayonet and the butt" and has little comprehension of the necessities of tactics and strategy. When he sees one position after another being abandoned for strategic reasons and mile after mile of territory falling into the hands of the invader he becomes discouraged. He still fights bravely (up to the very last the Serbs fought with courage), but his *élan* and his enthusiasm are damped. The Serbian Staff faithfully followed the counsels of the Allies from Belgrade to Pristina, that is to say, they retreated, facing triple odds, performing prodigies of valour for nearly two months, and at the end of that time the Allies at Salonica were as unable to come to their assistance as the first day.

The Serbian soldier possesses a strong dash of

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Oriental fatalism, a heritage, probably, of five hundred years of Turkish rule. This enables him to bear up under circumstances which would discourage many European troops. He is docile and easily accepts military discipline. In physique the Serbs are a strong and sturdy race and accept uncomplainingly privations such as would drive other armies to revolt or despair. They content themselves with the simplest fare (I have seen men marching and fighting for days on a few cobs of raw maize and a raw cabbage or two), and have marvellous powers of resistance to climatic conditions, supporting equally well extremes of heat and cold.

But what distinguished the Serbian Army from all others was its methods of transport. The roads, or rather the want of them, rendered automobile and even horse-drawn transport out of the question. The patient ox was the pivot of everything in the Serbian Army. The baggage wagons, the pontoon train and the artillery, even the field guns, were for the most part ox-drawn. Nothing else could get through the seas of mud *en évidence* everywhere after any rainfall. As the existing railways were all single track they did not render the same services as the double-track railways in other countries. The burden thrown on wheeled transport was therefore much greater than elsewhere.

As it is the ox that sets the pace the marching speed of the Serbian Army is painfully slow, from two and a half to three miles an hour. When field batteries are drawn by bullocks the development of a battle is a very slow affair. There are no horse batteries chang-

ing position at the gallop or thundering along the roads. But as the enemy, as soon as he enters Serbian territory, must also abandon horse traction if he desires to make any progress at all everybody is on an equal footing.

The Army Service Corps was made up of peasants' carts, requisitioned by the military authorities. They were all sorts and sizes, some in good repair, others threatening ruin or appearing to do so. Some had four oxen and some had two. Some had tilts, others had none, or mere apologies for covers in tattered canvas. The "Komordji," or drivers, rarely wore any uniform beyond the Serbian military cap, but tramped alongside their teams in the russet-brown homespun costume universally worn. Many of the men had been out with their teams since the first Turkish War and had tramped in rain and shine, in summer heat and winter cold, from the plains of Thrace to the frontiers of Hungary. They had all left their farms to be cultivated by their wives and children, whom they had not seen for many a weary month.

But in spite of the patriarchal appearance given to a Siberian army on the march by the thousands of ox-wagons, the droves of sheep and the countless vehicles piled high with hay and straw, it is an admirable fighting machine, and could hold its own, in its own country, against the most up-to-date adversary.

Its staff officers are well trained and have learnt their *métier* in the armies of France, Germany or Russia. They are well-equipped and admirably mounted and do their work in smart and business-

like fashion. The regimental officers are also well-trained, though many belong to the peasant class. There is certainly no more democratic army in Europe, and in Serbia it is certain that every soldier "carries his marshal's baton in his knapsack."

The Commander-in-Chief was Prince Alexander, Crown Prince and Prince Regent. For some months past the health of the aged King had prevented him exercising active command. But His Majesty was heart and soul with his troops, and made a point of moving everywhere with the army to encourage them by his presence. Wherever he went he was received with boundless enthusiasm. His courage and absolute indifference to danger excited general admiration. He was constantly to be found where the shells were falling thickest. It is certainly no sinecure to be an officer of King Peter's suite.

Prince Alexander came only second to his father in the affection of the Army. Though then only twenty-seven years of age he was already a veteran, having learnt his *métier* in three successive wars. His military talents are said to be of a high order. As he was at the same time Regent of Serbia, his task during the campaign was no light one, as, in addition to his military duties, he had to take part in the civil administration of the country and to attend to delicate diplomatic negotiations with foreign Powers.

But the brain of the Serbian Army was Field-Marshal Putnik, the Chief of the General Staff. It is curious that from the beginning of the war till October, 1915, the Allies each had but one generalis-



simo, while Germany had a succession of popular idols at the head of her armies, who all, more or less, proved to have "feet of clay." Von Kluck, von Moltke, von Mackensen, von Gallwitz, and half a score of others had their passing moments of popularity. The only German general who continued to excite popular enthusiasm was Field-Marshal von Hindenburg. He possessed those qualities of the old swashbuckler type which appeal to the popular imagination. But on the side of the Allies no nation possessed a leader who enjoyed the confidence and veneration of the entire people to a greater extent than did General Putnik, the Chief of Staff of the Serbian forces.

The future generalissimo was born in 1847, and began his military career as a cadet of the Military Academy of Belgrade. When the Turco-Serbian War of 1876 broke out he was still a first lieutenant. A year later, when Russia took the field against Turkey, he had been promoted to captain, and he went through that campaign as company leader. When Serbia in 1885 declared war on Bulgaria, Radomir Putnik was lieutenant-colonel and Chief of Staff of the first "Ban" of the Danube Division. On being promoted colonel he became Chief of the General Staff, and shortly after was promoted to the command of the Division of the Shumadia.

On account of his political sympathies he was forced by King Milan to relinquish his command. From that moment until the accession of King Peter in 1903 Colonel Putnik lived in retirement and devoted himself exclusively to military studies. When the Karageorge-

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vitchs remounted the throne of their ancestors King Peter recalled Colonel Putnik to active service and promoted him to the rank of general. From that moment Putnik's prestige did not cease to increase. When he was not in active command of a division he held the portfolio of Minister of War.

Small and spare of stature, General Putnik had not that outward expression of physical vigour which one associates with military energy. His grey beard, trimmed to a point, was whitened by the silver threads of long nights of anxious vigil and the weight of illness. Only the two vertical lines between his heavy eyebrows denoted the iron will of the Commander-in-Chief of the Serbian Army. When his eyes lighted up his whole face was illuminated with a flash of energy.

When the first Balkan War, the campaign against Turkey, was declared, General Putnik was naturally put at the head of the Army. On this occasion King Peter revived an old Serbian title. He made the general a "Voivode," which signifies "dux," or leader, in the classical acceptance of the word. The functions which were attached to the title in the Middle Ages were equivalent to those of the modern commander of an army corps. The equivalent to this rank in other armies is that of Field-Marshal.

The man who since his youngest years had not ceased to awaken ever-growing confidence and devotion among his countrymen had a constitution undermined by illness. His advanced age forced him to take every precaution. Attacked by severe, chronic asthma, he rarely left his room, living in an apart-

ment kept constantly at hothouse temperature. His manner was brusque, and on all occasions he expressed himself with outspoken soldierly frankness.

From the point of view of military science the distinguishing characteristic of General Putnik was his marvellous memory of topography. Thanks to this precious faculty, without quitting his room he could follow and direct the movements of the troops under his command, and even manœuvre them with a perfect knowledge of the country in which they were operating. His soldiers had an absolutely blind confidence in his powers.

General Putnik began life a poor man, and poor he remained. After the conclusion of the first Balkan War, in recognition of the immense services he had rendered his country, a number of wealthy Serbians desired to present him with a fortune. This General Putnik refused. "I thank you," he said; "your offer has deeply touched me. But what I have done does not require any material reward. I am poor, I have always been poor, and poor I will remain. I only ask one thing. I have many children. If ever one of them should be in need of help I hope that in memory of me he will find a helping hand."

The Voivode was literally adored by the whole Army. The Crown Prince surrounded him with every care. Nothing was left undone to promote the well-being of the man who incarnated the soul of the Serbian nation.

## CHAPTER II

### THE AUSTRO-GERMAN AND BULGARIAN ARMIES

**A**FTER the rout of the Austrian Army under Field-Marshal von Potiorek in December, 1914, by the Serbians, the forces of the Dual Monarchy made no further attempt to invade Serbia. They merely kept a few regiments on the Danube front to oppose any possible attempt by King Peter's troops to invade Hungary, while a dozen or so batteries kept up a desultory artillery duel with the Serbian guns defending the Save and the Danube. As Serbia was in the throes of the terrible typhus outbreak, the Army was not in a condition to undertake an offensive movement, even if such had been planned or intended.

This condition of things continued until the early summer of 1915. The respite was a most welcome one to the Serbian Army, exhausted by three years' constant fighting. It is even questionable if this period of truce might not have continued indefinitely if it had not been for the critical position of Turkey. That Power was facing the Russian Army in the Caucasus and the Franco-British force operating in the Dardanelles. The Turks were running short of ammunition and war stores of all kinds. This state of affairs had been brought about by the refusal of Roumania, in the

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spring of 1915 under pressure from the Entente Powers, to allow any further supplies for the Turks to cross her territory. The collapse of Turkey would have been a veritable disaster for Germany, as it would have had as its first result the opening of the Dardanelles. This would have allowed Russia to receive the munitions, the want of which was paralysing her operations on the Polish front and in the Carpathians.

It therefore became a vital matter for Germany to come to the aid of her Turkish ally. The only way this could be done was by forcing her way through Serbia to Bulgaria and thence to Constantinople. For this a German Army was necessary, and this for two reasons. Firstly, after the rout of the Austrian Army in December, it was doubtful if Austrian soldiers could be got to stand up against the soldiers of King Peter, and secondly, the Dual Monarchy had difficulty in finding the men. Not that the Emperor Francis Joseph did not dispose of hundreds of thousands of troops. He had large reserves, but unfortunately he could not use them.

This was due to the heterogeneous composition of his Empire. Prince Metternich, in the 'fifties declared, speaking of Italy, "*Ce n'est pas un pays, c'est une expression géographique.*" This was equally true of the Dual Monarchy. Its curious composition presented a complicated problem for its General Staff. It was impossible to send Croatian or Bosnian soldiers against Serbia, or men from the Trentino and Tyrol against Italy, or Poles into Galicia, or employ Bohemians against Russia. They would desert *en masse* to the

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enemy. Austria had already had proof of this in the first Serbian campaign when whole companies of Croats, with their officers and equipment, surrendered without firing a shot. Thirty thousand Austrian Croats and Bosnians taken prisoners in Poland by the Russians asked to be sent to Serbia to fight with their brothers-in-race against Austria. Austria could not even count on her Poles and Bohemians to fight against Serbs. It is impossible to count on Slav troops to operate against a Slav country.

If then Germany desired to crush Serbia and effect her junction with the Bulgarians, it was clear she must herself undertake the invasion of Serbia. The importance she attached to it was shown by the choice of the generals entrusted with the command of the troops. The commander-in-chief was the famous Field-Marshal von Mackensen and his principal lieutenant was General von Gallwitz. The leading rôle played in the great war is a signal proof of the former's talents, for it was by sheer merit that he forced himself to the front. It is notorious that he was *persona ingratissima* with the Kaiser, who dislikes men of strong character around him, men who refuse to play the courtier to the War-Lord. General von Mackensen had been commander of the army corps which had its headquarters in Dantzic when the Crown Prince was appointed Colonel of the Deaths-Head Hussars in garrison in that city. He proved a most difficult and insubordinate officer, and came repeatedly in conflict with General von Mackensen. At first the Kaiser supported the latter's authority, but later on

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the Crown Prince won him over to his side with the result that General von Mackensen resigned his command. He was living in retirement when the war broke out. Of course, in common with all other generals judged physically fit, he was recalled to active service. His brilliant campaign in Poland is in everybody's memory, a campaign which earned him his marshal's baton. The decision of the Great General Staff to entrust him with the command of the army marching on Constantinople was a clear proof of the enormous importance the Germans attached to the success of the campaign.

General von Gallwitz was a worthy assistant to his chief. He was known to be a soldier of great energy and decision of character and a tactician of great skill. The choice of these men proved that the Kaiser intended to reach Constantinople *coûte que coûte*.

But if the leaders were excellent it is more than could be said of the rank and file. The quality of the troops under the command of Field-Marshal von Mackensen is a proof of the fact that as far back as July, 1915, the Germans were beginning to run short of men. The 200,000 men the Germans put in the field were brought together from all the fronts. There were men from Warsaw, Lodz and Brest-Litovsk fighting side by side with units from Arras, Ypres and Champagne. The quality was miserable. During the campaign I had an opportunity of seeing hundreds of German prisoners. I invariably found them to be youths of seventeen or eighteen years and men of over forty. They were pale-faced and narrow-chested, a

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class of men who, twelve months before, would not have passed the doctor. I even saw one man who had only three fingers on his right hand. A French surgeon told me he had treated a man, who was a typewriter with the staff, who was deaf and dumb.

The only man of really good physique and soldierly appearance I saw was a non-commissioned officer, but then he was a professional soldier with twelve years' service to his credit. He told me that the officers had informed their men that the Serbians would bolt at the first sight of a Prussian helmet. They had been not a little astonished when the Serbians came at them with the bayonet and hurled regiment after regiment into the Danube. At Krushevatz I met a prisoner who did not look a day beyond sixteen years. His *pickle-haube* was so big that it came down to his ears. He told me that he was seventeen and a half years old, but I doubt it. He certainly looked a round-faced school-boy.

It was with such a *matériel* that Field-Marshal von Mackensen invaded Serbia. Of the 100,000 Austrians little need be said. They were used to garrison the captured towns and guard communications. Their leader knew better than send them against Serbian troops. The fear felt by them for their conquerors of eight months before would probably have caused a second *débâcle*.

But unfortunately for the Serbians it was not on his infantry that Field-Marshal von Mackensen relied, but on his artillery and machine gun. For every Serbian battery the Germans had three, and while the



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Serbs had a machine-gun section per battalion the Germans had one per company. When a force outnumbered its opponent by three to one, the quality of the infantry becomes of secondary importance. A pale and narrow-chested soldier in a turning movement is just as good as a lifeguardsmen, and when an army finds its rear threatened, the quality of the troops operating does not count. In a country cut up into watertight compartments like Serbia by ranges of mountains, a small force is more handicapped than when operating in the open country. With the possibility of deploying on a front twice as large as that of the Serbians, it was possible for the Germans to continually threaten the flanks of the Serbian Army, whose rear was constantly menaced by the Bulgarian Army.

The army of King Ferdinand entered upon the campaign with every advantage on its side. It mustered nearly 400,000 men, against whom the Serbians could oppose barely 150,000. They had had a rest of nearly two years since the conclusion of the second Balkan War, and had time to thoroughly re-organize and re-equip their army. Germany had in August made them a loan of two hundred and fifty million francs so that they were financially ready for the campaign.

In addition the Bulgarian Army had an advantage over the German Army in that they were fighting in a territory in which they had already operated, and doing it with troops which knew the country and who were veterans with two campaigns behind them. They were further burning to avenge the defeat they

had suffered at the hands of the Serbians two years before. In the period of rest they had enjoyed they had manufactured and imported enormous quantities of ammunition. For three months before the beginning of the campaign they had had the advantage of the counsel of several score of officers of the German staff, who had worked out at the Ministry of War in Sofia the whole plan of campaign of the Austro-German and Bulgarian armies.

They had further the certainty that the instant they joined hands with Field-Marshal von Mackensen's army they would be able to receive munitions in unlimited quantities, while the Serbians, once they were cut off from all communication with the outside world, would be unable to renew their stock. The Serbs had therefore to husband their ammunition, while their enemies had no necessity for doing so. Of this they had bitter experience during the campaign.

One of the chief difficulties with which the Serbians had to contend was their ignorance of the strength of the army which Austria and Germany were prepared to bring against them. All they had to go on until the actual invasion were the reports brought in by the French aviators attached to the Serbian Army, and these, of course, gave only a general indication. They could only report on the troops massed in the vicinity of the frontier, while the Serbian General Staff had to reckon with German reinforcements kept out of sight which could be brought up by rail in a few hours. It was this uncertainty which rendered it very difficult for Field-Marshal Putnik to make his

plans to meet the Austro-German invasion. If he kept too many troops on the northern front he would weaken his eastern one, while if he massed his main forces against the Central Powers, he exposed Macedonia to invasion.

Of course in regard to the strength of the Bulgarian Army he knew that to a battalion. He knew that opposed to the 150,000 men, the maximum force which he could spare to hold Bulgaria in check, were 36 regiments of 4 battalions with reserve formations of equal strength, 9 artillery regiments and 4 batteries of 4 guns each, 24 mountain batteries and 6 battalions of fortress artillery, 12 regiments of cavalry, besides pioneers, railway troops, pontoon battalions, telegraph battalions and other technical units. This formidable force, one third stronger than the whole Serbian Army, was ready to hurl itself on Serbia's flank the moment she was in grips with the Northern invaders.

All that Serbia could do was to await the attack of her enemies and transport her army to the point chiefly menaced. This entailed a continual *va-et-vient* of troops, divisions being taken from one front and hurried to the point of danger on the other, as occasion arose. And this in a country where the railway is single track and the rolling stock none too plentiful. No army ever faced more crushing odds or faced them with more courage, even if it was the courage of despair.

Field-Marshal Putnik had also to reckon with the unfavourable geographical position of the capital and the temporary capital of the country; Belgrade being

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but a few hundred yards from the Hungarian frontier, while Nish, the seat of government at the moment of the outbreak of hostilities, is one day's march from the Bulgarian frontier. In addition he was handicapped by the fact that the Salonica-Uskub-Nish railway, on which so much depended, is, at Strumnitza, but three short miles from the Bulgarian frontier and thus at the mercy of a sudden *coup de main*.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BATTLE OF THE MORAVA

WHEN in August, 1915, I received orders from my paper, the *New York Tribune*, to join the headquarters of the Serbian Army I was at Lugano in Switzerland where, safe from the pitiless blue pencil of the censor, I could record the progress of events in Alsace and in the Italian Peninsula. As it was clear from the telegrams in the Swiss press that the opening of the second Austro-Serbian campaign was imminent I left at once for Salonica *via* Rome, Naples and Athens.

At Rome I had a long conversation (of which I have given a summary in the introduction to this volume) with M. Coromilos, the eminent diplomatist who represents Greece at the Italian court. He was frankly pessimistic at the extraordinary course of the diplomacy of the Allied Powers and foresaw only a catastrophe as the result of it. Reports of the coming attack on Serbia by Austria, this time reinforced by Germany, were day by day more persistent, but the same curious optimism regarding the attitude of Bulgaria was visible in the columns of the Italian governmental organs, which probably drew their inspiration from the Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office.

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In Athens I found the prevailing sentiment one of extreme pessimism. The Greek Kingdom was torn by conflicting currents. The Premier, M. Venizelos, was frankly in sympathy with the Allies, but he informed me that King Constantine was convinced of the ultimate triumph of Germany. When I asked him on what His Majesty based this conviction he simply smiled discreetly and shrugged his shoulders without replying. An American *confrère* who had had a long conversation with King Constantine, to whom I put the same question, replied that it could not be described as a conviction. A conviction is arrived at as the result of logical reasoning. In the King's case it was simply faith, a sort of heaven-sent revelation. The definition of faith in the Shorter Catechism as "the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for," was probably a good description of His Majesty's mentality.

The Greek General Staff, which, almost to a man, is German trained, made no secret of their sympathies for the cause of the Central Powers. The members of the court, carefully chosen by King Constantine's consort, the sister of the Kaiser, were also strongly pro-German. The notorious Baron von Schenck, the agent in Athens for the German propaganda, who disposed of unlimited financial resources, had done his work thoroughly and secured the support of a large and influential section of the press. He had also enrolled in his service a number of Greek politicians susceptible of yielding to the kind of persuasion he used. It is in this atmosphere that King

Constantine lived. It was therefore no wonder that he had confidence in the power and the greatness of Germany and the ultimate triumph of her arms, for all suggestion to the contrary was carefully kept from his ears.

At the same time the great mass of the people were on the side of the Allies. But they had no means of making their opinions felt in governmental circles. King Constantine was undoubtedly extremely popular with the army and with that on his side he did not fear any attempt at revolution. He had twice forced M. Venizelos to resign when he was at the head of a majority in the Chamber. This, of course, was straining the constitution to breaking-point, as it was only a disguised form of *coup d'état*, but having, as I have said, the army on his side, he was convinced that he could risk such measures.

On one point, however, M. Venizelos informed me the King could be depended on, and that was in regard to carrying out his treaty obligations towards Serbia. His Majesty had not yet, he declared to me, got to the "scrap of paper" theory of his imperial brother-in-law, and was prepared to stand by the treaty with Serbia in case that Kingdom should be attacked by Bulgaria. Some strong influence must, however, have been brought to bear on him to make him change this view. When, a fortnight later, the moment came for Greece to maintain her engagements King Constantine dismissed M. Venizelos from power and substituted a Cabinet under M. Zaimis, which repudiated the Greco-Serbian Treaty as inapplicable to the case

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where King Peter's dominions were attacked by two Great Powers as well as by Bulgaria. This represented the final break-up of the Balkan League, and the Peninsula, from that moment, returned to the anarchical conflict of interests which had for a quarter of a century been its leading characteristic.

At Salonica I found intense excitement prevailing. Every report from Nish and Sofia showed that the moment of the catastrophe was approaching. It was extremely curious to contrast these reports with the optimistic telegrams from London and Paris assuring us that Bulgaria was the sincere friend and supporter of the Entente Powers. People in Salonica read these telegrams with the blankest amazement. The remarks made on the extraordinary policy being pursued by the Allies were far from complimentary to the Foreign Ministers carrying it out.

On September 28th, Bulgaria flung off the mask and mobilized her army. Salonica was seething with excitement, everybody asking what would be the policy of Greece. Forty-eight hours later came the royal decree mobilizing the Greek Army in its turn. Everybody supposed that Greece was going to stand by her Serbian ally. But they reckoned without the King. The mobilization was the last act of M. Venizelos. A few days later he was dismissed from power. German influence in Athens had again carried the day.

These startling weeks had, as their first result, the collapse of the castle of cards so painfully erected by the Foreign Ministers of the Entente Powers. They began to fear that the astute Bulgarian Prime Minis-



ter had been making a fool of them (a conviction which everyone in the Balkans except the diplomatists of the Entente Powers had reached weeks before) and they began to concert hasty measures to avert the impending disaster.

When I came down from lunch at the Hôtel de Rome on September 27th I found the vestibule crowded with British soldiers seated around, their rifles between their knees and the floor littered with their knapsacks. They were the orderlies of the Staff Officers who had just arrived from the Dardanelles on a French warship. It was clear that an expeditionary force was about to be disembarked in Salonica.

I saw that if I wanted to make sure of reaching Nish I had no time to lose, as it was more than certain that the first move of the Bulgarians would be to attack the Salonica-Nish railway at Strumnitza. I accordingly left Salonica on Friday, October 1st, in the *train de luxe* which left three times a week for the temporary capital of Serbia. It was a thoroughly up-to-date train with sleeping and restaurant cars, but there its resemblance with similar trains in other countries ceased. It crawled along at a snail's pace, stopping at every little wayside station, and sometimes even, for no apparent reason, in the open country. The line, since the mobilization had been ordered, was closely guarded, but the presence of the Greek sentries was the only sign of military activity. But once we had crossed the Serbian frontier all this changed. The railway wound its way among a suc-

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cession of low, arid, brown hills on the crests of which one could see the silhouettes of guns in battery and the parapets of freshly dug trenches.

At Strumnitza, which is only four short kilometres from the Bulgarian frontier, a strong force of infantry, cavalry and artillery was encamped. Long lines of trenches had been dug along the hills dominating the railway and strong redoubts constructed for placing guns. The railway guard consisted mostly of peasants in the russet-brown costume peculiar to Serbia. Though the only outward sign of their military status was their rifle and bayonet, they had the air of veterans with their bronzed resolute faces, barred by the heavy, drooping moustache. It was a curious contrast to travel in a modern *train de luxe* through a country devastated by three years of ceaseless war.

On every siding were trains piled high with munitions, aeroplanes, automobiles and other war material all rolling northward as fast as they were disembarked at Salonica. When the train entered Serbian territory its speed was, if possible, slower than ever. But fourteen months of newspaper work on the French front had, however, trained me to philosophy in such matters. Trains in war time leave when they leave and arrive when they arrive, and that's all about it.

It was nearly midday of the second day when we finally arrived at our destination. As is usual in Balkan towns the station at Nish is a mile and a half or so from the centre of the town and the route lies over cobble-stone streets in an incredible condition

of disrepair. Nish, in spite of having been Serbian for over thirty years, still has all the characteristics of a Turkish town, wide, dirty streets flanked on either side by rows of one-story houses, with, here and there, immense public squares over which the ramshackle public vehicles roll and rock like ships in a heavy sea. In fine weather the dominant feature is dust which drifts in heavy clouds before the wind; in wet weather the streets are a sea of mud of a peculiarly tenacious quality.

At ordinary times Nish has a population of about 30,000 souls. When I reached it there were nearly one hundred thousand and there had been even a greater number. These were chiefly refugees who had poured into the town during the first Austrian invasion, and officials who had followed the Government when Nish was made the temporary capital. The Foreign Office was installed in the Prefecture and the other Ministries were lodged *tant bien que mal* in other public buildings. The diplomatic corps, which had followed the Government from Belgrade, occupied such quarters as they had been able to find. The Diplomatic Club, where the members of the corps lunched and dined, was installed in rooms above the Bella Kaphana, the leading restaurant of the town. The fare of the Bella Kaphana bore only a distant resemblance to that of the Maison d'Or or the Café Anglais, but *à la guerre comme à la guerre*. Later on we were destined to look back on the meals there as repasts fit for Lucullus.

The Bella Kaphana was the news exchange of the

town. Here at lunch and dinner one met French aviators and Red Cross surgeons, British and American ambulance units, Serbian officers of every arm, local journalists and government officials. The principle underlying the efforts of the *chef* seemed to be "When in doubt use paprika," a peculiarly vivacious form of red pepper. The result was that almost every dish tasted like a torchlight procession and brought tears to the eyes of the most hardened. Wine was still plentiful and beer (two francs a bottle) could be had at irregular intervals when the train brought a consignment from Salonica.

The wildest rumours were current, but little news that could be depended upon. The newspapers from Salonica were eagerly bought up. They contained reports of the steady disembarkation of French and British troops and hope ran high that reinforcements would soon reach Serbian soil. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed and when at last the arrival of French troops was officially announced for the next day, the town went wild with excitement. The municipality voted twenty thousand francs, which it could ill spare, for the decoration of the streets in honour of the arrival of the Allied troops. In a few hours the town burst out in a mass of bunting, French tri-colours and British Union Jacks were everywhere *en évidence*. Lines of Venetian masts, festooned with French and British colours, were erected from the railway station to the Town Hall. Peasants poured in by thousands from the surrounding country and every inhabitant of Nish was afoot to welcome the Allies.

But hours passed and nothing came. Then it was announced that the arrival had been postponed till the following day. But again disappointment awaited the eager crowds. Day after day passed, till finally, as I was returning home one night, I saw town officials going round in the darkness gathering in the flags and packing them in carts. Next morning the bare poles gave eloquent testimony that the short dream of aid from the Allies was at an end.

Depression followed on the former enthusiasm. Hour by hour the reports from the Danube and the Bulgarian frontier were eagerly read. Every evening in the *Bella Kaphana* the faces of the foreign diplomats were scanned to see if their expressions would give any indication of the way events were trending. All we could hear was that the Austro-German forces on the Danube front were massing scores of batteries of guns of every calibre opposite Belgrade, Semendria, Ram and other towns on the river banks while hour by hour the Bulgarians were concentrating on the eastern frontier. It became known that Field-Marshal Putnik had asked permission of the Allies to march the Serbian Army across the frontier and break up the Bulgarian mobilization and that he had not only been refused the permission in question, but had been given the astounding assurance that the Bulgarian mobilization was not directed against Serbia. This assurance was received with derision in Nish where everybody knew the Bulgarian attack was only a matter of hours.

Then the crash came. On the 5th of October we

received news of the bombardment of Belgrade. On that date forty-three guns of 30.5 and 38 centimetres supported by scores of field guns and mortars of various calibre opened fire on Belgrade, Semendria and other towns along the banks of the Save and Danube. The Serbians, who had sent their heavy guns to the Bulgarian frontier, had at the Danube only a score or two of obsolete DeBange guns and some howitzer batteries. The only heavy ordnance were the two French and four British naval guns manned by French and British sailors. These were supported by some heavily armed Russian monitors on the Danube. This international force was under the command of Admiral Troubridge of the British Navy. The French guns were struck by shells and put out of action the first day of the bombardment. The British guns were more fortunate and Commander Kerr was able to withdraw them unharmed. They accompanied the Serbian Army throughout the entire retreat and rendered yeoman service.

The bombardment of Belgrade was one of the fiercest in the history of the present war. Over 50,000 projectiles fell in the town in the first forty-eight hours. Nothing was spared. Over eighty shells struck or fell around the American Hospital under the charge of Dr. Ryan, and that in spite of the fact that a Red Cross flag, visible for miles, was flying from the roof.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts the German infantry on October 6th managed to get a footing on the right bank of the Danube at Belgrade and three other points. The capital was only defended by a small

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body of troops, the gendarmerie and a number of Comitadjis or irregulars. The defenders fought their assailants hand to hand. The quays of the Danube were running with blood and piled with German corpses. When they were driven from the quays the Serbs continued the fight in the streets of the city.

A large number of the inhabitants tried to fly when they saw the Germans land. But the artillery on the other side of the river had opened a curtain fire on the environs of the city. Two miles away hundreds of shells were bursting, making a zone of fire impossible to cross, while overhead German aeroplanes were circling, dropping bombs on the defenceless people below.

It took two days for the invaders to break the heroic resistance of the defenders of the capital and to reach the positions to the south from which they could dominate the town. By October the 15th, however, they finally occupied the banks of the Save and Danube. Overwhelmed by numbers, badly protected by hastily constructed trenches, the Serbian troops fought desperately, supporting courageously three and four attacks each day, each preceded by a formidable artillery preparation, backed up by masses of asphyxiating gas. The Germans bought their success dearly. Their losses in killed and wounded were enormous, and at one point alone, near Zabrezh, the Serbs took over a thousand prisoners, with nearly a score of officers.

Surprised at meeting such resistance, the Germans brought up fresh reserves, and soon their forces outnumbered the Serbs by nearly three to one, while their artillery was over twice as strong as that of the de-

fending force. But in spite of this the situation remained undecided.

It was the pressure from the Bulgarian front that finally made the balance to incline in favour of the Germans. Every day brought to Nish fresh reports of the massing of troops on the eastern frontier, and on October 12th the armies of Generals Jekoff and Boiadjeff, without any previous declaration of war, attacked all along the line. The Bulgarian Army alone was a hundred and fifty thousand men stronger than the entire Serbian Army of 250,000 men, which had in addition to face in the north 300,000 Germans and Austrians armed to the teeth.

It was clear from this moment that the principal effort of the Germans was directed against the valley of the Morava. Once this was in their hands they could force their way down it to the Bulgarian frontier and join hands with their Bulgarian allies. This would also give them possession of the Belgrade-Nish-Sofia-Constantinople railway. As soon as the junction with the Bulgarians was effected they could pour troops and munitions down to Constantinople. When this was done the Franco-British enterprise in Gallipoli would become hopeless. The real defence of that force lay on the banks of the Danube. This was seen by the Allies when it was too late. General Sarrail's force was *la moutarde après le dîner*, as our French friends would say. It landed at Salonica two months too late to be of the slightest use in saving the situation.

As soon as the German plan of operations became clear, I determined to make an effort to reach the fight-



ing line of the Serbian force on the Danube front. The Headquarters Staff was at Kraguyevatz, a town situated halfway between Nish and Belgrade.

Kraguyevatz is a town of considerable military importance, as here the chief Serbian arsenal, constructed by the Creusot Company of France, was situated. Though the distance was only a matter of sixty miles, it proved a long and fatiguing journey, the train trundling along at about ten miles an hour, and being continually side-tracked to allow military trains loaded with troops, guns and munitions to pass.

Kraguyevatz proved to be a pleasant little town, with nicely-built houses and well-planted gardens and orchards. It is supposed to be specially favoured meteorologically, "rare as rain in Kraguyevatz" being a Serbian proverb. If the rain, when it does come, in any way resembles the deluge coming down when I arrived and during my whole stay, I can only regard this as a special dispensation of Providence.

The obtaining of permission to go to the front did not prove an easy matter. The reports from the Danube were not cheerful reading. The Serbian troops were being hard pressed, and at such moments generals do not care to have the providing of facilities to journalists added to their other troubles. But after a considerable expenditure of diplomacy, I at last received permission to proceed to Palanka, where I was told I would find the Division of the Shumadia which was holding the entrance of the valley of the Morava against the Germans.

But it was one thing to get permission to go to the

front and another thing to get there. I was told to take train at 11 p.m. to Lapovo and there to change on to the Palanka line. I was at the station punctual to the minute, but this was more than could be said of the train. There was a constant succession of troop trains crammed with soldiers pouring north to reinforce the fighting line, and others carrying wounded from the front travelling in the contrary direction. As the line is single track this entailed a heavy strain on its resources, as the sidings were congested and the staff overworked. Hour after hour we waited in the pouring rain. The streaming platforms were glistening with wet in the crude light of the arc lamps. Train after train emerged from the outer darkness, trundled slowly, axles creaking and groaning beneath the load of men and guns, through the station and was again swallowed up in the obscurity beyond. One had a momentary glimpse of the Serbian soldiers, standing stoically in the open trucks in the pouring rain, or saw the silhouette of the guns, their muzzles pointing skyward, as they passed, the heads of the horses emerging through the openings of the cattle trucks used for their transport.

But at length, at four o'clock in the morning, our train arrived, and after a sojourn of half an hour or so in the station moved slowly in the direction of Lapovo. Here on arriving we found chaos and confusion. The Bulgarians, we heard, were approaching Nish, and orders had been given to evacuate that town. Train after train was pouring into Lapovo disgorging its quota of fugitives. The platforms were piled moun-

tains high with trunks and baskets and littered with ambulance stores, among which were moving hundreds of French aviators, Red Cross surgeons and nurses, scores of officers and civil functionaries.

The news they brought was not cheerful. The Bulgarians, it was said, would be in Nish in twenty-four hours. This was not exactly welcome news for me, as all my baggage was still there, and all my money, with the exception of the couple of hundred dinars I had with me, was in the custody of the Banque Franco-Serbe. But experience had taught me to take such reports *cum grano salis*. As the Serbs, when I had left Nish forty-eight hours before, were still in possession of the fortress of Pirot, twenty kilometres from the town, I did not anticipate such a speedy arrival of the Bulgarians. In any case, I was bound for the moment in the opposite direction and would have to leave the rest to fate.

About seven o'clock the train for Palanka arrived, and we proceeded on our way. With me were a number of staff officers bound for the front and three or four French military doctors. Soon the heavy boom of cannon announced that we were approaching our destination, and at midday our train rolled slowly into the station at Palanka. Outside we found every indication that we were very near the fighting line. Long lines of field guns drawn by teams of patient oxen filled the streets, a constant stream of ambulance wagons bearing wounded was pouring into the station yard to reach the sidings where the hospital trains were drawn up, while a second stream of wagons, filled with

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ammunition and food for the troops, was moving in the contrary direction. Crowds of fleeing peasants thronged the little town, besieging the inns and bakers' shops, clamouring for food. As the staff automobiles promised had not arrived, the French doctors and myself made for the nearest restaurant to lunch and await their arrival.

It was nearly two o'clock when they put in their appearance, and we started for the fighting line. Soon after leaving the town we came on an endless line of bullock wagons pouring toward Palanka. With them were marching scores of peasants' carts piled high with furniture and bedding covered over with the brilliantly-coloured quilts which the Serbians affect, on which were perched the old women and the children too young to stand the fatigues of the march. The men, the women and the older children were tramping alongside, leading the oxen or driving countless heads of cattle and sheep and droves of pigs. Some even drove flocks of geese and other inhabitants of the poultry yard. When we breasted a steep ascent and arrived at the summit, an extraordinary sight met our view. As far as the eye could reach, in front and behind, was an endless procession of vehicles all pouring southward. It was clear that the retreat had begun and that the baggage train of the division was on the move. But there was no haste or confusion, everything was being conducted with the greatest order. Only the women showed signs of nervousness, glancing back with frightened looks toward the north, from which we now heard the uninterrupted thunder of the guns.

It was clear that a few miles off a furious battle was raging.

But a second line of hills hid the actual battle-field, and it was only half an hour later when we had breasted the second ascent that it came in sight. Once we had attained the summit a marvellous panorama burst upon our view. At our feet was a rolling plain shut in right and left by high hills through which we could see a river wending. This was the famous valley of the Morava through which for centuries has poured the tide of invasion. Away on the horizon we could faintly distinguish the gleam of water showing the course of the Danube. In the centre of the panorama, on the Hungarian side of the Danube, was a pyramid-shaped mountain. Here, I was told, was the headquarters of Field-Marshal von Mackensen, who was directing the operations of the invading force. Right opposite, between us and the Danube, in the middle distance, was another line of low hills running transversely across the valley. This was studded here and there with clumps of trees and small woods, among which could be seen the roofs of several villages. Near the crests were the Serbian batteries in action against the German forces advancing from the Danube to force the entry of the valley. We could not see the guns, but the short, sharp spurts of flame from their muzzles disclosed their positions. The villages, several of which were ablaze, were being held by the Serbian infantry, while behind the clumps of trees we could see an occasional regiment of cavalry under cover.

But nothing could have withstood the tremendous fire of the German heavy guns. The enemy had managed, at the price of endless difficulties, to transport a number of their monstrous cannon to the right bank of the Danube, and these were hammering the Serbian lines. Huge shells from the thirty-eight centimetre guns were pounding the crest of the hills, which were smoking like volcanoes as these enormous projectiles burst. So tremendous was their effect that the crests were changing their shape before our eyes.

As one gun after another came into action the Serbian position became untenable. They had no artillery with which they could make effective reply to ordnance of this calibre, and we could see the long lines of grey-coated infantry winding down the slope, using woods, ditches and the ruined villages as cover from the murderous fire of the enemy. A minute or two later a tremendous explosion shook the air, and a couple of miles away a pillar of black smoke mounted slowly into the sky. The Serbs had blown up the last bridge across the Morava. Long lines of German infantry began to appear on the opposite crest. A couple of Serbian battalions marched up to the line of hills from which we were viewing the German advance. They immediately set to work to throw up a line of trenches. They were the rear-guard of the Serbian force, whose task was to cover the retreat of the Serbian division. Looking backward along the road to Palanka, we could see that the endless line of baggage wagons had been replaced by long columns of infantry. The German guns were

still thundering on the front, and fresh masses of infantry were arriving on the crest of the hill and preparing to pour down the slope.

Von Mackensen had forced the entry of the valley of the Morava.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FALL OF NISH AND KRAGUYEVATZ

WHEN it became clear that the Germans had forced the entrance to the valley of the Morava, I left the fighting line to return to Palanka. The chauffeur of our automobile was a stranger to the district, and lost his way while traversing a small forest. Just as we were about to emerge from this a sergeant and a couple of men, reconnoitring on the edge of the wood, rushed into the middle of the path and made signs to us to stop. We were, they explained, making straight for the German lines. With some difficulty we turned the automobile on the narrow pathway and retraced our steps.

The long *détour* we were then forced to make before we gained the highway to Palanka took so much time that when we reached it we found the German artillery had been put in battery on the crest of a range of hills, about three miles away. Seeing two staff automobiles, they promptly opened fire. The first shrapnel burst about two hundred and fifty yards beyond us, just over a group of soldiers. The second burst fifty yards or so behind us. Just as I expected that they would find the range with the third shot, we entered a cutting which concealed us from view.



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Here we stopped to take a soldier on board who had been somewhat badly wounded in the head by the first shrapnel, and conducted him to the nearest ambulance.

*En route* to Palanka I went to pay my respects to Colonel Terzitch, the Commander of the Division of the Shumadia, at the village where he had established his headquarters. He invited me to dine with him and his Staff, but said the hour would depend on how long it took him and his Chief of Staff to draw up the plan of operations for the morrow and issue his orders. I spent the intervening time in strolling about the village (the name of which has slipped my memory) which enjoys, I was told, the proud honour of being the largest village community in Serbia. It is certainly one of the most prosperous-looking, but this is not surprising, as the valley of the Morava has the reputation of being the most fertile in the kingdom. Its inhabitants are said to be the richest peasants in the country.

The headquarters of the division were installed in the village school-house. The mess was the most democratic I ever saw. With Colonel Terzitch, his Chief of Staff and other officers, sat down the non-commissioned officers and the men acting as secretaries and orderlies. All ate the same fare, the only difference being that at the officers' table wine was served. Colonel Terzitch is one of the most celebrated and capable soldiers in the Serbian Army (he was later Minister of War), and his division, re-

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cruited in the valley of the Shumadia, was as celebrated as its chief.

During the meal he communicated to me some details of the forces attacking his division. These consisted of three divisions, and were two divisions of the Third German Army Corps, commanded by General von Lochow, and the 46th Division of the Twenty-Third Army Corps. The infantry divisions of the Third Army Corps were the 6th, under General Meyer von Radek, and the 25th, under General von Jarrolski. The 6th Division was made up of the 20th, 24th and 64th Regiments of Infantry and a battalion of "Jaeger" or light infantry, the 3rd, 18th and 39th Regiments of Artillery and the 3rd Regiment of Cavalry. The 25th Reserve Division was made up of the 168th Active Regiment and the 83rd and 113th Reserve Regiments, the 13th and 25th Regiments of Artillery and the 4th Reserve Regiment of Dragoons.

The 46th Reserve Division, which completed the force, was composed of the 214th, 215th and 216th Reserve Regiments of Infantry, two regiments of artillery and a regiment of cavalry. It had evidently been hastily improvised for the Serbian campaign, as the troops composing it had been brought from Ypres and Arras on the French front and Brest-Litovsk on the Russian front.

The Serbian casualties for the day, Colonel Terzitch informed me, had been just under 300 men killed. The total killed in the three days' fighting had been over twelve hundred. The Germans outnumbered

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bered the Serbians by two and a half to one. In spite of the crushing superiority of the enemy the Serbians fought with courage and confidence, defending their positions foot by foot.

As I was anxious to leave for Nish I took leave of Colonel Terzitch about ten o'clock and started for Palanka. Rain was coming down in torrents, and the whole countryside had become a quagmire. The automobile churned its way, up to the axles in mud, for five or six miles or so, and then came to a standstill, completely bogged. We obtained the aid of a passing oxen team, but even its efforts failed to move the car. There was nothing for it but to abandon our vehicle. A couple of hundred yards further we came across an empty motor ambulance. This was still able to move, so we got in, and slowly and with difficulty we ploughed our way to the station, taking over an hour to cover the three miles.

At Palanka there was no train and the station-master could not tell me when there would be one, as the military transport practically monopolized the line. Telegraphic inquiries revealed the fact that our train was side-tracked two stations away, but as to when it would reach Palanka no one could say. The rain was coming down in torrents. The only haven of refuge was the station-master's office, which a stove, heated red-hot, had brought to the temperature of a Turkish bath. As I had had no sleep for thirty-six hours I dragged a mail-bag from a corner to act as a pillow, and lay down on the floor. I got up every hour or two to see what prospects we had of getting away,

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but each time found the same monotonous procession of military trains rolling through the station.

To pass the time I got the telegraph operator to ring up his colleagues up and down the line, and thus got the latest news and rumours, especially rumours, for there seemed to be a dearth of reliable news. Strumnitza, we heard, was in the hands of the Bulgarians, who had blown up the bridges on either side of the town, so that railway communication with Salonica was definitely cut. Nish was still in the hands of the Serbians, but was emptying fast, the inhabitants fleeing by thousands. But Pirot was still holding out, so that the immediate occupation of Nish was not likely.

As by midday there was still no sign of our train, I and a couple of French army surgeons determined to go to the village for lunch. Here we found everything in confusion. The inhabitants were hastily loading their belongings on carts and wagons and getting ready to flee. At the inn we managed to get some food, but had to wait till the landlord unpacked knives and spoons from the wagon in the courtyard on which his household possessions were piled prepared for flight. The Germans, we were told, were only about seven miles distant, and the occupation of Palanka was expected the following morning. While we were still lunching a messenger arrived from the station-master to say that the long-expected train had at last arrived, and requesting us to make haste. Five minutes later we were at last *en route* for Nish.

Though the distance is only about 60 miles, we were sixteen hours in performing the journey. The train

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was filled with refugees, who had fled from the Danube towns during the bombardment. In my compartment were three young girls, school teachers at Belgrade, who passed the time singing the national ballads of Serbia. The music of these is singularly beautiful, with an underlying note of sadness characteristic of all Slav melodies.

It was six o'clock in the morning when we arrived at Nish. The station was crowded with people waiting to leave, but the greatest order prevailed. There was no sign of panic. Just outside the station I met a Staff Colonel of my acquaintance. He told me he and another officer were leaving for Salonica with dispatches for General Sarrail. As the Nish-Salonica line was cut they were going by automobile to Monastir, and thence by rail to Salonica. He told me that Pirot had fallen, and that the Bulgarians were advancing on Nish. In the south they were marching on Uskub. In the north, in addition to Field-Marshal von Mackensen's army, which I had seen force the entrance to the valley of the Morava, a second German Army under General von Gallwitz was advancing on Kraguyevatz. An Austrian force assembled in Bosnia was preparing to invade Serbia from that side. The country was, therefore, being attacked from north, east and south. The 250,000 Serbians were face to face with 300,000 Germans and Austrians and 400,000 Bulgarians. All telegraphic and postal communication with the outside world, except *via* Monastir, was now cut, and even the Monastir route was threatened. When this was cut our isolation would be complete. By the

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irony of fate the wireless installation at Nish, the only one in Serbia capable of communicating with Salonica, had been completed and sent its first message only three days before, and already it would have to be destroyed.

The Government and the Banque Franco-Serbe had left for Kraljevo. Greece had finally betrayed her ally and refused to fulfil her treaty obligations *vis-à-vis* Serbia. The excuse given was that the treaty only provided for Greece coming to the aid of Serbia if she was attacked by Bulgaria alone, but did not provide for any assistance in case that country was aided by other Powers. This, of course, was a mere quibble, invented to excuse Greek desertion. "The fiasco made in Bulgaria by the diplomacy of the Allies," the Colonel added, "had undoubtedly helped to bring about this change of view in Greece." At this moment the automobile with the other officer arrived. The Colonel shook hands, entered it, and was off on his long journey to the Greek frontier.

My only anxiety now was to get my baggage and take the train to Kraljevo, to find the Banque Franco-Serbe and the members of the Government. I was afraid that my landlady, an ancient dame of about seventy-five years, might have joined the exodus, but to my relief I found her still at home, and my baggage intact. She greeted me in voluble Serbian, and was evidently expressing her delight at my safe return. At the post-office I found a few officials still at their posts, though they now enjoyed sinecures as far, at least, as letters were concerned. A few wires were

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still working for official messages, but the operators were ready to cut them and remove the instruments at a moment's notice. At the Bella Kaphana I found the former crowd had disappeared. A score or so of people were lurching in depressing silence. Anxiety was everywhere apparent. No newspapers had been published for four days, and as the official Press Bureau had accompanied the Government, we had not even its typewritten bulletins for our information.

The situation was undoubtedly growing more desperate every hour. The Headquarters Staff, I heard, was preparing to leave Kraguyevatz for Krushevatz and measures were being taken to destroy the Arsenal and all its contents. The wounded who could be moved had already been evacuated. As I had hardly had any sleep for three days, I determined to pass the night in Nish and leave the next day for Kraljevo. Some timorous souls foretold that when I awoke I would find the Bulgarians in possession of the town, but I had long ago learnt to discount such prophecies. I knew that the garrison which had evacuated Pirot was fighting a rearguard action in the mountains to the east, and that it would take the Bulgarians at least another forty-eight hours to reach Nish.

The next evening, accordingly, after the usual interminable wait at the railway station, I left for Kraljevo. I had to change at Stalatch and asked the guard to warn me when we got there, as the officials had long ago ceased to call out the names of stations. He promised to do so, but failed to keep his word,

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with the result that I passed Stalatch. I got out at Parachin, a station further on, where I had the pleasure of waiting seven hours for a train back to Stalatch. Here I had to remain all night waiting a train to Kraljevo, which I reached about four o'clock in the afternoon.

My first visit was to the Banque Franco-Serbe, which I found established in a deserted villa, the cashier installed behind a kitchen table. As he told me he had no idea how long the bank would remain in Kraljevo or where it would go on leaving that town I drew out my total fortune, about a couple of thousand dinars, which I knew would have to last me till I reached the outer world.

The next problem was to find lodgings. The 15,000 inhabitants of Kraljevo had been reinforced by over 60,000 refugees. Every house and café was filled to overflowing, but finally after a long search I managed, by paying Savoy Hotel prices, to obtain a wretched room in a tenth-rate inn. The unfortunate diplomatic corps had found quarters as best it could, and lunched and dined in the public room of the Hôtel de l'Europe, a third-rate hostelry where there were no cloths on the tables and where the serviettes were sadly in need of the wash-tub.

Here, to my surprise, I met a confrère in the person of M. Paul du Bochet, a young French Swiss who was correspondent of the *Petit Parisien*. He and I with M. Henry Barby of the *Journal*, of Paris, were the only foreign members of the Fourth Estate left in Serbia. Du Bochet had been in Cetinje when the



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news of the Austro-German invasion reached him, and had hurried at once from the Montenegrin capital to join the Serbian Army. He had first gone south and had reached Uskub, but only to find that it was being evacuated. He left in the last train for Prisrend and Mitrovitza, and after four days' constant travelling had reached Kraljevo. Here he learned that the Headquarters Staff had left Kraguyevatz for Krushevatz, as the former town was now seriously menaced by General von Gallwitz's army.

I told him it was my intention to proceed to Headquarters and get a permit to return to the front. We arranged to go together, and left next afternoon, arriving just in time for the evening mess of the Headquarters Staff. During the meal we heard the latest news. Kraguyevatz was seriously menaced and might fall at any moment. Automobile transport and the railways were working night and day to save what they could of the contents of the Arsenal. All that could not be saved would be destroyed. Uskub had been captured by the Bulgarians, the English Ambulance Corps under Lady Paget being taken prisoners, as she had refused to leave her wounded. Nish was now also in the hands of the Bulgarians, while von Mackensen's army was forcing its way down the valley of the Morava to effect a junction with them. Once this was done, the road to Constantinople would be open and the Germans would be able to send munitions to Turkey for want of which her resistance was about to collapse. This would settle the fate of the Gallipoli expedition.

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The Serbian troops of the First Army under the Voivode Zhivoïn Mishitch, facing von Gallwitz's army, after abandoning Kraguyevatz, would retreat on Kraljevo, while the Second and Third Armies, under the Voivode Stepanovitch and General Yurishitch-Sturm, would fall back on Krushevatz. This would bring the Serbian Army into a critical position, as it would then have its back to the range of mountains which at this point traverse Serbia from east to west, and through which there are only two passes, one running from Krushevatz to Kurshoumlia, and the other from Kraljevo to Mitrovitza *via* Rashka. This operation would be like pouring a hundred gallon cask through the neck of a pint bottle.

Once the Serbian armies had crossed this range of mountains they would have left Old Serbia, that is to say, Serbia as it existed before the war with Turkey, and would be driven into the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, a territory which only four short years before was under the rule of the Sultan. The only hope of avoiding this disaster was that the Second and Third Armies would check the further advance of the German Army descending the valley of the Morava. Of that, in view of the enormous superiority of the German forces, there seemed little prospect. However, as there seemed just a fighting chance that the miracle might be accomplished, du Bochet and I determined to push forward and join the Second Army.

The task of the Government was now one of colossal difficulty. One third of the kingdom was in the hands of the Germans and Austrians. Hundreds

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of thousands of people had left their homes and were pouring south, crowding towns and villages. The advance of the Bulgarians on the east and south was driving another section of the people toward the west and north. It was clear that almost the entire population of the country would soon be congregated in the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar with its back to the Albanian and Montenegrin frontier.

In addition as mile after mile of the railways fell into the hands of the enemy the rolling stock was pouring down from the north and up from the east and south, congesting what still remained in Serbian hands. Every siding was full to overflowing and still the mass of trucks and passenger cars kept accumulating. As a consequence, as the line is a single track, on which the up-trains must be side-tracked to let the down-trains pass, the congestion threatened to bring the traffic to a standstill.

Our first difficulty was one of transport. As we could no longer count on the railway, either a horse or ox drawn vehicle was necessary. As we had now no certainty of being able to return to any town once we had left it we had to be prepared to take our baggage with us. I had reduced mine to the smallest possible quantity. Du Bochet had even less, as on going to Montenegro he had left his main baggage at Kraguyevatz and it would, in a few hours, in all probability be in the hands of the Germans.

But transport was difficult to find. All the horses and carriages worth taking had long ago been requisitioned by the military authorities. We hunted

high and low for two days. At length we discovered an ancient carriage in a deplorable state of repair, and a couple of horses which the army had disdained. The wheels and springs of the carriage seemed sound, however, and that was the main thing. It was more, however, than I could say for the horses. One I found was completely blind, and the other seemed badly broken-winded. As we intended always to leave the vehicle a safe distance from the fighting-line and ride the animals when actually at the front, the blind animal was useless. After some search a third animal was discovered, a weedy, giraffe-like chestnut. It was an Austrian horse captured during the first campaign. It had been badly wounded in the chest by a shell splinter and was in no way a desirable acquisition, but it was a case of Hobson's choice. For the carriage and the two Rosinantes, with the harness and a couple of ancient riding saddles, the price was 1,100 dinars, about twice their value. But it was that or nothing, so we had to make the best of a bad job. As the horses looked half-starved we decided to give them a twenty-four hours' rest and good feeding before starting.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, November 2nd, we left Krushevatz in search of the Second Army. In the forenoon we lunched at the mess of the Headquarters Staff. We found that orders had been given for it to leave Krushevatz for Rashka in the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, half way between Kraljevo and Mitrovitza. News had been received of the fall of Kraguyevatz. The army had not been able to save an enormous mass of war material which had to be

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destroyed. This included ten thousand tents, thousands of uniforms, hundreds of thousands of cartridges and thousands of shells. The Serbian Government rifle and gun factory installed at a cost of several million francs had been blown up.

The Government and the Diplomatic Corps had resumed their nomadic existence, and had left Kraljevo for Mitrovitza. The position of the unfortunate foreign diplomatists was not an enviable one. They had no means either of communicating with their governments or receiving instructions from them. But the inexorable advance of the German and Bulgarian Armies drove them from one town to another. Each time the change was for the worse.

It was about three o'clock when we left the town. The roads, we found, were in a frightful condition. They were, for the most part, mere cart tracks and perfect seas of mud. The carriage half the time was ploughing through two feet of tenacious clay. Twice it stuck fast up to the axles, and was only extricated with the friendly aid of a passing bullock team.

Both our horses, the giraffe-like chestnut, whose name was Julius, and his partner (which I had named Caesar), a flea-bitten grey, regarded Serbian mud and the effort it entailed on them with profound disapproval.

Just at the point where the road from Krushevatz joins the main road running to Stalatch I came across half a dozen British soldiers belonging to the heavy battery which defended Belgrade. They were seated at the roadside preparing the inevitable pot of tea

without which Tommy Atkins's happiness is not complete. They told me their battery had been *en route* for Nish and that the guns had already been entrained at Stalatch. They were covering the intervening sixty kilometres in a couple of bullock carts. They were profoundly ignorant of what was happening in Serbia or the outside world, but were correspondingly cheerful.

They insisted on our sharing their tea, and produced a pot of the equally inevitable marmalade, which they proudly declared was one of the few objects which had survived the bombardment of Belgrade. I left them loading up their wagon and giving orders to their drivers in weird but apparently effective Serbian.

It was dark when we reached Chichevatz, the first stage on our journey; a collision with the parapet of a bridge broke a splinter bar of the carriage and forced us to halt for the night. The problem was to find quarters and food. Every village behind the front was filled to overflowing with the fugitive population from the country held by the Germans. Every public edifice was crammed; people were sleeping on straw, twenty in a room, in every available house. At the village inn the food supply resolved itself into the inevitable "Schnitzel," which in the present instance was a badly burnt piece of pork. We were, however, fortunate enough to find the local station-master at the inn, who hospitably offered us a bedroom in the railway station.

When we got there we noticed that he had already

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begun to pack up ready to leave. With him was a young official of the Ministry of Commerce, who had been sent to destroy the stores and rolling stock. Chichevatz was the point at which the Serbian railway stores were kept. More than a hundred wagons had been loaded with accessories, including scores of typewriters, paper and bureau materials, uniforms, etc., but it was found impossible to move them, as every siding between Stalatch and Nish was so crowded that there was not room for a single additional car.

When everything was lost on this section it was, I was told, the intention of the Serbian authorities to fill the whole track from Chichevatz to Nish with rolling stock from one end to the other and blow up all the bridges, so as to render the line unworkable. The new American engines, which were only delivered in 1915, were placed in a long tunnel on a side line, and each end of the tunnel blown up, so as to entomb them undamaged.

The news from the front was not encouraging. The Germans were advancing slowly but surely. The great disappointment to the Serbian population had been the failure to check the advance at Bagrdan. Bagrdan is in the line of mountains to the east of Kraguyevatz, and its strength as a military position is legendary in Serbia. For fifty years the Serbian nation had regarded Bagrdan as the bulwark that would check invasion. That it failed to check the German advance greatly depressed army and people.

The failure of the Bagrdan defence to accomplish that is not surprising. The Germans were just as

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well aware of the strength of the position as the Serbians, and they took good care not to make a frontal attack on it. They simply concentrated enough force on the position to hold the Serbian Army in check and then, making use of their superiority in numbers, they sent two columns to turn the position. This forced the Serbian Army to fall back.

One of the first results was the capture by the enemy of Kraguyevatz. After that the Germans steadily advanced on each bank of the Morava. Seven Serbian divisions opposing eighteen German divisions were odds that not even the bravery of King Peter's army could withstand. All night long, train after train rolled through the station loaded with military stores and packed with fleeing peasants.

Next morning the station-master roused me at 7.30 o'clock with the words: "The Germans are coming!" From his tone one could have supposed the cavalry were at the outskirts. The real reason I soon discovered was his desire that I should evacuate my sleeping quarters, as an ox-wagon was already at the door to transport the furniture to a place of safety.

We determined to leave the carriage there and ride to the front, as a carriage in a sudden retreat is apt to be cumbersome. We accordingly saddled the horses and rode to Parachin, twenty kilometres distant.

Parachin we found in a state of considerable excitement. The thunder of the guns drawing nearer and nearer gave evidence of the approach of the enemy. The battle was raging at Chupria, about four miles outside the town. The Second Army held the heights



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on both sides of the valley, opposed to a force of nearly double its strength.

The German tactics were simple but effective. They opened a tremendous and apparently indiscriminate fire on the Serbian position from guns and howitzers of every calibre. I noticed, however, that they no longer possessed the tremendous pieces I had seen in action at Palanka; the 15-centimetre gun seemed the heaviest artillery they carried with them. Shells fell by hundreds on every square mile of the Serbian positions. After two hours or so of this indiscriminate bombardment we began to see parties of infantry, from twenty to fifty strong, pushing forward. When they came within rifle-range they began to deploy and opened fire on the Serbian positions. As soon as the Serbian infantry began to reply, a field telephone, with which each of the German advance parties was armed, 'phoned back the exact position of the trenches to the artillery in the rear. An instant later an avalanche of shrapnel and shell was poured on the Serbian lines, while at the same time the heavier German guns opened a "tir de barrage" on the ground two miles in the Serbian rear to hinder the movement of retreat or prevent reinforcements being brought up.

The Serbian infantry complained that except these advance parties, which retired as soon as they had made the Serbians reveal their position, they hardly ever saw a German infantry soldier, and had to retreat before a storm of shell and shrapnel. It was clear that the capture of Chupria was only a matter of hours, so we decided to ride back to Parachin.

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As the Staff of the Second Army was expected to arrive in that town that evening we determined to remain there over night. With thirty thousand refugees in a town of twelve thousand inhabitants it was no easy matter to find a room, but the Mayor kindly had a deserted house broken open for us, and also, which was even more important, found food and stabling for our horses. Next morning the people of the next-door house awakened us with the news that the Germans were attacking the town and that infantry fire was clearly audible.

When we got out we found this was exaggeration but that the Serbian baggage train was pouring through the town—a clear sign that the retreat had begun. The town was in wild excitement for two reasons—firstly, on account of the approach of the Germans, and secondly, because orders had been given to distribute to the inhabitants everything in the military stores to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy. As a result I saw hundreds of people going about carrying dozens of pairs of boots, uniforms, underclothing, bread, biscuits, etc.

At midday, the provision and munition columns having safely cleared the town, General Stepanovitch and his staff, after placing a strong rearguard to delay the German advance as long as possible, left for Razhan, a town about twenty miles distant, from which a road led to the entrance to the mountain pass leading from Krushevatz to Krushoumlia.

## CHAPTER V

### FROM CHICHEVATZ TO KRUSHEVATZ

THE return journey to Chichevatz was uneventful, save for the discovery that Caesar, my mount, in addition to being broken-winded, seemed to suffer from some sort of heart trouble, which induced him to lie down at the most unexpected moments. I never discovered how far those attacks coincided with a mere desire for repose. I noted that a sharp application of my riding whip contributed remarkably to his speedy recovery, and that the attacks generally came on when there was a particularly nasty bit of road to negotiate.

Our progress was slow, as the road, as far as the eye could see, was blocked by moving columns, infantry, cavalry, artillery, baggage wagons and pontoon trains pouring like a flood towards the mountains. The Second and Third Armies were now in full retreat and making every effort to gain the entrance to the pass as speedily as possible. The word speed, in connection with the Serbian Army, has, of course, only a relative value, as it can never exceed the pace set by the ox-wagons. Speed in the case of Serbian troops has therefore been replaced by prolongation of the effort, so as to cover the greatest possible distance in

the twenty-four hours. The more I saw of the Serbian oxen, the more my admiration for them increased. They seemed tireless and their powers of traction were perfectly marvellous. The wagons, too, I found, in spite of their apparently primitive construction, were marvels of strength and efficiency, standing an amount of wear and tear that would have wrecked any ordinary vehicle.

The problem that faced Field-Marshal Stepanovitch and General Yurishitch-Sturm was no easy one. It was to transport the hundred and thirty thousand men of the Second and Third Armies, with thirty thousand bullock wagons, a hundred batteries of artillery, three divisions of cavalry, pontoon trains, field telegraph and telephone sections, munition columns, and the thousand and one things that form the impedimenta of a modern army, through a mountain defile seventy kilometres in length.

The entrance to this pass lies just outside Krushevatz, and it runs *via* Jankova Klissura to Kurshoumlia, a few miles from the old frontier of the Turkish Sandjak of Novi Bazaar, annexed by Serbia after the defeat of the Sultan's armies in 1912.

On account of the encumbered state of the roads our progress was slow. Usually when mounted we could push on past the slow-moving military columns, but in the present instance this was impossible, as a flood of peasants and their families, fleeing from Chupria, Parachin and a score of other villages, filled the road on either side of the marching troops.

Darkness had fallen when we reached Chichevatz.

At the railway station we found the station house dismantled. All the furniture was gone and the station-master's aged mother was cooking the evening meal in an outhouse in which a deal table and a few chairs had been placed to serve as a temporary dining-room. A section of engineers had arrived to blow up the bridge and fire the railway wagons filling the sidings before the arrival of the Germans. Telegraphic and telephonic communication still existed on the north to Chupria and on the south to Stalatch. We were thus able to follow the progress of the Germans hour by hour. During the dinner every now and then the telephone bell in the station would ring. The station-master picked up his cap and went out to answer it.

The first messages were from Chupria, twenty-five kilometres up the line. "The Germans are three miles from the town," came the first communication. Then a few minutes later: "Shells are falling all round the station. We are getting ready to leave." Then after an interval of half an hour: "This is our last message. The telegraph instruments have been unscrewed and loaded on the train with all the *personnel*. We leave in a few minutes."

After that Chupria was silent and Parachin (sixteen kilometres away) took up the tale. "The sound of the guns is growing louder every minute," it telephoned, "Chupria is in the hands of the enemy." Half an hour later: "Our outposts and the 'Comitadjis'" (irregular Serbian troops who on account of their knowledge of the country generally remain in contact

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with the enemy till the last) "are engaged with the German advance guard." Then, in thirty minutes or so, came the welcome news: "The Germans seem to have halted for the night. The gun fire has almost ceased. We can see the enemy's bivouac fires all along the horizon."

It was a curious feeling thus to get news hour by hour of the advance of the invaders. It was like a night watch by the bedside of someone dying. Bit by bit we saw the last fatal moment approaching. When the train with the railway *personnel* arrived from Chupria we got a few more details. Field-Marshal von Mackensen had halted his army, which had been engaged from dawn, just outside Parachin, which would be occupied the next morning. The train took a few refugees from Chichevatz on board and then trundled off slowly to Stalatch, the junction ten kilometres or so down the line.

The majority of the inhabitants of Chichevatz, we learned, had resolved not to fly but to await the arrival of the Germans. In this they showed their good sense, as they would have gained little by flight. The congestion caused everywhere by the exodus of the population threatened to bring about a national catastrophe. As the country still in the hands of the Serbians diminished, the mass of people who had fled from the districts invaded by the Bulgarians in the south and east and by the Germans and Austrians in the north was daily being herded closer and closer together. Food was getting scarce and lodgings impossible to find. And this on the threshold of winter. Up to

now the sheep, oxen, pigs and flour that the fleeing population had been able to take with them had kept them alive, but these provisions were rapidly disappearing, and then starvation would stare them in the face. It was out of the question that the narrow strip of territory into which they were being slowly but surely forced could provide food for hundreds of thousands of starving people.

The first care of the Government was to provide for the needs of the army on which depended the last hopes of national salvation. Rations had to be found for nearly 200,000 men and 40,000 "Komordjis" (bullock-wagon drivers), and forage for 80,000 oxen and 20,000 horses. To increase the difficulties of the Government, the army and people were being forced into a country which had been Serbian for but three short years, and of which the administration was still in its initial stages. The loyalty of the Turkish and Albanian section of the population could not be altogether depended upon. It was more than certain that the Turkish section (fortunately a small minority) would regard the Germans, being allies of the Sultan, as their deliverers. It was under such circumstances that the great retreat into the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar and the newly-conquered Albanian territories was begun. It must be admitted that the prospect was far from brilliant.

Of the Allies in Salonica we heard little or nothing. An attempt by the French to advance in the direction of Uskub had, we learned, been repulsed by the Bulgarians. The Monastir-Salonica railway was still

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running, but it was seriously threatened and might be cut at any moment. Of the movements of the British troops in Salonica we heard nothing.

All this did not make for cheerfulness and the dinner was a depressing affair. As it was certain that the Germans could not arrive in Chichevatz till the following evening, I determined, about midnight, to go bed. This is a *façon de parler*, as sleeping accommodation there was none, except on the bare boards of the rooms of the station house.

At this instant the telephone bell rang once more. It was a call from Stalatch stating that a railway inspector was coming up on an engine to see the station-master. As Stalatch was only a quarter of an hour distant I waited till he arrived. The instructions he brought were that as soon as the train with the *personnel* from Parachin passed, the bridge outside Chichevatz station was to be blown up and the telegraph and telephone instruments were to be unscrewed. The loaded trucks on the sidings were to be given over to the plunder of the civil population and then everything that remained destroyed by fire and explosion. After that the station staff was to get on a train and leave for Krushevatz. All the railway officials and the civil functionaries were ordered to make for the town of Pristina, about a hundred and twenty miles distant.

About half-past twelve I went up to a room on the first floor of the station house and made up a bed as well as I could out of a mass of old newspapers. I was not destined, however, to get much sleep. About half-past three I was awakened by a shock like an earth-



quake. The whole building rocked, and every window fell in with a crash. A section of engineers had just blown up the bridge a hundred and fifty yards away. This was followed by a series of minor explosions, while the red flare of a conflagration filled the room. The blowing up and burning of the hundreds of wagons had begun. An engine a couple of yards from my now glassless windows kept whistling unceasingly for half an hour, so that all hope of further sleep was at an end.

I got downstairs in the cheerless dawn of a drizzling morning to find the inhabitants of the village having the time of their lives. Three hundred loaded trucks and vans had been given over to plunder. Some of them contained thousands of boots, two were filled with several million packets of cigarette papers, others contained biscuits, tinned meat and vegetables, tea, coffee, uniforms and stores of all kinds. One wagon filled with perfumery was very popular with the female section of the population, peasant women who probably had never owned a bottle of scent in their lives.

After watching this orgy of looting for some time, I went off to assist the station-master's mother in preparing the morning coffee. I also ransacked our provision chest and gave *madame le chef de gare* some tins of preserved food for use on their long tramp to Pristina, as some slight return for the kindly hospitality she and her husband had shown us. While we were breakfasting we had a visit of a German aeroplane. I expected it would drop a bomb or two on the station and was somewhat nervous for our carriage

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and horses, but it turned out to be merely scouting, and went off without any hostile action.

After breakfast we received some unwelcome intelligence. During the night German cavalry sent to maintain the *liaison* between General von Gallwitz's Army, operating against the First Serbian Army at Kraljevo, twenty-eight miles to the west, and Field-Marshal von Mackensen's force had arrived at Varvarin, a village only two miles distant. As all that separated us from Varvarin was open pasture land, we might receive the visit of a patrol at any moment. We therefore decided that we would leave at once. But our coachman could nowhere be found. With the rest of the village he had gone off plundering. It was an hour before he turned up, loaded with boots, tinned provisions, hundreds of packets of cigarette papers, tins of petroleum and bottles of perfume. Meanwhile du Bochet and I had been on tenterhooks, never taking our glasses off Varvarin for a single instant, and expecting every minute to see the lances of the German cavalry *en route* for Chichevatz.

As soon as our man appeared we lost no time in harnessing the horses and getting the carriage under way. In order to lighten the task of our wretched Rosinantes we decided to cover the twenty kilometres separating us from Krushevatz on foot. The drizzling rain had now been succeeded by brilliant sunshine so that the promenade was an agreeable one. We did not hurry, so that it was four o'clock before we arrived at Krushevatz.

There we noticed an unaccustomed animation. The

whole town, men, women and children, was afoot and everybody seemed in the best of spirits. People were standing around in groups, with flushed faces, eagerly discussing. We soon found the explanation of the mystery. As in Chichevatz, the wagons in the railway siding had been given over to plunder. Among their contents was a consignment of several thousand bottles of champagne. These the villagers had promptly absorbed, with the result that the whole population was in a highly exhilarated condition. At one moment there were even some exciting scenes. Among the loot were hundreds of rifles and thousands of cartridges, and those who were lucky enough to obtain these began firing them off in all directions in sheer lightness of heart, due to their indulgence in the produce of Rheims and Epernay. It is a miracle that there were no casualties.

In the main street we met a number of nurses of the Scottish Women's Red Cross Unit. They informed us that Dr. Elsie Inglis, the head of the Unit, had decided to remain with the wounded and had called for fifteen volunteers from the forty-five nurses composing the Unit. They were somewhat nervous as to how the Germans might behave on entering Krushevatz. I was in a position to inform them that, as far as I had been able to learn, the Kaiser's troops had been on their good behaviour in Serbia, and had treated the Serbian wounded fairly well. This was probably policy on their part, as they were anxious to conciliate the population and thus facilitate the occupation of the country.

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I had even heard reports that they had bound up the wounds of slightly injured Serbian soldiers and sent them back to their own lines in order to spread the news of how humane they were. They further sold salt to the peasants for a few centimes the pound (the sale of salt in Serbia is a Government monopoly and brings in a large revenue, which makes it an expensive commodity), and provided sugar at one fifth of the ordinary price. All this, of course, was intended, so to speak, as a bribe to the population and to make them think that the Germans were not as black as their reputation.

I have since met Dr. Elsie Inglis in London, after her release by the Germans, and found that she had had no reason to regret standing by her wounded. Though the Germans handled her and her nurses with a certain amount of unnecessary *brusquerie* and harshness, they were not actually ill-treated, and had the satisfaction of knowing that their devotion to duty had not been in vain.

The initial good treatment of the Serbian population by their conquerors disappeared when they thought the necessity for it had passed away. Once they were thoroughly masters of the Balkan Peninsula they made a "clean sweep" of everything. Sheep, pigs, cattle, grain, metals, firewood, etc., everything, in a word, which could be the slightest use to the German population, was sent off to the Fatherland and the Serbian population left to starve.

But this is a digression. *Revenons à nos moutons.* As it was certain that twenty-four hours was the long-

est period we could hope to remain safely in Krushevatz, we set about preparations for our further journey. As it had become clear that the pulling of our carriage in difficult ground was beyond the strength of our two horses, we decided to add a third. We therefore purchased the blind animal we had originally rejected. He was the strongest of the three, and when placed between the two others his want of vision was to a great extent neutralized.

When I went for a walk in the town next morning I found it a great contrast to what it had been the week before. The crowds of refugees which had filled it to excess were gone, again fleeing before the invader. With them had gone a goodly proportion of the regular inhabitants. Half the shops and all the hotels were closed and the streets were almost deserted. Such animation as there was came from the military element. An endless stream of troops and wagons was pouring through the town and making for the blue line of mountains behind which lay the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar.

An officer I met told me some touching stories of King Peter. The aged monarch, in spite of his failing health, deemed it his duty to pass his days in the midst of his faithful troops. He was always to be found at the point of danger and inspired his soldiers by the calm courage he showed on the field of battle. He had accompanied the Second and Third Armies nearly to Chupria and had been almost constantly under shell-fire. He travelled up to the fighting-line in his automobile, but once he had reached it he mounted on

horseback to enter the fire zone. He was everywhere received with boundless enthusiasm. The Karageorgevitchs have always been a fighting race, and King Peter is true to the blood of his ancestors.

The same officer, who belonged to the Headquarters Staff, gave me a technical *résumé* of the operations of the Serbian Armies, the First opposing General von Gallwitz in the neighbourhood of Kraguyevatz, and the Second and Third trying to bar the route of the army of Field-Marshal von Mackensen in its descent through the valley of the Morava.

The splitting of the German army of invasion into two was due to the obstinacy of the Serbian defence in the valley of the Morava. Field-Marshal von Mackensen saw that he could not break the Serbian resistance by a frontal attack on their positions. He therefore brought up two new divisions to reinforce the troops under the command of his lieutenant, General von Gallwitz, and sent this force to threaten the Serbian left flank.

This forced Field-Marshal Putnik to send to the threatened point troops taken from the force holding the valley of the Morava, and from the force opposing on the east the advance of the Bulgarians. The equilibrium was henceforth broken. The Bulgarian division attacking the line Zaetchar-Parachin recovered its liberty of movement, finding no one to oppose it, and was sent to reinforce the army which had occupied the line Kniazhevatz-Saint Nicholas (lost to the Serbians by the fault of the Allies) and whose mission it was to capture Nish. With the reinforcements from the

Zaetchar-Parachin line the Bulgarians marching on Nish were in a superiority of three to one.

The apex of the angle formed by the junction of the two fronts was mined, and the Serbs to re-establish their position had to give ground along the whole front. This operation constituted a very delicate problem on account of the extreme length of the front, the difficulty of maintaining the *liaison* of troops so scattered, the insufficiency of the means of communication, and especially the constant menace that the two flanks might be turned by an enemy so superior in number.

The intervention of the two fresh German divisions sufficed to precipitate the march of events. This resumed the whole tactics of Field-Marshal von Mackensen. He allowed the Serbians to organize their defensive, then after taking his time to thoroughly reconnoitre their positions, he brought up his reserves and, directing a crushing attack on a selected point, forced the whole army to fall back to a new alignment in order to prevent being cut in two.

There is nothing new about such tactics, but Field-Marshal von Mackensen applied them with marvellous decision and *à propos*, calculating everything, foreseeing everything and leaving nothing to chance. His immense numerical superiority and especially his superiority in guns of heavy calibre enabled him to strike with sledge-hammer force on the thin, long-drawn-out line of battle, which to defeat the constant menace of a flanking movement the Serbs were forced to maintain. The German Army, in a word, blasted its way from the Danube to the line Krushevatz-Kraljevo by means

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of shell and shrapnel. Its masses of infantry and cavalry were always a menace, but rarely engaged.

And now they had brought the Serbian Army with its back to the mountains and with no choice but to retreat, the First Army through the pass from Kraljevo to Mitrovitza via Rashka, and the Second and Third Armies through the 70-kilometre long mountain gorge running from Krushevatz to Kurshoumlia.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE RETREAT THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS

AS the day passed it was clear that the nervousness of the inhabitants was increasing. Though those who remained had voluntarily made up their minds to await the arrival of the Germans, it was evident that as that moment approached they were becoming anxious as to what their treatment might be at the hands of the enemy. Shortly after midday the public crier went round summoning the oldest male inhabitants to the Town Hall. Everybody knew what this meant. These old men were to form the deputation which would proceed, bearing a white flag, along the high road toward Stalatch to announce to the Germans the surrender of the town. The downcast looks of the people in the streets showed how deeply they felt their position and what an effort it cost them to allow the enemy within their gates.

About three o'clock I heard that isolated patrols of cavalry preceding the German advance-guard had been seen between Krushevatz and Stalatch. It was clear that our departure could no longer be delayed. I paid a last visit to the hospital to take farewell of the brave women of the Scottish Red Cross who were stopping with their wounded. I gave them all I could spare in

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the way of preserves, as I had heard they had been reduced to dry bread for a fortnight past, and I knew that the resources of Krushevatz were completely exhausted. They told me Mr. Smith, the secretary of the Unit, and thirty of the nurses had left that morning in two bullock carts making for Cettinje, the capital of Montenegro, via Mitrovitza, Ipek and Andreyevitza.

At five o'clock I had the horses harnessed and we left the town. We did not, however, make rapid progress, as a couple of miles further on we reached the road along which the army was marching. The passage of thousands of wagons and hundreds of guns had given the *coup de grâce* to the wretched road, at no time in the best of repair. It had been churned by innumerable wheels and hoofs into a veritable quagmire. Every instant a wagon would stick fast and block the line for a mile. Our three horses, panting and covered with sweat, were straining at the traces and every now and then came to a complete standstill. To lighten their task, du Bochet and I got out and walked alongside.

As darkness fell the scene became a sinister one. To the left behind the railway station, one building after another burst into flame; the employés were firing the storehouses and blowing up the wagons on the siding. A few minutes later the whole town was shaken by a series of explosions. The stocks accumulated in the Obilitchevo powder magazine were being blown up.

From the eminence on which I stood the spectacle was terrifying. Krushevatz was blazing at half a dozen points, the whole sky was covered with a crim-

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son glare, while below us the river, blood-red in the flames, could be followed to the horizon, where the flashes of Serbian guns delaying the German advance could be seen.

On the line of retreat confusion became worse confounded. The whole road was filled with a triple line of bullock wagons, their panting teams straining to tear them through the tenacious mud. Suddenly there came an explosion like an earthquake. An immense column of yellow flame shot heavenward, lighting up the whole country for miles round. The heavy girder bridge over the river had been dynamited. At the same instant three immense German shells came screaming overhead and burst with tremendous explosions, one near the Town Hall and two near the railway station. These nerve-shaking explosions caused a wild panic among the oxen, the first I had seen in Serbia. The terrified animals broke into a lumbering gallop and poured in a surging mass, with our carriage in their midst, down the road. Suddenly they came on a narrow bridge spanning a small ravine. Those on the outside were forced against the parapet. I saw the carriage balance for an instant and then, with the three horses, crash into the ditch twenty feet below. There was a sound of smashing glass, and it was all over with our vehicle.

The only thing was to extricate the kicking horses and salve such baggage as had escaped the disaster. This was a long and difficult process, as it was as dark as pitch and rain was now falling in torrents, but after an hour and a half of hard work we finally got our be-

longings ranged alongside the roadside. Fortunately the ravine into which our carriage had fallen was overgrown with thick brushwood. This had broken the fall of our horses so that, apart from some slight damage they had done to each other with their hoofs, they were not much the worse. We replaced the harness by the saddles and bridles as the easiest way of transporting them and got the animals safely back on the road.

Our next difficulty was to find means of transport for our baggage. Our coachman stopped a mounted non-commissioned officer of the transport service. I do not know exactly what he said to him, but I imagine he made him believe we were foreigners of distinction, persons of great importance whom it was advisable to befriend. In any case, he consented to stop the next transport wagon that should have room for our baggage.

A few minutes later the Reserve Munition Column of the Timok Division (which was fighting a rear-guard action to cover the retreat) came up and room was found for our belongings. Du Bochet and I entered a second wagon after tethering Julius and Caesar to it. Our coachman remained mounted on the third horse. This was the last we ever saw of him. He took advantage of the darkness to go off with the horse and saddle. Unfortunately for him, in the darkness he had taken the blind animal. Two days later we heard that he had been seen trying to sell it for 150 dinars (about \$30), but I do not know if he found a purchaser.

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Krushevatz, I learned from a cavalry scout riding by, was on the point of being occupied by the Germans. All the Serbian troops had been withdrawn except a few bands of Comitadjis, or Serbian irregulars, who were still holding the bank of the river. The three shells we had seen explode were the only ones fired by the Germans, and were evidently intended more to strike terror than to do actual harm.

Worse news was brought from Stalatch, the last station before Krushevatz. The evening before a railway train of seventy wagons had been put together and sent off. On reaching a gradient the single engine proved too weak to mount it with such a train behind it. There was nothing for it but to uncouple half the wagons and leave them behind. Unfortunately no one sent word of this to Stalatch. The result was that when the last train left that station with the employés and the military guard on board in the darkness it crashed into the standing wagons and wrecked the whole train. Forty people were killed and nearly a hundred seriously injured.

This news was not encouraging, but we could at least congratulate ourselves that we had been able to find transport for ourselves and baggage. The wagon we occupied was far from being an ideal means of locomotion. Its tilt was not exactly watertight, and ammunition boxes, when they are thrown anyhow into a wagon, do not form a model sleeping couch. But we consoled ourselves by remembering that it was assuredly superior to any accommodation we would have had as German prisoners, which might easily have been

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our fate. We journeyed slowly onwards till about midnight, when the park was formed and a halt was made for the night.

At dawn we were again *en route*. As the rain had ceased we were able to get out and walk. The panorama which met our eyes was grandiose in the extreme. To right and left of us snow-capped mountains towered to the clouds. Through the centre of the valley they formed wound a narrow road skirting a rushing stream, the Rasina. As far as the eye could reach, both in front and rear, was an endless line of marching regiments, infantry, cavalry and artillery, and thousands upon thousands of white or yellow tilted bullock wagons. For fifty kilometres in front of us and ten behind us rolled this human flood, 130,000 men, 20,000 horses and 80,000 oxen, with here and there a pontoon train, a field telegraph section or a battery of immense howitzers drawn by teams of twenty-four oxen.

But behind us we could always hear the inexorable thunder of the German guns. At first I wondered that the army did not make a stand, as if ever there was a position which seemed capable of defence it was the valley of the Rasina. About four o'clock in the afternoon we reached a point which seemed a veritable Thermopylæ. This was the point where the Toplitza flows into the Rasina. Towering mountains rose on either hand, while in the centre, facing up the valley, was an isolated hill, to left and right of which were flowing the two streams. It was the most unique position of natural strength that I had ever seen.

But I soon found the explanation of why we were

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pressing on without losing an instant. Field-Marshal von Mackensen had sent orders to the Bulgarian force at Nish to advance on Kurshoumlia, *via* Prokuplje, and close the exit to the pass. If this manœuvre had been successful the whole of the Second and Third Armies would have been caught in the mountain gorge with the entrance held by the Germans and the exit closed by the Bulgarians. All that the Serbians had to hold back the whole Bulgarian Army advancing on Kurshoumlia from Nish was a division and a half. If this force should fail to check the Bulgarians our fate was sealed.

It was therefore no matter for surprise that the Serbians strained every nerve to get clear of the pass, or that they were unable to halt for a single hour to hold back the pursuing Germans. Such rearguard actions as were fought were only such as were absolutely necessary to protect the march of the retreating column.

As the Serbian oxen cannot be driven much beyond their ordinary pace, on such occasions increased speed must be replaced by prolongation of the effort. On the second day of our march through the pass we were on the move, without even stopping to feed or water the oxen, from six o'clock one morning till two o'clock the next, or an *étape* of twenty-one hours. Then, after a stop of only four hours to feed and rest the exhausted animals, the march was resumed. From time to time a German aeroplane hovered over the column, but, curiously enough, made no attempt to throw bombs.

though the slow-moving column offered an excellent target.

The next day we had to separate ourselves from our wagons, as a fresh arrival of ammunition filled them and left no room for our baggage or ourselves. As we had now conquered a position as sort of "honorary Komordjis" of the Timok division, the major in command of the convoy found us another wagon. This was in the Provision Column of the division and was fortunately nearly empty, so that we were able to stow our baggage and ourselves in comparative comfort. The wagon was well and solidly built, with a fine brand-new yellow canvas tilt. This was made from an English tent which the driver had obtained just before the destruction of the contents of Kraguyevatz arsenal.

The driver, a man named Stanco, was destined to accompany us right to the end of our Odyssey. He was a peasant from the Timok province, and the wagon and oxen under his charge were the property of his sister-in-law, the widow of his brother who had fallen a victim to the great typhus epidemic some months before. For three long years Stanco had tramped alongside his team. He had been at the siege of Adrianople in the war against Turkey, had gone through the campaign against Bulgaria, and been present at the rout of the Austrian Army under Field-Marshal von Potiorek.

Strange to say, Stanco could speak a little French, having been employed in a copper mine in his native province run by a French company. Like most



“Komordji,” he was a past-master of camp cookery and could turn out a savoury meal with the most primitive materials. He was also, like many men from Timok, an excellent performer on a curious native flute, made out of a stem of the maize plant. I used often to hear him in the middle of the night playing the strangely sad and plaintive folk-song of his people. He seemed to find consolation in this for his separation from his wife and three little children, who were trying to run his small homestead in Timok. Our chief difficulty now was to find bread. Flour was running short and the price of the loaf had gone up from two-pence to two francs. Other provisions were still, however, relatively cheap, as a fowl for instance could still be had for seventy-five centimes, or at most a dinar or franc.

The gorge through which we passed the last day of our march was one of savage grandeur and had a singular resemblance to a mountain gorge in the Scottish highlands, bare, brown-coloured mountains, topped with snow and covered half-way up with stunted trees, towering on either hand. But we had little inclination to admire scenery. Since midday we began to hear sounds of heavy firing in front of us, which showed that the Bulgarian Army was forcing its way toward Kurshounlia, and might even yet close the exit of the pass.

Even the oxen seemed to be affected by the prevailing anxiety, and stepped out with more than their usual vigour. The men of our column rarely spoke. They seemed depressed and exhausted with their long

march, and hardly even raised their heads to watch the German aeroplanes which from time to time circled overhead. They were for the most part men from Timok, with the dark, swarthy complexion, brilliant eyes, and heavy sheepskin caps like inverted beehives on their heads.

They had tramped alongside their oxen from the Hungarian frontier to the gates of Constantinople, from the plains of Thrace to the mountains of Albania. They had become indifferent to everything, living as in a painful dream, having in their hearts neither hope nor hatred, but only a sort of indescribable regret, mixed at times with a childish astonishment, at the accumulated horrors of the war. We had met them by the hazard of our route, we would soon leave them never to see them again, and yet I had the conviction that if need be they would have fought for us and died for us, just because we showed them kindness. Their lives day after day were of unchanging monotony. While daylight lasted, they tramped stolidly alongside their teams. At night we stopped wherever opportunity offered. The major in command gave an order, and immediately men and beasts formed the "park." This was done automatically, always with the same gestures. In ten minutes, or half an hour at the most, the wagons had lined up, the oxen were picketed. In the narrow space between the lines of wagons the fires were lighted.

Squatting down on their heels, the men stretched their numbed hands to the flickering blaze. Sometimes one would hear the plaintive strains from the

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violin of a gipsy soldier, or the low sounds of the native flute. The men seemed in these sombre days to sleep but little. After tramping all day alongside their wagons they would remain seated around the bivouac fires, dozing or talking in low tones, till the advent of the cheerless dawn warned them to feed the oxen and prepare to resume their weary march. Nothing seemed to interest them, nothing to excite them. They seemed deaf to the ceaseless thunder of the guns in our rear and front, though they must have realized that if the Bulgarians should drive back the weak Serbian force holding them in check, they would fall captive to a pitiless enemy. I do not believe that they were really indifferent to the prospect, but with their curious fatalism they were prepared to accept the inevitable. This, however, did not for a moment make them relax their constant effort to push forward without losing a moment.

It was with relief that we saw the mountain gorge gradually broadening, a sign that we were approaching Kurshoumlia. About four o'clock in the afternoon we at last came in sight of that village, a small group of houses, the centre of an amphitheatre of hills. But if it was insignificant as regards size and economic importance, its strategic importance was immense. To the rear ran the route to Krushevatz, along which the Germans were marching in our pursuit. To the left was the route to Nish, *via* Prokoplje, by which the Bulgarians had been advancing in their attempt to reach Kurshoumlia and close the exit of the pass, while on the right was a road leading to the route from

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Kraljevo to Mitrovitza, the route along which the First Army was passing, pursued by the Austro-German forces under General von Gallwitz. The road running from Kurshoumlia joined this route at Rashka, where, a week before, the General Headquarters had been installed on leaving Krushevatz.

The panorama presented by Kurshoumlia and the environs was a marvellous one. On all the hills were countless wagons and the bivouacs of the troops. Guns were parked in long lines and thousands of horses were either picketed or turned loose to crop the short herbage. From the further extremity, on the road leading to Pristina, our only line of retreat, long lines of wagons were moving off, their places being immediately occupied by the column debouching from the pass.

The news we received at Kurshoumlia was not cheerful. The First Army, which was retreating from Kraljevo to Mitrovitza, was being hard pressed by the Germans. The latter were reported to have reached Rashka. If this was so, our position was critical in the extreme. As soon as the last Serbian regiment had left the pass and reached Kurshoumlia, we might expect to see the first German column debouch from it. The Bulgarians who had marched from Nish to attack us were still being held at Prokuplje, ten miles distant. But the most serious news was that of the German advance to Rashka, because if they should reach Mitrovitza and march on Pristina our retreat would be completely cut off, and in a week's time we would be the centre of a circle of German and Bulgarian bayonets.

It was for this reason that the whole army was con-

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tinuing its retreat on Pristina, to join hands with the First Army which was retreating from Kraljevo through Rashka and Mitrovitza. If the movement should succeed the whole of the Serbian Army, or rather, what was left of it, would be concentrated at Pristina, in the triangle of which that town would be the apex, and the base a line drawn from Mitrovitza to Prisrend. As the population of this territory is nine-tenths Albanian and the people were conquered by the Serbs less than four years before, too much confidence could not be placed in their loyalty to King Peter. The position of the Serbian Army was therefore becoming more and more desperate every hour. Desertions were becoming daily more numerous. We shot three deserters in the camp the evening after our arrival; but I could see from the sullen attitude of the men that the carrying out of the sentence was straining things to breaking strain.

In Serbia, as I have already stated, conscription is regional; the men in a battalion all come from the same district and those in the companies generally from the same village. They are many of them blood relations, being brothers, cousins, uncles and nephews, etc. When once the work of demoralization begins, it is difficult to inflict drastic punishment. The three men we shot were deserters from other regiments, and the men of the Timok division regarded their fate with more indifference than they would have shown had they been from their part of the country. That the fighting in the pass had been severe in the last twenty-four hours was shown by the fact that ten wagons

came in filled with harness of the horses killed in the recent engagements. General Yurishitch-Sturm did not dare to oppose the Germans as long as the mass of his army was in the pass, but once the main body and the transport train was through in safety, he put up a better rearguard fight. A battery of howitzers and two batteries of field artillery which came in the night of our arrival bore signs of the heavy fighting they had been engaged in during the preceding forty-eight hours.

A ceaseless stream of troops and transport was pouring toward Pristina. They only remained bivouacked in Kurshoumlia long enough to give the exhausted men and animals the much needed rest before embarking on the 75-kilometres march to Pristina. As we lay on the grass on the side of the mountains where the transport column was bivouacked, we could hear the triple cannonade from the Germans on the north, the Bulgarians on the east and the Austrians on the west, drawing nearer hour by hour, showing that the claws of the vise were slowly but surely closing in on us. A number of pessimists regarded our capture as certain, but as we could do nothing till the exhausted bullocks were fed and rested, we could only possess our souls in patience with such philosophy as we might.

As I and my French colleague still had the two horses which survived the disaster to our carriage tethered to our ox wagon, we had always the possibility, on the condition that we abandoned all our other worldly possessions, of being able to keep out of the actual clutches of the enemy by taking to the mountains.

## CHAPTER VII

### KURSHOUMLIA TO PRISTINA

THE exhausted state of our oxen forced us to pass three anxious days at Kurshoumlia. The second day the dull boom of guns to our right confirmed the report that the Germans were at Rashka. We were therefore nearly completely surrounded, the Germans being to the north, the Austro-Germans to the west and the Bulgarians to the east. The only line of retreat was to the south toward Pristina. If both the armies we were with and the First Army marching *via* Mitrovitza reached there in safety, the entire armed force of Serbia would be concentrated round that town.

Our wagon was lying on the steep slope of a wind-swept mountain. Our two wretched horses, which had suffered greatly from the scarcity of forage on the march through the pass, were turned loose to graze. A hundred yards or so behind us on the crest of the hill was a bare, sun-parched plateau on which were a series of half-ruined trenches, the last vestiges of the war against Turkey. Here the artillery had established some anti-air guns to drive off any of the enemy's aeroplanes which might be tempted to bomb the closely-packed wagon park. Behind these a Serbian aeroplane

lay under the guard of a sentry. It was ready, at the first signal, to go to meet the attack of any German airmen. From time to time it also made a flight to reconnoitre the position of the army of Field-Marshal von Mackensen. The troops holding the Bulgarians in check at Prokuplje had also been reinforced by the troops which had safely debouched from the pass, so that we could breathe more freely. The chances of a successful advance by the Bulgarians had now much diminished.

In the afternoon of the day following our arrival, I paid a visit to the village of Kurshoumlia. I found it crowded to excess. The streets were filled with an extraordinary mass of wagons, motor-cars, guns, pontoon trains, horses, men and oxen. A military wireless station was crackling away busily sending reports and receiving orders from the Headquarters Staff. Long columns were still pouring from the pass we had quitted the day before. At the other extremity of the village other columns, which had been reposing for three or four days, were pouring out in the direction of Pristina. As soon as they evacuated their bivouacs their places were at once taken by the newcomers. The wretched oxen of the arriving columns dragged themselves along with hanging heads in the last stages of physical exhaustion. Many had lost their shoes in the rocky defiles and were limping badly. Shoeing shops had, however, been installed in every wagon park. The shoeless beasts were thrown on their backs, their feet roped to a wooden tripod, and in a few



minutes the thin metal plates were again attached to their hoofs.

We found that the money crisis which had long been threatening had now become acute. No one would accept the Serbian ten dinar notes, and as those who still possessed silver money refused to part with it, things were rapidly approaching a deadlock. Nearly all the civil population had left and the staffs of the Second and Third Armies were already *en route* for Pristina. All that remained in the village were a few subaltern functionaries, some military surgeons and Red Cross sections and the commanders of the units left to cover the retreat and delay the advance of the enemy.

The National Stanitza, or official headquarters, was besieged by a crowd of wounded, stragglers and soldiers who had lost touch with their regiments. They all demanded bread, but only the wounded were served. The others received the curt and apparently harsh order, "Eat maize." As if to excuse his apparent harshness the commissary turned to me and said in a low voice, "I can't tell the poor devils that all is lost, that there is no hope of the Allies coming to our assistance, and that we have only flour and fodder for two more weeks."

In the streets not a single woman was to be seen. All the shops, except a pharmacy, a hairdresser's, and a café were closed. We entered the latter. Seated on the ground were a hundred or so soldiers without arms, their uniforms in rags and covered with dust, many of them wounded, and all in the last stage of

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physical exhaustion. They were drinking raki, the national spirit of Serbia. The terrible state of the atmosphere soon drove us out, we preferred the monotonous solitude of our bivouac.

As night fell the spectacle was a wonderful one. On all the amphitheatre of hills thousands of camp-fires were burning. In our bivouac we passed what seemed interminable hours. The cold was intense and wood was none too plentiful. Seated round the fires the "Komordjis," or wagon drivers, turned and re-turned before the flames the long linen rags in which they envelop their feet before putting on the heavy leather moccasins with upward pointed toes which constitute their footwear. At night the faithful Stanco made a bed for us under the tilt of the wagon with boxes of shells for a mattress and cases of Russian rifle cartridges for a pillow.

But the enemy was advancing continually, and we had again to get *en route*, join once more the endless columns marching from morning to night in the mud and rain. It was blowing half a gale which drove the rain in sheets before it in sudden squalls.

The whole Serbian Army, with the exception of the few divisions required to fight the rearguard actions necessary to delay the advance of the German and Bulgarian Armies, was now again in retreat. It was clear that a certain amount of indecision prevailed as to the future operations. The probability of the retreat ending in a disaster was becoming more obvious day by day. The embarrassments of the Government had reached such a point that the civil and military ad-

ministrations threatened to collapse beneath the strain. In fact, the civil administration had already done so. The whole of the population of northern and southern Serbia was now pouring into the former Sandjak of Novi Bazaar and the Albanian province lying between Pristina and Prisrend. Ninety per cent. of these people had no money and no food, and even if they had had money, unless it was in silver, it would have been no good to them, as the peasants and villagers refused to accept paper in any form.

As a consequence, the Government had to rescind its order that all the male population above fourteen years of age should retreat before the Germans. The problem of feeding these hundreds of thousands of fugitives had proved an unsolvable one, and they were now ordered to return to their homes. But it was one thing to give an order and another to carry it out. The tide of human misery which had been flowing to the Sandjak and towards Albania had now turned back, and was flowing northward. But as they had already swept the country clean of every kind of provisions on their southward march, they entered a desert when they started to re-traverse it on the homeward journey. Every minute or two I met groups of gaunt, hollow-eyed men and women, dragging themselves wearily back along the roads they had had so much difficulty in passing a few days before. One often came on a dead body or on some poor wretch who had lain down to die.

The valley from Kurshoumlia along the banks of the Kosanitza is one of savage grandeur, black basaltic

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mountains, their summits capped with snow, towering on either hand. I learned on the third day of the march that a flying Bulgarian column had climbed over these mountains and had attacked an Army Service Column which had bivouacked in the village in which I had slept the night before. Over forty men were massacred, many being tortured to death, and all the bullocks and horses driven off by the Albanian rebels who had guided the Bulgarians over the mountains. From a military point of view the raid was of little importance, as the raiders were unable even to carry off the contents of the wagons, but it was a proof that the feeling of the Albanian population towards their Serbian conquerors of four years ago was still tinged with hostility.

The very strictest measures had to be taken to prevent horses, forage and material of all kinds being stolen during the night. The sentry in our camp one night shot an Albanian horse thief dead, which certainly did not contribute to improve the relations with the man's native village. It was, in fact, a relief when we saw on the horizon the line of the old Turkish blockhouses which formerly guarded the Albanian frontier-line, as it was a sign that the passage through the mountain gorge was drawing to an end, and that we would soon debouch on the mountain plateau.

I travelled all day with four batteries of 15.5 centimetre guns, each drawn by fourteen powerful oxen, which were coming from Prokuplje, where they had been holding the Bulgarians at bay while the Second and Third Armies were traversing the Krushevatz-

Kurshoumlia pass. The officers told me they had no other orders than to retreat in the direction of Pristina, and were marching in that direction until they should receive fresh instructions. As we climbed toward the upper plateau, the cold was intense, a violent north-easterly gale driving a violent snow-storm before it. But in spite of all obstacles, the endless columns of infantry, cavalry, artillery and baggage train moved steadily southward, and we had the certainty that if the rate of progress was kept up, we would be in Pristina in three days' time.

About two in the afternoon we left the pass and entered the plateau. There was an instant improvement in the road, the rocky and muddy mountain route giving way to a fine, broad highway in excellent repair, over which one could have driven a motor-car at sixty miles an hour. Under these improved conditions I ordered the horses to be saddled, and my French confrère and myself pushed ahead to look for quarters for the night.

These we were fortunate enough to find in the gendarmerie headquarters, a large and roomy building with stabling for over fifty horses. In fact, it was more a fortress than a house. It had been constructed by the Turks fifty years ago as one of the centres for maintaining order among the wild Albanian tribesmen. A couple of score of Albanians were employed as stable hands, water-carriers, woodcutters, etc. It was significant of the relations between them and their Serbian conquerors that if one of them was

sent to the well a hundred yards away to draw a bucket of water, he was accompanied by a gendarme with a loaded rifle. If this was not done, I was informed, the Albanian would give "leg bail" the instant he turned the corner. All the gates were kept bolted and barred with a sentry outside to keep the men employed within the building from taking flight. As the Serbians, twelve months ago, disarmed the whole Albanian population, the latter was helpless as far as the use of physical force was concerned, but it can easily be imagined what a favourable territory it was for the activities of German and Bulgarian spies.

We arrived at Pristina on the afternoon of the 15th November. We found that with the flood of Serbian refugees, the Albanian element, generally predominant, had been somewhat submerged. During the last two days' march our bullock wagon was attached to the Provision Column of the Combined Division, one of the *corps d'élite* of the Serbian Army. The nineteen-year-old wife of the major in command rode with him at the head of the column; for twelve months past she had shared all the fatigues of the campaign. She told me she was married ten days before the declaration of war by Austria, and three days after the wedding her husband left her to join his regiment. Three months later he was brought back to Belgrade with a splinter of a six-inch shell in his chest and lay for weeks between life and death. As soon as he was able to ride a horse again he asked to be at least allowed to serve in the army transport. His wife had

accompanied him, and for the past year had shared the fortunes of the Serbian Army.\*

Pristina presented an extraordinary spectacle. On the ampitheatre of hills surrounding the town were camps and bivouacs extending as far as the eye could reach, while every road right up to the horizon was filled with endless columns, horse, foot, artillery and transport, all pouring toward the town. The narrow streets were filled to overflowing with Serbian soldiers of every arm, French aviators and engineer officers, British soldiers of the Marine Gun Battery, and French, Russian, Greek, British and Roumanian Red Cross doctors and nurses.

A curious optimism prevailed. Rumours of the most extraordinary nature were in circulation; the Bulgarians had been driven back from Prokoplje, Serbian patrols had re-entered Nish, Uskub had been recaptured, a Russian Army had entered Bulgaria and occupied Negotin, etc., etc. But there is no country in the world where one has to be more distrustful of rumour than Serbia. The fact that the whole Second and Third Armies were continuing their movements of retreat discounted considerably the reported successes at Prokoplje and Nish. The recapture of Uskub had been so often announced and as often denied, that I felt I would want better authority than rumours in the bazaar of Pristina.

On the contrary, everything went to show that the

\* The Major and his wife and the men of their convoy were massacred by the Albanians a few weeks later in the vicinity of Dibra.

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position was as critical as ever and growing more desperate every hour. No one seemed to know either where the Government or the Headquarters were. I inquired at half a dozen points, but could only get the vaguest kind of reply till by accident I met a colonel who was principal aide-de-camp to King Peter. He told me the King had arrived in Pristina two hours before, and that both the Government and Headquarters Staff were at Mitrovitza, forty kilometres distant. The situation, he informed me, was getting blacker every hour, and unless the Serbian Army could, by a last desperate effort, break the circle of bayonets that was slowly but surely closing in on it, its fate was sealed.

The money crisis was as acute as ever, and we were rapidly approaching famine prices. I had to pay 20 dinars for adding a thickness of leather to the soles of my boots. At any other time a couple of dinars would have been regarded as exorbitant. An attempt had been made to relieve the monetary situation by putting postage stamps in circulation, but after a day or two these in their turn ceased to have the public confidence. Maize bread was being sold in the streets at 5 dinars the two-pound loaf, instead of 25 centimes. The soldiers, however, continued to receive their usual rations. There was, I was told, food for the men and forage for the animals for ten days more; after that time famine would be staring us in the face. This, of course, only referred to the Army; the civil population had been face to face with starvation for a long time.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RETREAT OF THE FIRST ARMY FROM KRALJEVO TO PRISTINA

**A**T Pristina we were able to get some particulars of the retreat of the First Army under the Voivode Zhivoïn Mishitch, which had been marching through the mountains on a line parallel to that of the Second and Third Armies with which we had been. This route ran from Kraljevo via Rashka to Mitrovitza, whence the route lay across the plain of Kossovo to Pristina.

I have already, in an earlier chapter, described my visit to Kraljevo, where the Government and the Diplomatic Corps had taken refuge on the 18th October, when the advance of the Bulgarians had menaced Nish. A part of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, which had not been able to find lodgings in Kraljevo, was quartered at Tchatchak, a small town a few miles from Kraljevo. A few days later, the 26th October, the turning movement executed from the west by the Austro-German forces under General von Gallwitz threatened first Uzhitze and then Tchatchak, and caused orders to be given for the immediate evacuation of these towns. This was carried out between the 26th and 29th October. Simultaneously came the

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news that the Headquarters Staff had evacuated Kraguyevatz, and installed itself at Krushevatz. Two days later the Government and the Diplomatic Corps quitted Kraljevo to traverse the pass through the mountains to gain Rashka, on the frontier of what was formerly the Turkish Sandjak of Novi Bazaar.

With the Government the population of all the towns threatened by the Austro-German advance poured like a flood through the mountain pass. On all the routes converging toward the valley of the Ibar marched thousands of homeless, starving people. As they approached the mountains they found the towns and villages becoming smaller and smaller and less able to afford hospitality to the population in flight. Thousands were forced to camp in the open in the pouring rain, their miserable wagons, filled with such furniture and household goods as they had been able to save, parked in the mud, surrounded by the cattle, sheep and pigs they had been able to drive with them.

At first the army was in the rear of this fleeing mass, fighting a rearguard action with the advancing enemy and holding them in check. But soon they were menaced on their rear just as the Second and Third Armies had been, and forced to traverse the mountains in all haste so as to gain the Sandjak of Novi Bazaar before the enemy could close the other end of the pass.

As a consequence the retreating army soon swelled the ranks of the fleeing population. The troops found the roads encumbered with a mass of peasants, wagons, herds of cattle, droves of sheep and all the

impedimenta of a nation in flight. It was only at the price of tireless effort that the troops, the artillery and the baggage train forced their way along the crowded roads. The spectacle of this starving multitude was continually under the eyes of the retreating troops, and naturally did not tend to encourage them. Many of the regiments were themselves without bread, and wept tears of rage at their helplessness to succor or defend their starving compatriots.

A French surgeon who took part in this terrible march gave me the following account of their journey :

“Our group,” he said, “consisted of Drs. Collet and Gandart (two surgeons with the rank of Colonel), nine surgeon-majors, six assistant surgeons and seven nurses. We managed, after a long search, to find five ox-wagons to transport the more indispensable part of our ambulance outfit and our baggage. We left Kraljevo on November 3rd. All we had in the way of provisions were a few pounds of biscuits. We had not a single cooking utensil.

“We marched on foot, forcing our way with difficulty through the mass of people and vehicles which blocked the route. By sundown we had not discovered any signs of a village, and determined to camp for the night in a majestic amphitheatre of desolate, snow-capped mountains. On the opposite side of the Ibar, on one of the loftiest summits of the range, we could see the ruins of an immense castle. These were the ruins of the castle of Maglitch, the ‘Castle of the Mists,’ dating from the time of Stephen Nemanja, who reigned in Serbia in the Middle Ages.

“Here we installed ourselves as best we could. We cut some maize in a neighbouring field to make ourselves a bed. Luckily we had met *en route* a peasant driving some sheep, who had sold us one. This we roasted whole on a spit made from the branch of a tree. When it was cooked we cut it up, by the light of a guttering candle, with our pocket-knives, and managed thus to stay our hunger.

“After this meal we lay down on our bed of maize straw, pressing one against the other for warmth, for the cold was severe. At first the night was fine and starlit, but after midnight a wind sprang up, bringing with it the rain, which fell in a deluge.

“At six o’clock, soaked to the skin and frozen to the marrow, we resumed our weary march. We marched all day without anything to eat, and when at last, completely exhausted, we stopped for the night, we had not even maize straw to make a bed and were forced to sleep on the bare ground on the side of the mountain. Some Austrian prisoners who arrived at our halting-place had managed to find some wood and had built some fires. We gathered round these and boiled some tea, which we drank without sugar. We passed the night without sleeping beside the fires, and at dawn resumed our weary march. It was evening before we reached Rashka, where we arrived famished, exhausted, and half dead with cold.”

Rashka in its turn became for a week the new capital of Serbia. Here the Government, the Diplomatic Corps and the Headquarters Staff took up their quarters. A French confrère, M. Henry Barby, who

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took part in the retreat of the First Army, met M. Pashitch, the Serbian Prime Minister, on the bridge over the Ibar, regarding that landscape with a melancholy gaze. "It is here that Serbia had its birth," he remarked, "God grant that Rashka may not be its tomb."

But it was impossible for the Government and the First Army to remain longer at Rashka. They could only stop there as long as the Second and Third Armies were between them and the Bulgarians, and were in a position to prevent the army of Field-Marshal von Mackensen from debouching from the Krushevatz-Kurshoumlia pass at the latter village. When these armies continued their retreat towards Pristina, the First Army, in order to maintain the *liaison* with them, had to resume its march and fall back towards Mitrovitza.

Once there the Government would again find itself in contact with a railway, the line which runs from Mitrovitza to Uskub *via* Voutchitrn and Pristina. As Uskub had been for a long time past in the hands of the Bulgarians, it could only be utilized as far as Lipljan, a station thirty kilometres beyond Pristina, whence the road runs to Prisrend on the frontier of Albania.

## CHAPTER IX

### AT MITROVITZA

**A**S it was difficult to get any clear idea of the situation without finding out definitely the position of the First Army and the intentions of the Government and Headquarters Staff, I determined to take the train to Mitrovitza, forty kilometres distant, where the latter was established. It was also rumoured that that nomadic banking establishment, the Banque Franco-Serbe, was moving with the Government, and as my money was beginning to run low I was anxious to get a cheque on Paris cashed by it.

The railway to Mitrovitza runs across the historic plain of Kossovo, where five centuries ago Serbia, after a last desperate battle, fell under the domination of the Turks. The tomb of the Turkish Sultan Murad I., who was slain by a wounded Serbian soldier in the very moment of his victory, is one of the striking features of the landscape. The battle of Kossovo, though it ended in the defeat of the Tsar Lazar's Serbian Army, is one of the most glorious feats of arms in the annals of Serbia, and its memory five centuries later spurred on the army of King Peter to fresh acts of heroism.

One of the curious features of railway building

in the Balkans is that the railway stations are always at considerable distance from the towns they serve. In Pristina the distance is no less than ten kilometres or two hours' good walking. The major in command of our transport column kindly lent my French colleague and myself a two-horse carriage to convey us to the station, and about midday we were *en route* across the historic plain of Kossovo for Mitrovitza. During the whole forty kilometres we had ample evidence that the retreat on Pristina continued. The roads were filled with endless lines of transport convoys, while in every station train after train was being loaded and sent off.

In the train I met a Russian confrère, the correspondent of the *Novoc Vremia*. He had been with the troops opposing the Bulgarian advance from Nish and Prokuplje, and had fallen back with them to Pristina. He was desirous of crossing by Ipek and Andreyevitza, to send off his dispatches from the powerful French wireless station at Podgoritza, in Montenegro, now our only means of communication with the outer world.

At Mitrovitza a disappointment awaited us. The Government and Headquarters had left by special train for Prisrend an hour before. Not only this, but orders had been given to evacuate the town and the last train, we were told, would leave at one o'clock the following day. There was nothing for it but to wait for this train, so we tramped off to the town situated, as usual, a mile or two from the station. We found the inhabitants of Mitrovitza in a

state of panic. All the Turkish shops and cafés were closed and barricaded.

There is no doubt the sympathies of the Mohammedan portion of the population were with the German invaders, but as there were large bodies of Serbian troops in the town and still more outside opposing the German advance, the terrified inhabitants saw the possibility, not to say the probability, of a German bombardment. Thousands were, therefore, preparing to evacuate the city. I saw that the prospects of the one o'clock train next day being taken by assault by a crowd of terror-stricken fugitives were very great, so that when my Russian colleague arrived with the news that there would be a special train sent off at six o'clock in the morning, we determined to travel by it if possible. But meantime the problem was to find food and lodging. No one would accept a centime in paper money. Fortunately we possessed a small but sufficient store of silver pieces, and were able to procure a very unsatisfactory meal and a still more unsatisfactory bed above a Turkish café.

As the town was plunged in Egyptian darkness and there was no amusement in stumbling along narrow, deserted Turkish lanes and alleys, there was nothing for it but to go to bed at eight o'clock. About midnight I was awakened by sounds of life and movement in the street below. There were sounds of rolling vehicles and trampling of feet. I thought at first it was the population in flight, but the sound was too regular for that. I got up and went to the window. It was the First Serbian Army in full retreat.



By the light of the guttering candle swinging above the door of our café, I could see company after company, squadron after squadron, and battery after battery pouring past. Hour after hour the steady "tramp, tramp" of thousands of feet echoed in the narrow streets. It was four o'clock in the morning when the last battery rumbled through, the roll of the wheels drowning the soft patter of the hoofs of the oxen drawing the guns.

And then it began to rain, and such rain! Talk of the "windows of heaven being opened," the whole side of the house was out. It came down in sheets, it came down in buckets, it rained ramrods. The gutters in the centre of the streets became rushing torrents, while Niagaras poured from all the overhanging eaves. And in the midst of this deluge we had to set out for the station three miles away. The road, which yesterday had been muddy, was today a "slough of despond." In the Egyptian darkness there was no means of avoiding pools and puddles. The chilly rain, driven by half a gale, blinded one, and every now and then we would splash right up to the knees in pools of muddy water.

At last we reached the station soaked to the skin, only to learn that the supposed special train was a myth and that there would be no means of transport back to Pristina till one o'clock in the afternoon. The idea of splashing our way back to our cheerless room in the café in the rain and darkness was beyond my courage. I declared that I would first try to dry myself at the immense fire burning in the station-master's

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office, and wait for daylight. Every moment the gale increased in fierceness, while the cold became more intense. The rain had long since turned to snow. I thought of the plight of the twenty thousand men of the First Army whom I had seen tramping through the town, and who were now out in the desolation of the plain of Kossovo, on their forty kilometres' march to Pristina.

Just at this moment a locomotive backed into the station and stood throbbing and humming opposite the station-master's office. "Where is it bound for?" I asked him. "Pristina." "Can't we travel by it?" He looked at our blue, white and red *brassards* (which meant that we were attached to the Headquarters) hesitatingly, but finally said, "No, it's quite impossible." He must, however, have consulted someone in authority, for two minutes later he came running in to announce, "If you can be ready in half a minute, you can take the engine." It did not take us more than ten seconds to climb aboard, and a minute later we shot out into the blizzard. Unfortunately we were running tender first, so that we had no protection against the weather. But we were too glad to get away from Mitrovitza to worry about such trifles. Every now and then we dashed through flooded parts of the line with the water up to the footplate. When the line ran alongside the road we could see that it was strewn with the dead bodies of horses and oxen which had succumbed to cold and fatigue.

When we got to Pristina station we found it a scene of wintry desolation. It was thronged with thousands

of troops, waiting to entrain, who sought shelter from the snow, which was now being driven by a regular hurricane, behind sheds, out-houses and station buildings. In the station-master's office I met an English officer in the Serbian Service, Captain Piagge, who was waiting to entrain with his machine-gun section. He gave us the latest news and, what was still better, some excellent French brandy from his pocket flask. But if the brandy was good, it was more than could be said of the news, which was as bad as could be. The Serbian Army was menaced from all sides. Only one line of retreat remained open to it in the direction of Prisrend. The Headquarters Staff had, therefore, decided to abandon the tactics of retreat which had been imposed on them by the Allies, to take the offensive and to risk one last desperate battle to retrieve the situation.

Since the Austro-German attack on the Danube, the instructions of the Allies to the Serbian Staff had been to avoid risking everything on a pitched battle and to retreat slowly, delaying the advance of the enemy as much as possible, until the Allies should be in a position to come to their assistance. This the Serbians had done for nearly six weeks, with the result that they were now almost forced back against the mountains of Albania, and the Allies seemed as far as ever from being able to help them.

The Serbian General Staff had therefore decided the only chance left was to hurl the whole Serbian Army on the Bulgarians' positions in the south, burst their way over the Katchanik mountain range and

recapture Uskub. Once there, they could give their hand to the French force and form a new front facing east, with Salonica as their *point d'appui* on their extreme right. It was a last and desperate throw of the dice, a forlorn hope to be undertaken with an army almost in a state of exhaustion. But there was a fighting chance of success, and the retreat on Priserend meant nothing but disaster.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SERBIAN OFFENSIVE

AS the blizzard still continued, my French confrère and I stopped as long as we could in the railway station of Pristina, watching all day the entraining of the Serbian Army, now *en route* for its offensive in the Katchanik mountains against the Bulgarians. Regiment after regiment and battery after battery lined up under the pitiless blast of the tempest and in the driving snow to await their turn to entrain. The men were chilled to the very bone and had before them a long railway journey in open trucks, exposed to the fierce gale. On arriving at their destination, they would have to begin their weary march in the snow-covered mountains, advancing against an enemy strongly entrenched. Their task seemed one above human powers, but it was the one last desperate chance in the terrible game of war.

No other choice was left to them. The Austro-German force, under General von Gallwitz, advancing from the north-west was only fifteen short miles away. Field-Marshal von Mackensen, on the north, was slowly but surely drawing nearer to Pristina, while a Bulgarian Army was pouring from the southwest. As the whole of the southern frontier from Strumnitza

to Monastir was now in the possession of the Bulgarians, the circle of steel round the doomed Serbian Army was almost complete. Only one single line of retreat still remained open to it, the route to Prisrend. But that route offered no salvation. The enemy's line would close in as inexorably on Prisrend as it was doing on Pristina, and at Prisrend no further retreat would be possible, the limits of Serbian territory would be reached. Beyond Prisrend lay the desolate mountain ranges of Albania.

The fate of King Peter's gallant army therefore depended on the last throw of the dice, a desperate offensive to break the encircling Bulgarian line in the direction of Uskub. If the attempt should be a success and should be supported by a simultaneous attack by the Allies from Salonica, there was just a fighting chance that the Serbs might be able to join hands with the French and British troops. If this was done, it would at least offer a safe line of retreat into Greek territory.

The officers with whom I talked in the railway station had few illusions as to the possible success of this desperate effort. Their troops were exhausted and discouraged by their three-hundred-mile march from the Danube. Desertions had been numerous and provisions and fodder were running low. The effort seemed beyond the strength of the much-tried army. But, as I have said, it was the last hope, and as such it was accepted. Officers and men braced themselves for this final effort.

But when three o'clock arrived, we could no longer

delay our departure for Pristina. We had a two hours' tramp before us to reach the town, and by five o'clock night would be beginning to fall. In Serbia there is little or no twilight, darkness follows a few minutes after the setting of the sun. As we had to find our wagon among a mass of ten thousand parked on the mountains round the town, we did not want to reach Pristina after nightfall.

When we emerged from the station a wonderful sight met our eyes. As far as the eye could reach, the snow-covered plain of Kossovo extended on every side. Every feature of the landscape was blotted out by a shroud of snow, feet deep. Over this, long lines of snow-clad figures could be seen moving, the columns extending for miles. These were Serbian regiments starting on their weary march to the mountain range over which they must force their way to attempt to join hands with the French. They had a peculiarly ghostly appearance due to the fact that every man tried to protect himself from the driving snow by wrapping himself in the section of tent canvas he carried.

By this time the wind had fallen, and the curious silence which accompanies heavy snow reigned everywhere. In every direction were the ghostly columns plodding in single file over fields and along roads. On all sides were dead horses and oxen, singly and in heaps, half buried in snow, with swarms of carrion crows whirling and croaking overhead. It was a realization of the retreat from Moscow such as I never expected to see. The gaunt, half-starved faces of the passing soldiers did nothing to destroy the illusion.

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When, after a two hours' tramp, we reached Pristina a fresh surprise awaited us. All the hills around the town, which twenty-four hours before had been covered with tens of thousands of transport wagons, were absolutely deserted. The red rays of the setting sun lit up nothing but rolling miles of virgin snow, not a wagon or an ox was to be seen. On climbing to the summit of the hill where we had left the transport of the Combined Division, with which was our baggage wagon, we found nothing left but the four field guns which had been placed in battery there to defend the convoys against aircraft. All the men of the battery could tell us was that the whole transport had inspanned and left two hours after our departure for Mitrovitza, the previous day. One of the men thought we would find it in camp near the station, but he was not sure.

The situation was not a cheerful one. There we were at nightfall on a snow-covered, desolate mountain, while the wagon (which contained our food and baggage and formed our sleeping quarters) and our two horses had completely disappeared. All we possessed in the world was the clothes we stood up in, and this in a town where accommodation was not to be had and food non-existent. Then I remembered that two days before I had found lodgings for three French Red Cross nurses who were leaving for Prisrend. If they had left their rooms might be vacant. They took some finding in the darkness, but we finally located them. We found them occupied by a Russian military doctor and his staff. He had stabled the



wagons and pack-horses of his ambulance in the courtyard, while he and his six aides had commandeered the rooms. But in war time where there's room for six there's room for eight, and he gave up a corner of the floor as our sleeping accommodation.

He informed us the Headquarters Staff of the Second Army had arrived in Pristina. This solved the question of food till we should find our wagon, if we ever should do so. While we were dining at the mess that evening we received confirmation of the Serbian offensive in the direction of Uskub. It was clear that it was looked upon as a forlorn hope, a fighting chance that might enable the Serbians to retrieve an apparently hopeless situation. At the same time no one had any illusions as to the desperate nature of the task, in view of the terrible privations and fatigues through which the troops had just passed. But the courage and self-sacrifice of the Serbian soldier seem to have no limits, and it was felt that what was humanly possible would be done.

The whole of the next day we devoted to a fruitless hunt for our missing wagon. The only clue to its possible whereabouts was that the Transport Column of the Combined Division was encamped at Lipljan, a village about thirty kilometres distant. On the departure of the Russian doctor and his ambulance from the house where we had been stopping we had offered hospitality to a section of the Scottish Women's Medical Unit, which was *en route* for Pristina. As the sections had to pass through Lipljan, Miss Chesney, the doctor in charge, offered us seats in their

automobile. On arriving at Lipljan, we discovered that the Transport Column had already left. All we could find out was that it was marching in the direction of Prisrend. We therefore arranged to continue our journey with the Scottish ambulance.

All day long at Lipljan we could hear the battle raging. The mountain range to our left was the scene of the fighting. During the whole afternoon I watched, with my field-glass, the Bulgarian shrapnel bursting along the crest. At one moment a couple of companies of Bulgarian infantry even managed to slip between the Serbian lines and pushed forward till they were able to open fire on the railway station about 300 yards from where our ambulance was encamped. They were unaware that a Serbian cavalry regiment was in bivouac behind a number of haystacks about a mile away. This regiment hastily saddled and went off at a fast trot. A few minutes later they were at the railway station. The men drew carbines and dismounted, and in twenty minutes the Bulgarians were driven off. The usual endless line of army transport was pouring through Lipljan from Pristina. The conductors kept looking anxiously at the line of bursting shrapnel along the crests of the mountain six miles away; they evidently realized that if the Bulgarians should win the heights it would be all up with the transport on the Pristina and Prisrend road.

When I went to sleep that night in Lipljan I could still hear the sound of the guns. Next morning we discovered the Scottish ambulance was gone. About two o'clock in the morning there had been a tre-

mendous outburst of heavy gun-fire in the mountains. It seemed so near that the nurses had got alarmed, struck camp, loaded their wagons and automobiles and gone off. So my French confrère and I were finally reduced to tramping our way to Prisrend. Fortunately the weather was fine and the roads passable, and we covered our 35 kilometres a day without difficulty. In the evening we managed to find a blockhouse with a gendarmerie officer in command who requisitioned us a room in the house of an Albanian peasant named Sali Aga. Once the details of price arranged (all, I may mention, in the favour of Sali Aga) he received us with patriarchal dignity, treating us as honoured guests. He killed and prepared a well-fed fowl and produced quantities of Albanian cheese and butter. Of course the only sleeping accommodation was straw alongside the fire, but as at one moment it had looked as if we would have to sleep by the roadside in the open air, we were thankful for even that.

The next day, about thirty kilometres from Prisrend I at last discovered the Commissariat Column of the Combined Division we had been looking for for five days past, in the hope of discovering our lost baggage wagon. The Major in command told me that when his column received orders to leave Pristina our man Stanco had left with our wagon for the railway station to await our return from Mitrovitza. Since then he had not seen him. This was not cheerful, but the news he gave me from the front was less cheerful still.

At first the Serbian attack on the Bulgarian front in the Katchanik Mountains had been successful; the

Serbians had advanced to Giljane. King Peter's troops fought with desperate courage, driving the Bulgarians from one mountain summit after the other. But as soon as the Bulgarians realized the serious nature of the Serbian offensive they brought up reinforcements from all sides. With the Germans advancing in their rear the Serbians could not fight a long-drawn-out battle. It was for them a matter of life or death to break through the Bulgarian lines. If they failed to do so the two German Armies together with the Bulgarian forces coming from Nish, would take them in the rear. This would mean the complete encirclement of the Serbian Army and its unconditional surrender.

In addition to the military problem there was also that of food supplies. The territory still in the hands of the Serbian Army now amounted to only a few hundred square kilometres. It was out of the question that this could furnish supplies for an army, even for a few days. In the transport wagons of the Combined Divisions there were, the Major told me, supplies for barely two weeks. After these were consumed it would be impossible to renew them. Other divisions were even in worse case. The same held good of munitions. Each division had what they carried with them and what was contained in the wagons of the Reserve Columns. Ten days would see the last cartridge fired. The question of forage for the horses and transport oxen was even more acute. The whole country had been swept clean of corn, oats, hay and maize, and in less than a week's time there would be a hundred thousand animals starving.

The advance on Uskub had been an effort beyond the strength of the exhausted Serbian Army, and from all reports it had fought to a standstill, which, under the circumstances, was equivalent to defeat. The cause of Serbia was lost. The valiant little nation which had fought a victorious war with Turkey, had repulsed the treacherous attack of Bulgaria, had conducted a successful campaign in Albania, and administered to Austria one of the most crushing defeats in her history, had at last been beaten to her knees by an irresistible coalition of her enemies. After four years of ceaseless war, in which the flower of her manhood had died on the battlefield, Serbia with her 200,000 bayonets, the last levies of a heroic people, was face to face with 700,000 enemies with practically unlimited resources of war material. Her Allies were powerless to aid her, so that her King and Government were now forced to take the supreme resolution in this hour of stress.

On entering Prisrend I found it a cosmopolitan city. Hundreds of French aviators, automobilists, engineers and Red Cross Units, Russian, British, Greek and Roumanian doctors and nurses, and English sailors of the naval gun batteries were everywhere *en évidence*. The blue and crimson uniforms of the Royal Guard showed that King Peter was in Prisrend. As the members of the Government, the Crown Prince Commander-in-Chief and the Headquarters Staff had also arrived, all that was left of the elements of Government in Serbia was assembled within the walls of the ancient Albanian city.

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The one question on everybody's lips was "would it be an unconditional surrender?" in which case we would all find ourselves German prisoners forty-eight hours later, or would the King, the Government and the army leave Serbian territory and take refuge in Albania? The final councils did not last long. On November 24th the supreme resolution was taken, the King, army and Government would refuse to treat with the enemy and would leave for Albania.

To this resolution several factors contributed. One of the chief was Serbia's loyalty to her Allies. She had undertaken not to sign a separate peace and she held her word to the last. She might be defeated, she was not conquered. Another factor was the dynastic one. It was certain that one of the first conditions of peace which Germany, and especially Austria, would have exacted would have been the abdication of King Peter. It was equally certain that M. Pashitch and the other members of the Government would have been arrested and probably exiled for life from Serbia. There was therefore nothing to be gained by surrender and as long as King Peter, his Government and his army escaped the clutches of their enemies, Serbia was unconquered. The treasury had long been placed in safety abroad, so that there was no want of funds to meet the expenses of the Government and army in exile.

Of course no one had any illusions as to the difficulties of the task the Government had undertaken. It meant that the army must abandon its artillery (excepting mountain guns), its transport wagons, its

motor-cars, its pontoon trains, its artillery ammunition, in a word everything that could not be carried on the back of pack animals would have to be left behind. It was further impossible to transport the army with any system or order; for that there was no time. Each unit, company, battalion or regiment, squadron or battery was given its place of rendezvous in Albania and told to get there as best it could. There were three routes, one to Scutaria, through Montenegro, *via* Ipek and Andreyevitza; another *via* Lioum-Koula, Dibra and El-Bassan to Durazzo; and a third, that taken by the King, the Government and the Headquarters Staff, *via* Lioum-Koula, Spas and Puka to Scutaria.

The roads (except the Dibra-El Bassan route) are mere sheep tracks over the mountains. Vehicular traffic in any shape or form is absolutely unknown. Every ounce of food would have to be carried on pack animals, or in the men's knapsacks. The same held good for forage. And this last effort was demanded from an army which had already reached the limit of human endurance, which was in a state of physical exhaustion, and in many instances without food and without munitions. It was under such conditions that 150,000 men, all that was left of the 300,000 of three months before, began their march across the endless ranges of snow-capped mountains.

Personally I received good news in Prisrend. Our long-lost wagon had been found. Our man Stauco, wisely abandoning the attempt to find us among the 100,000 fugitives crowding Pristina, had set out for

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Prisrend, which he had reached after five day's march. The horses, however, were gone. As he was travelling alone he had no one to mount guard at night, and as every Albanian is a born horse thief, their fate was sealed. On reaching Prisrend he had reported his arrival at the Headquarters Staff, leaving word where he was to be found. The loss of the horses was of no great importance. They could never have faced the crossing of the mountains with a hundred kilos of baggage on their backs. For that work one requires sure-footed, sturdy mountain ponies.

When I reached Headquarters the first thing I noticed was a score of soldiers burning the archives, staff maps, etc., a clear proof that the journey to Scutaria was resolved on. During lunch I learned the latest preparations that had been made. M. Pashitch and the members of the Government were leaving for Scutaria with a military escort the following day. The next day the King and the Royal Household with the Royal Guard would start, and on the third day Field-Marshal Putnik and the Headquarters Staff would leave for Scutaria. As I and my French colleague of the *Petit Parisien* were attached to the Headquarters, Colonel Mitrovitch told me he had reserved a pack-horse for our baggage. All that was left of bread and biscuits would also be distributed the night before the march started.

It was a curious sensation to look round the large mess room, with its hundreds of brilliant uniforms worn by the men who had fought five victorious campaigns, and to think that in forty-eight hours' time



they would be in exile, camping among the snows of the Albanian mountains, with the splendid armies they had commanded shrunk to 150,000 men, deprived of everything that goes to make an army in the field. Grief and bitterness were written on many a face, many would have preferred to be in the fighting-line and to have died at the head of their men, rather than have seen this tragic hour.

One thing is certain, no reproach could be cast upon the Serbian Army; it had done its duty, and more than its duty. It had fought with desperate courage against overwhelming odds, and if the armed strength of Serbia was crushed, her honour at least was intact.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LAST DAYS IN SERBIA

WHEN I arrived at the Headquarters mess on Thursday, November 23rd, the day of my arrival in Prisrend, I received some details of the latest movements of the enemy. The Serbian Headquarters Staff had arrived at Prisrend on November 17th. Two days later it received news that the Austro-German Army under General von Gallwitz had occupied Rashka and Novi Bazaar.

On November 22nd this force entered Mitrovitza, and pushing forward, on November 25th rejoined the army of Field-Marshal von Mackensen at Pristina. The whole of the Austro-German forces on the Balkans were therefore massed in that town. The same day the Bulgarians, occupying Lipljan with two divisions, joined hands with their Austro-German Allies. Advancing toward Prisrend, the whole Austro-Germano-Bulgarian Army spread out its forces in a semicircle, surrounding all that was left of the Serbian Army and bringing it with its back to the frontier of Albania.

On the day of my arrival I paid a visit to the citadel, perched on the hill on the slopes of which Prisrend is built. Here are the last traces of the

stronghold erected by the Emperor Stephen Doushan, the Serbian Charlemagne. At my feet flowed the Bistritza, rushing in a torrent down through the town. To the east, at the extremity of a gorge, between towering mountains, I could see the snow-covered peaks of the Shar range, which formed a lofty barrier between us and the Bulgarians at Tetovo. To the left appeared the city of Prisrend, a vast agglomeration of Turkish and Albanian houses from which emerged the graceful minarets of its fifty mosques. Among these one could distinguish the belfry of the single Greek Orthodox Church. In an obscure corner was hidden a small Catholic chapel, the priest of which is subventioned by the Austrian Government.

In the afternoon arrived the news that the route from Dibra to Monastir had been cut, as the Bulgarians were at Prilep and advancing on Monastir. This extinguished the last hope of some part of the Serbian Army reaching that town to take train through Greece to Salonica. It was the *débâcle* all along the line.

After dinner in the evening a Major of the "Section des opérations" of the Headquarters Staff gave me a technical *résumé* of the operations on the various fronts for the past month.

"On the 28th of October," he said, "the Serbian Army had a small force in the south on the line Tetovo-Gostivar-Kitchevo and a detachment on the Babuna mountain. There was also a body of troops on the line Ferizovitch-Giljane.

"In Old Serbia the forces were grouped as follows:

There was an army corps on the left bank of the Western Morava on the front Gorny-Milanovatz-Kritsch. There was another army corps on the right bank of the Great Morava in the neighbourhood of Chupria and Parachin. A third army corps occupied the environs of Plotch near Nish.

“The principal idea of the Headquarters Staff at this time was to concentrate all the available troops in the country between the Western Morava and the Southern Morava, and to reinforce the troops of the front Giljane-Ferizovitch, and there await the arrival of the French troops.

“On November 2nd the troops on the left bank of the Western Morava had to give way before the superior force of the Germans, and retire to the right bank. The troops which were in the environs of Chupria and Parachin were in consequence forced to fall back toward the mountain of Jastrebatz, while the troops in the environs of Nish had to abandon their position and fall back on Lescovatz. The position of this force towards November 7th became very critical, as one of its divisions had suffered a severe check in the neighbourhood of Lescovatz. The line of retreat of this army corps, Lipljan-Medvedje, was threatened. This was the principal reason for hastening the retreat of all the army corps, while the troops which held on the right bank of the Western Morava were forced to retire towards Rashka.

“The troops which had retired to the neighbourhood of Mount Jastrebatz were ordered to retire toward Kurshoumlia, Prepolatz and Pristina. Their instruc-

tions were to fall back slowly, defending every possible position as long as possible. Other smaller detachments fell back on Jankova Klissura.

“Meanwhile the army corps which had received a check near Lescovatz had somewhat improved its position. It had been reinforced and made a successful attack on the Bulgarians which allowed it to utilize the line of retreat *via* Lipljan-Medvedje, which at one time was seriously menaced. It was therefore in a position to fall back towards Pristina.

“It was in consequence possible to save the Serbian armies, and this in spite of the fact that the retreat had to be carried out through a country possessing few roads. What rendered the position extremely difficult was the fact that the pressure from the German armies in the north was combined with a Bulgarian offensive coming from the south, and was deployed on a line running from Vranje to Lescovatz.

“The Serbian Army at Rashka then received orders to occupy the line Rashka-Novi Bazaar to bar the route to Mitrovitza. All the remaining Serbian armies were moved to the Plain of Kossovo, and in a position to reinforce the troops in Macedonia and undertake a general offensive. The troops in Macedonia received orders if possible to recapture Giljane and prevent the Bulgarians debouching from the Katchanik.

“In the battle near the Katchanik the Serbs succeeded in recapturing the very important position of Jegovatz; but the task before them was beyond the strength of troops exhausted by weeks of fatigue and hardships. The forcing of the strongly-entrenched Bulgarian lines

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by an army whose rear was threatened by the two German and the Bulgarian Armies was beyond its strength, and it had to fall back on Prisrend."

From November 24th to 26th we were occupied in making preparation for our departure. The Headquarters Staff, headed by Field-Marshal Putnik, numbered, with its escort, over 300 persons, with more than 400 riding and baggage horses. The aged Voivode was, as I have already said, a martyr to asthma and unable to mount on horseback or face the bitter cold of the Albanian mountains. It is, however, utterly impossible to traverse the mountain roads in a wheeled vehicle of any sort. In consequence, it was resolved to construct a sort of sedan chair in which the veteran leader could be carried across the mountains on the shoulders of Serbian soldiers.

The French in Prisrend, consisting of the Aviation and other units, numbering altogether nearly 250 officers and men, resolved to cross the mountains by the same route as the Headquarters Staff, starting the day before it, immediately behind the King and the Royal Household. This detachment was under the command of Colonel Fournier, the French military attaché, having as his lieutenant Major Vitrat, the head of the French Aviation Section. This section had rendered immense services to the Serbian Army throughout the whole retreat. Major Vitrat is an officer who would do credit to any army. I have rarely met a man of more decision of character, and certainly none of greater courage. His example inspired the Aviation

Corps from its pilots to the last of its transport chauffeurs.

The French detachment was composed of three sailors from the naval gun battery of Belgrade, 94 automobile mechanics, 125 officers and men of the Aviation Section, and 5 wireless operators. The *personnel* was utilized according to its aptitude. A commission for the purchase of the necessary pack animals was formed of two observing officers of the Aviation Section, one a captain of hussars and the other a captain of artillery. The officers brought together what money they still possessed for the purchase of the provisions necessary for the journey, a matter of 18,000 francs.

This proved the most difficult part of the organization, as food and fodder were becoming rare. A certain amount of corn for the 70 pack horses of the expedition was found at a price of one franc the "oka" (the Turkish "oka" is about three English pounds), and ten sheep which accompanied the column and were killed and eaten as occasion required.

The next difficulty was the question of transport of half a dozen sick men in the detachment. Horses for their transport could not be found, and it was out of the question that they could be carried on stretchers by their comrades. Colonel Fournier solved the difficulty by ordering their transport by aeroplane. The Section still possessed six machines capable of flying, in spite of the fact that for two and a half months they had been exposed night and day without shelter to wind, rain and snow. On Thursday, November 25th, the six aeroplanes started off across the mountains on their

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flight to Scutari. This was the first time in military annals that the aeroplane had been pressed into the ambulance service. But the innovation was a most successful one, the aeroplanes arriving in Scutari in less than half the number of hours that it took the rest of the detachment days in its march across the snow-clad hills.

It was, indeed, with a certain envy that we watched the start of these ambulance-aeroplanes when we remembered the difficult task that lay before us before we could rejoin them in Scutari. Du Bochet and I arranged to travel with the French column, and handed to Major Vitrat the list of provisions which we could contribute to the common stock. The first *étape*, that from Prisrend to Lioum-Koula, is along a fairly good road. It was resolved to send on the pack animals the day before and to cover the thirty kilometres to Lioum-Koula, which is the last village on Serbian territory, in the automobiles of the Aviation Corps. As the road from this point onward is a mere sheep track across the mountains, utterly impracticable for wheeled vehicles, the automobiles would there be destroyed in order to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE MARCH ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS OF ALBANIA

IT was seven in the morning of Friday, November 26th, when we started on our march across the mountains of Scutari. Despite the depressing circumstances, the aviation detachment was in high spirits at the prospect of returning to France after a year of hardship in Serbian campaigning. At Lioum-Koula we were to destroy the automobiles, preliminary to starting on our 120 mile tramp. We had, however, to begin the ceremony prematurely, as six miles from the start one of the motors gave out. As there was neither time nor inclination to repair it, the vehicle, a ten-ton motor lorry, was run by hand into a field alongside the road, flooded with petrol and set on fire. An instant later it was blazing merrily while the irrepressible younger spirits of the detachment executed a war dance around it, solemnly chanting Chopin's "Funeral March."

But it was at Lioum-Koula that we had the grand *feu d'artifice*. Near a bridge across the Drin the right bank of the river drops precipitously nearly 150 feet. One after another the huge motors were drenched with petrol and set on fire. The chauffeurs steered straight for the precipice, jumping clear as the cars shot over.

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The immense lorries rolled, crashing to the bottom, where they formed a blazing pile.

Twelve hours later I saw a crowd of 500 wretched Austrian prisoners gathered around the ruins. They had crawled down to warm themselves, and to roast chunks of meat cut from dead horses, at a blaze that had cost the French Republic a quarter of a million francs. The rest of the landscape was blotted out by the whirling blizzard through which the fiery tongues of flame were darting. Every now and then the explosion of a benzine tank would scatter the Austrians, but the temptation of warmth proved too much for them, and they soon returned.

Five minutes after the last car was over the precipice, Major Vitrat formed up his men, told off his advance and rearguards, gave the word "*en avant, marche,*" and the column swung off through the driving snow on the first *étape* of its long march. We had intended accompanying it to Scutari, but found that the bullock wagon with our baggage and our pack horse, which had left Prisrend the previous day, had failed to arrive. It did not put in its appearance until five o'clock in the evening, and as a violent snowstorm was then raging, I did not care to tackle the mountain ascent in the dark to try to find the French bivouac. There was, therefore, nothing for us to do but to join the Headquarters Staff.

The event of the day was the arrival of the Voivode Putnik. The veteran Field-Marshal had been a martyr to asthma for years past. He practically had not left his room for two years. This was always kept at a

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temperature of 86 degrees Fahrenheit. A seven days' mountain journey in a sedan-chair, carried by four soldiers, must have been a terrible experience for him. But the capture of their beloved Voivode by the Germans would have been regarded by the Serbians as a national disaster.

The next day it was still snowing, and the start for Scutari was delayed another twenty-four hours. As two years before, during the Albanian campaign, the Serbians had demolished all the houses in Lioum-Koula except four, accommodation was limited. I found lodgings in a huge ammunition tent. The gendarme in charge objected to my smoking cigarettes, which he said was strictly forbidden by the regulations, but he said nothing about the score of guttering candles burning on cartridge-boxes, or the spirit-lamp on a box labelled "shells," over which the wife of the colonel was preparing tea. When I drew his attention to this he declared the regulations were silent on the subject of candles and spirit-lamps, but distinctly mentioned cigarettes.

All day and night the troops bound for El-Bassan poured through Lioum-Koula. As we had nothing to do, I went out for a walk about five miles along the road. Every five hundred yards or so I came on dead bodies of men who had succumbed to cold or exhaustion. Coming back I encountered Captain Piagge, the English officer in Serbian service whom I had met at the Pristina railway station, when he was leaving to take part in the last desperate effort to advance on Uskub. When I had last seen him his machine gun

section numbered about eighty-four men. At Lioum-Koula it had dwindled to twenty-six. He had all his guns intact, however, and delivered them, as I afterwards heard, safely at El-Bassan. The sufferings of the Serbians in the Katchanik Mountains had, he told me, been terrible. His section, after passing the whole day in the blizzard at Pristina station, had, at midnight, with the temperature far below zero, been embarked on open trucks for its six hours' journey to the fighting-line. The men had nothing to eat except some maize bread and a few raw cabbages. As soon as they left the train they had started on their march into the mountains. At first they were successful, driving the Bulgarians from one mountain ridge after another. But fatigue and privations soon told their tale, and in forty-eight hours his men had fought themselves to a standstill and nothing was left but retreat on Prisrend.

Probably not since the crossing of the Alps by Napoleon had such a military expedition been undertaken as the traversing of the Albanian mountains by the Headquarters Staff and the remains of the Serbian Army. But Napoleon made his march after long and careful preparation, while the unfortunate Serbs began theirs when their army was in the last stages of destitution, without food, with uniforms in rags, and with utterly inadequate means of transport.

The sight presented by Lioum-Koula on the eve of departure was unique. On the mountain side for miles nothing could be seen but endless fires. They were made by the burning of the thousands of ox-wagons,

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which were unable to go further, as the road for vehicles ceases at Lioum-Koula. Fortunately the snow-storm had ended and had been followed by brilliant sunshine.

Next morning at nine o'clock the Headquarters Staff set out. It included 300 persons and 400 pack animals. The road wound along the banks of the Drin, which had to be crossed twice by means of picturesque old single-span Turkish bridges, since destroyed to impede the Bulgarian advance.

The first mistake made was that of transporting the sedan-chair of Field-Marshal Putnik at the head of the procession. Every time it halted to change bearers, which was every fifteen minutes, the whole two-mile-long procession, following in single file, had to stop also. As a result, instead of reaching Spas before sunset, we only reached a village at the base of the mountain after darkness had fallen.

Here a long council was held as to whether we should bivouac in the village or undertake the mountain climb in the dark. After a discussion lasting three-quarters of an hour, during which the mass of men and animals stood shivering in the freezing cold, the latter course was decided upon. It was one of the most extraordinary adventures ever undertaken. A narrow path about four feet wide, covered with ice and snow, winds corkscrew fashion up the face of the cliff. On one hand is a rocky wall and on the other a sheer drop into the Drin.

This road winds and twists at all sorts of angles, and it was up this that we started in the black darkness,

with the sedan-chair of General Putnik still heading the procession. Every time it reached a corner it was a matter of endless difficulty to manœuvre it around.

On one occasion we stood for thirty-five minutes in an icy wind, listening to the roar of the Drin, invisible in the black gulf 500 feet below. Horses slipped and fell at every instant, and every now and then one would go crashing into the abyss. It was a miracle that no human lives were lost.

It was ten o'clock when, tired, hungry and half frozen, we reached bivouac at Spas. Here we found that, though dinner had been ready since four o'clock in the afternoon, it could not be served because all the plates and spoons were on the pack animals, which had remained in the village below. Neither had the tents arrived, and as Spas contains only five or six peasant houses, accommodation was at a premium. Colonel Mitrovitch, head of the mess, told us he had reserved a room for us in a farmhouse a quarter of a mile away.

The house really was two hours distant, over fields feet deep in snow. When we got there at midnight we discovered that there were already nearly a score of occupants; but at least we were able to sleep in some straw near the fireside, instead of in the snow outside.

Next morning we set out at six so as to get ahead of the main body of the Headquarters Staff. The day was magnificent and we slowly climbed foot by foot to the cloud-capped summits of the mountains. Up and up we went, thousands and thousands of feet. Every few hundred yards we came on bodies of men frozen or starved to death. At one point there were four in a

heap. They were convicts from Prisrend penitentiary, who had been sent in chains across the mountains. They had been shot either for insubordination or because they were unable to proceed. Two other nearly naked bodies were evidently those of Serbian soldiers murdered by Albanians.

By midday we reached the summit of the mountain, a wind-swept plateau several thousand feet above the level of the sea. For fifty miles extended range upon range of snow-clad mountains, the crests of which had never been trodden by the foot of man. Nothing could be seen but an endless series of peaks, glittering like diamonds in the brilliant sunshine. The scene was one of undescribable grandeur and desolation.

After traversing the plateau we began the descent, skirting the edge of precipices of enormous height and traversing narrow gorges running between towering walls of black basalt. Every few hundred yards we would come on corpses of Serbian soldiers, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups. One man had evidently gone to sleep beside a wretched fire he had been able to light. The heat of it had melted the snow, and the water had flowed over his feet. In the night during his sleep this had frozen and his feet were imprisoned in a solid block of ice. When I reached him he was still breathing. From time to time he moved feebly as if trying to free his feet from their icy covering. We were powerless to aid him, he was so far gone that nothing could have saved him. The only kindness one could have done him would have been to end his sufferings with a revolver bullet. But human life is

sacred, and so there was nothing to do but pass on and leave him to breathe his last in these eternal solitudes.

On this part of the journey it was a matter of life and death to reach the end of the *étape* and find some shelter. If we had been surprised by darkness in the desolation of these wind-swept mountain gorges, where the narrow pathway ran alongside a fathomless abyss, our fate was sealed. In addition to the forces of nature we had also to reckon with the wild and lawless Albanian population. The hardy mountaineers who live among these fastnesses have many qualities, but the life of feud and strife of their savage clans does not make for the development of respect for human life.

We spent the night in an Albanian peasant's hut in the village of Fleti, a collection of half a score of houses, surrounded, like most Albanian villages, by a dry stone wall. The Albanian population refused to accept our Serbian silver money, and we were forced reluctantly to bring out our small store of ten and twenty franc gold pieces. In ordinary times one of these would represent a small fortune to the Albanian mountaineers, but they were evidently resolved to exploit the Serbian retreat commercially to the best of their ability.

We started next morning at dawn. Soon after mid-day we overtook King Peter and his Staff. Despite his seventy-six years he marched on foot with a vigour a younger man might have envied. During all the four hours we marched with the Royal Staff His Majesty never once mounted his horse, which a soldier was lead-



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ing behind him. When we stopped for the night at the village Bredeti the King had a march of ten hours to his credit.

It was at this point that we came across the first gendarmes of Essad Pasha, the ruler of Albania, who eighteen months before had driven the Prince von Wied, the marionette King nominated by the Great Powers at the instigation of Germany and Austria, from his throne. These gendarmes had been sent out by their iron-handed master to protect the journey of King Peter and his Staff. They were a picturesque lot, many of them going barefooted in the snow, but there was no doubt of the first class quality of their rifles and revolvers. For the most part they wore Serbian uniforms—that is when they wore any uniform at all—of which the Nish Government had some months before made Essad Pasha a present of several thousand.

The attitude of the Albanian population towards the Serbs could not be described as friendly, but at the same time they gave no outward signs of hostility. They rarely saluted the Serbian officers and showed no desire whatever to offer hospitality. In the case of the Members of the Serbian Government, the King and his suite and the Headquarters Staff, Essad Pasha had requisitioned accommodation in the rare Albanian villages, but anyone not belonging to one of these units had every chance of faring badly. All they had to depend on were the “hans” or wayside caravanserai.

These huge, barn-like structures consist of nothing but four walls with a shingle roof, the latter generally

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far from watertight. Here men and horses are quartered pell-mell. Everybody annexes as much space as he can and lights a fire for warmth and cooking. As the "hans" have no chimneys and the smoke is left to find its way through the open doors or through the roof, the condition of the atmosphere may be imagined.

As du Bochet and I had pushed ahead of the Headquarters Staff, we had naturally lost the advantage of being billeted in the farmhouses requisitioned by Es-sad's gendarmes.

On arriving at Bredeti we had therefore to claim the hospitality of the local "han." We lit our fire in the square yard or two of space we had been able to commandeer. But the atmosphere soon proved too much for us. I do not know by what means they arrive at it, but the eyes and lungs of the Serbian soldiers seem smoke-proof. They sit and converse cheerfully in a smoke cloud through which you cannot see a yard. As we had not acquired the smoke habit, in an hour's time we were driven to flight. Blindness and suffocation seemed the penalty of a more prolonged stay.

We therefore, in spite of the snow and freezing cold, fled to the exterior. Here, as some protection against the weather, we determined to put up a small tent we carried with our baggage. It was barely three feet high and open at one end, and was, in consequence, but an indifferent shelter against the inclement weather. However, having made Stanco build a blazing fire near the open end, we entered it and went to sleep.

Three hours later we awoke to find the wretched tent in a blaze. We struggled out with difficulty and

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managed to save most of our belongings from the flames. But the tent and sleeping-rugs were gone, and there was nothing for it but to remain seated round the camp fire till the advent of the dawn would allow us to resume our weary march.

On the next *étape* a new experience awaited us. The road ran for miles through a rocky gorge, through which a river flowed. The route lay along the bed of this, and the only means to travel was to step from one stone to the other. There is nothing so nerve-racking as to have to keep one's eyes constantly glued to the ground, where each step presents a new problem. Of course, every now and then one of the stones would turn under our feet, and this meant a plunge up to the knees in the icy water of the stream.

As far as the eye could see there was nothing but this rocky bed, winding between towering basaltic cliffs. The task of transporting a thousand men and horses under such conditions was almost superhuman. If the Albanians had been openly hostile not one man could have come out alive. When we reached the village where we stopped the night we had the greatest difficulty to obtain accommodation, until it became known we were not Serbians. Then every hospitality was shown us, but prices were enormous. The Albanian, like most peasants, is grasping and fond of money, but once you cross his threshold, your person and property are sacred. I never had the slightest fear once I entered an Albanian house.

But on the road everything is possible. The tribes live at war with one another and respect for human

life is non-existent. It would have been as much as our lives were worth to travel an hour after darkness. But during the daylight an armed party inspires a certain respect.

The men physically are probably the handsomest in Europe. I have never seen anywhere such beautiful children as those in Albania, and their parents seem extremely fond of them. But the little people seem to lead very serious lives. I never by any chance saw half a dozen playing together. They sat round in silence looking at us with wondering eyes, especially when du Bochet and I spoke French together. Not one Albanian in a hundred knows how to read or write, or has ever been more than twenty miles from home. And it was through such a country the Serbians had to transport an army, and that with the Germans and the Bulgarians in close pursuit.

The last stages of the march were probably the hardest, as fodder for the animals and food for the men were practically unprocurable. Money difficulties also increased daily, the Albanians refusing to accept Serbian silver or notes, at any rate of exchange. They would, however, give food and lodgings for articles of clothing, shirts, underwear, socks and boots. On the last stage we had, therefore, to resort to the primitive system of barter, buying a night's lodging with a shirt, and a meal with a pair of socks.

In the mountains just before Puka I discovered the first trace of wolves. The carcasses of dead horses, which were now numbered by scores, showed signs of having been torn by them. A part of the French

Aviation Corps, which was preceding us, got lost in the snow and darkness here, and had to spend the night in the open without protection. A dozen were frostbitten, but no fatal casualties. After six days we finally reached the Drin again, now a broad and swiftly flowing stream.

Thence the march to Scutari may be summed up in the word mud—mud of the deepest and most tenacious kind; sometimes it only reached to the ankles, sometimes to the knees, but it was always there.

The twenty-five miles between the Drin ferry and Scutari represents physical effort of no mean order. It was the finish for scores of unfortunate pack-horses. During the last two days they got practically no food. On these days we found dead horses every hundred yards. When at last, at four in the afternoon, we came in sight of the towers and minarets of Scutari everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AT SCUTARI

I DO not suppose since the Children of Israel crossed the desert any "promised land" was ever looked forward to with such yearning as that felt by the remnants of the Serbian nation for the first sight of Scutari. During the final *étape*, the "Tarabosh," the fez-shaped mountain which dominates the town and lake, was for them what the "cloud of smoke by day and the pillar of fire by night" were for the followers of Moses. The sight of the score of minarets denoting the actual position of the town created the belief that in an hour or so our long *anabasis* would be at an end. But this was more or less an optical illusion. The flatness of the plain makes objects seem nearer than they really are, and it was a long seven hours' tramp from our last halting-place till we reached the banks of the river on the other side of which were the outlying suburbs of the town.

Our final day's march was not the least interesting one. After climbing our last hill and winding our way down a tunnel-like descent covered with immense boulders, we debouched on the plain of Scutari. Here we found grassy slopes covered with clumps of spreading trees, mostly walnut and oaks. The miserable huts

of the mountaineers had now given place to well-built stone houses. Instead of the poorly-clad, half-starved inhabitants of the hills, we now met handsome, well-clothed men and tall and graceful women. We were now in the country of the Myrdites.

We were again marching along the banks of the Drin, which is, at this point, a broad and imposing stream, pouring its meandering course towards the lake of Scutari. As far as the eye could reach there was a succession of large, closely-wooded islands, canals, lakes and flooded prairies, from which rose hundreds of poplar trees, bordered by immense banks of sand, over which we could see Serbian cavalry moving, reduced by the distance to little black dots.

In the shops in the villages we now found tobacco, excellent coffee served *à la Turque*, and little bundles of smoked fish from the lake. The slow and soft language of the Turks made a curious contrast to the harsher and more nasal Albanian. Montenegrin soldiers, with their khaki-coloured skull caps and short cloaks *à l'Italienne*, had now replaced the truculent-looking gendarmes of Essad Pasha, with their belts full of revolvers and their general look of *brigands d'opérette*. We traversed the river in large boats with raised bows, reminding one of the gondolas of Venice or the caïques of Constantinople. The boatmen were tall, handsome men with swarthy, resolute faces, brilliant black eyes, drooping moustaches and aquiline noses. After the rude and rich Serbia, the monotonous deserts of Macedonia and the savage desolation of

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upper Albania, we had now the Orient, with its curious and attractive Eastern charm.

Our final difficulty was the fording of the river. The ferrymen refused to accept Serbian paper-money and all our silver was gone. Fortunately at this moment a Montenegrin officer of gendarmerie rode up and to him we appealed. He settled the difficulty in summary fashion by a plentiful distribution of blows from his heavy riding-whip to the men manning the boat. The latter, it appeared, had orders to transport everyone coming from Serbia free of charge, so that their effort to extort money from us was only a gentle attempt at a "hold up."

Our first visit was to the hotel where we knew the French Aviation Corps was lodged. Here we were given details of the journey of the corps, which had fared even worse than ourselves. Seventeen of their horses had died *en route*, so that the 250 officers and men composing the party had none too much in the way of food during the final *étapes*. A section of the company had also lost its way in the marshes outside Scutari, and only reached the town after tramping without stopping for over twenty hours. Twelve men had frost-bitten feet and had to go into hospital, but all had recovered. At Scutari they found their six comrades who had come by aeroplane with the sick men from Prisrend. The journey by air had been accomplished in one and a half hours, the men on foot had taken nearly eight days. After indulging in the unusual—and very expensive—luxury of a whisky-and-soda we had lunch with the equally unaccustomed



luxuries of table-cloths and serviettes and then went in search of quarters. These were not easy to find, as the Serbians were now pouring by thousands into the town. But du Bochet, during his previous visit to Scutari, had made the acquaintance of the Governor of Scutari, the Montenegrin Voivode Bozha Petrovitch. We paid a visit to him at his official residence and he sent a non-commissioned officer with us to requisition a lodging.

The latter found us a room in the house of a "notable" of the town, a young Turkish Albanian. It was situated in a side street. Behind an immense gateway was a large courtyard and gardens, in the centre of which stood the house, a typical Turkish edifice of the better class. We were given a large room on the ground floor. Round the whole room ran a low divan on which we would sit by day and sleep by night. The windows, Turkish fashion, were closely barred. Every evening at eight o'clock a little Turkish servant, always silent but always smiling, arrived, and after carefully removing his shoes as a sign of respect, opened an immense cupboard, from which he took mattresses, pillows and large and handsome silk quilts embroidered with large blue and yellow flowers, with which he proceeded to make up our beds.

The question of sleeping quarters settled, the next question was that of food. We found the Headquarters Staff installed at the Hôtel de la Ville. As the dining-room was somewhat small for the number of officers composing the Staff, we arranged with the ever courteous but much harassed Colonel Mitrovitch

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to send our man Stanco to fetch our meals, which we ate at our lodgings.

This settled we went for a tour of the town. An intense animation filled the streets. Seated along the walls of the houses or cross-legged round the open windows of their small shops, or wandering about in groups, Albanians in white skull-caps and Turks with crimson fezes and heavy, brilliantly-embroidered waist-belts, looked on impassible and apparently indifferent to the invasion of their city. A continual flood of new arrivals inundated the town. There were "Komordjis" from Timok, veritable *têtes de brigands*, with their brilliant eyes, shaggy beards and immense sheepskin bonnets; soldiers from Old Serbia in their muddy uniforms, with rusty rifles and heavy sandals covered with caked clay; gigantic mountaineers from the Uzhitze districts, with their deep, guttural speech and heavy step, civilians in torn and muddy clothes, women in men's dress, riding breeches, and military boots, and officers in stained and dusty uniforms.

The convoys which had struggled across the mountains were now pouring in, hundreds of Serbian oxen, with their magnificent spreading horns, but starved and lame, thin-flanked pack horses, hardly able to drag themselves along under their heavy loads, and cavalry soldiers, tramping along on foot, leading their exhausted mounts.

Every barracks was full, all the private houses had been requisitioned, and still the flood of fugitives kept pouring into the town in a double stream, one arriving by the route we had followed, from Lioum-

Koula, and the other by the Montenegrin road *via* Ipek and Andreyevitza. The placid Turks, the tall and sinewy Albanians and the Myrdite mountaineers in their barbaric costumes, looked on in silence. But one felt that in them was rising a feeling of sullen rage, mixed with fear.

This invasion of Scutari had the same effect it had had everywhere else. Provisions began to run down and in a few days there was no more bread obtainable. Taken completely by surprise (for they had only a day or two's warning of the decision of the Serbians to retreat into Albania) the Montenegrin Government had not had time to make preparations. Besides, what preparation could they have made? For months past Montenegro herself had been short of provisions. Time after time the inhabitants of the capital had been forced to look on helpless, when before their very eyes, Austrian torpedo boats "held up" and took off to the Bocche de Cattaro the ships laden with maize *en route* for Antivari.

Under these circumstances it may readily be imagined that the inhabitants of Scutari were far from hailing the Serbian invasion with enthusiasm. The Austrians must have got wind of this, for every morning at ten o'clock, with clock-work punctuality, an aeroplane appeared over the town and began dropping bombs. The first day a number of people were killed and wounded. On the other visits the casualties were fewer as everyone sought cover, but the material damage was considerable. The two points at which the bombs were aimed were the chief barracks and the

Italian Consulate. These were about a hundred and fifty yards from one another. As the house I was quartered in was exactly in the centre of this line we got full advantage of all the bombs that missed. Fortunately there was a stable with thick walls and strongly-vaulted roof, which was practically bomb-proof, in which we could take refuge and from which we could watch the explosions in safety. As during the whole course of the war no aerial attacks had been made on Scutari the object of the new departure was undoubtedly to render the Serbians unpopular with the inhabitants of Scutari, "Jonahs" whose presence had brought misfortune on the city.

As soon as the Headquarters Staff arrived in Scutari it began, with admirable energy, the work of reorganizing the wrecks of the Serbian Army. It was without definite news of the various armies, for the initiative regarding the operations of the retreat into Albania had been left in the hands of the individual commanders. The first necessity, however, was to collect provisions and arrange for their distribution. Then, as the *débris* of the army arrived, the men were placed in barracks and, when these were full, in camps and bivouacs.

The guiding spirit of the Headquarters Staff was Colonel Zhivko Pavlovitch, an energetic and indefatigable Colossus, the Chief of Staff of Field-Marshal Putnik. His influence was quickly apparent. Day by day the number of bivouacs on the hills behind Scutari became more numerous. With the renaissance of order the *morale* of the troops improved. The

hundreds of soldiers wandering aimlessly about the streets disappeared. The division of the Danube had, by a miracle of energy, succeeded in bringing over the mountains by the Ipek route, a number of batteries of field and mountain guns. These, in the most difficult places, they had dragged along by ropes.

The troops which had marched by the Dibra—El-Bassan route in the hope of reaching Monastir and proceeding thence by rail to Salonica to join the Allies failed to reach the former town before the Bulgarians. In forty-eight hours Colonel Zhivko Pavlovitch had succeeded in getting in touch with them and had concentrated them around Kavaya, Tirana and El-Bassan. These troops were later embarked at Durazzo for Corfu.

A few hours after the entry of the Serbians into Scutari the officers of the British Adriatic Mission arrived in the town. The object of this mission was to take measures for feeding, re-equipping and re-organizing the Serbian Army in Albania. This was also the desire of the Headquarters Staff. Unfortunately the Italian Government was opposed to the idea. It declared that it was not in a position to assure the safe passage of the transports with food, clothing, arms, etc., across the Adriatic.

That this was precarious was proved by the action of the Austrian fleet at Durazzo and San Giovanni di Medua, when a squadron of eight vessels suddenly appeared on December 9th in those ports and sank all the shipping, steamships and sailing vessels then in the roads.

When I arrived at Durazzo some days afterwards M. Gavrilovitch, the Serbian Minister Plenipotentiary in that town, gave me a description of this incursion, which I cannot do better than give in his own words: "I was sitting working in my office," he told me, "when one of my attachés came in and announced that a squadron of warships was in sight. I went out to the *terrasse* of the Legation whence I had a view of the Adriatic. With my field-glass I distinguished a squadron of eight ships, cruisers and destroyers, steaming toward Durazzo. When they came nearer I could distinguish the Austrian flag. As I was convinced they were going to seize that town, I immediately got out the archives of the Legation, the cypher, etc., and burnt the whole in the courtyard. I fully expected to sleep that night in Ragusa as an Austrian prisoner.

"Half an hour later the warships arrived in the roads and cast anchor. We expected to see a landing-party put off every minute. But hesitation appeared to prevail. The Austrian Admiral was probably doubtful of the forces at the disposal of Essad Pasha and the resistance he might encounter. The ships lay there inactive for two hours, and then suddenly opened fire on all the shipping in the harbour. They sank two steamers and a number of sailing vessels. You can still see their funnels and masts emerging from the water. After that they weighed anchor and went off to San Giovanni di Medua, where they repeated their exploit. They then quietly returned to the Bocche de Cattaro."

What renders this affair so mysterious is that Brindisi, where scores of Italian warships of all categories are lying, is only two and a half hours' steaming for the swiftest Italian destroyers under forced draft. I crossed from Durazzo to Brindisi a fortnight later, on the Italian destroyer the *Ardito*, and we covered the distance in about three hours with, I was told, ten knots in hand of our full speed. As the Italian Legation at Durazzo possessed a wireless station that was in constant communication with Brindisi, the Italian Admiral there must have had news of the approach of the Austrian squadron five minutes after it appeared above the line of the horizon. How, under these circumstances, it was possible for it to cruise undisturbed in the Adriatic for five hours and bombard two Albanian harbours remains a dark and fearful mystery.

On October 7th two Albanian non-commissioned officers arrived at Scutari from San Giovanni di Medua. They had arrived there from Durazzo in a motor-boat. They reported that they had accompanied two officers, sent by Essad Pasha to escort King Peter to Durazzo. A few miles from San Giovanni di Medua they had been stopped by an Austrian submarine which had taken the officers prisoners. It allowed the two non-commissioned officers to continue their voyage, but told them to warn the Governor at Scutari that the whole of the entrance to San Giovanni di Medua was mined. This, of course, may only have been "bluff," but there was no means of making sure one way or the other.

We began to see that if we wanted to leave Albania we would have to get to Durazzo or perhaps Valona. The route by San Giovanni di Medua, though the nearest (it is only 25 miles from Scutari by an excellent road), was too uncertain to be safe. We therefore began making preparations for our journey to Durazzo. Colonel Mitrovitch kindly furnished us with three riding-horses (we had with us on this part of the journey M. Nikolitch of the Press Bureau of the Headquarters Staff, who was *en mission* to Salonica), a horse for our baggage and a mounted gendarme and two infantry soldiers as our escort. These, with the faithful Stanco, who led our pack-horse, made us a party of seven. As all except Stanco were armed we were in a position to defend ourselves if attacked.

M. Yovan Yovanovitch, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, also kindly telegraphed to Essad Pasha, to send one of his gendarmes to meet us at Alessio (the point where the authority of the Montenegrin Government ceases) to escort us thence to Durazzo. Thanks to the courtesy of M. Pashitch, the Premier, we also obtained 450 francs worth of gold, as between Scutari and Durazzo, Serbian money, silver or paper, would be useless. Our Turkish host also gave us a letter to his uncle, who was one of the "notables" of Alessio, and who, he said, would, if we desired it, find us additional guides and escort. Under these circumstances we set out on December 12th on our journey to Durazzo, with every prospect of getting there with a minimum amount of difficulty.



## CHAPTER XIV

### SCUTARI TO DURAZZO

IT had daily become more and more clear that there was little chance of being able to leave Albania by the port of San Giovanni di Medua. This was, I must confess, a disappointment to us, as it imposed on us a fresh march to Durazzo, and perhaps even Valona. The one would mean another week of hardships and the other at least a fortnight, as we would be forced to traverse the whole of Albania from north to south. The only consolation was that we would be able to convince ourselves *de visu* of the condition and numbers of the Serbian soldiers who had been able to take refuge in the territory ruled over by Essad Pasha.

We started for Alessio, the first *étape* on our journey, at eight o'clock on the morning of Sunday, 12th December. The weather was fine and mild, but a dense fog hung over the lake of Scutari and the surrounding country. The road, however, was—for Albania—an excellent one, and was being still further improved by the work of about 1,500 Austrian prisoners. The influx of such a mass of Serbians made a good road to Alessio a necessity, either for the conveyance of provisions to Scutari or for the transport of the Serbian troops, if the difficulties of revictualling them should force the authorities to evacuate them.

So good indeed was the road that we were able to trot our horses the greater part of the distance. This, of course, did not advance us much, as we had, at the end of the march, to await the arrival of our pack-horse and the two soldiers on foot, but it was less tiring than riding hour after hour at a walk. There is nothing so fatiguing as to have to crawl at a foot-pace along a road that one sees stretching before one for miles.

When we drew near Alessio, however, we had to leave the high-road, as the last mile or two was flooded, and follow a path running along the face of the hills. At first this was negotiable, but after a couple of miles or so it became so bad that it was dangerous to remain mounted, as our horses slipped and stumbled on the rocky ground. As we were generally skirting declivities of considerable depth a fall would probably have been fatal. To our left were wide stretches of flooded meadows with here and there a red-roofed Albanian peasant house. Just as we were approaching a sharp angle in our paths we heard a succession of shots and saw a number of bullets strike the water round some cows which were standing knee deep in the flooded meadows. A few minutes later we saw some Albanian peasants armed with rifles come out of their huts and begin to dodge from tree to tree, always keeping under cover till they reached the water edge.

As we were moving along the hillside completely exposed to their view we felt somewhat nervous, as they might consider we belonged to the party which

was firing at them, but which we could not see, as it was concealed by the bend in the path, and open fire on us. Our gendarme made a sign to us to halt, passed the bridle of his horse to me, drew his carbine and went off to reconnoitre. He was gone about ten minutes, during which the firing continued, but evidently, from the noise of the reports, from a greater distance. When he returned he told us that the firing had been the work of a score or so of Serbian cavalry *en route* for Alessio, who had been emptying their carbines in sheer lightness of heart. This tendency on the part of the Serbian soldiers to fire off their rifles in this indiscriminate way was a great and ever-growing nuisance. It had begun shortly after we left Krushoumlia and was a clear sign of relaxing discipline.

When we passed the party in question, our gendarme (who held the rank of sergeant) spoke sharply to the non-commissioned officer in command, but only got an impudent reply, while his men regarded us with sullen ill-will. I imagine they had been imbibing some of the native raki, and that this accounted for their reckless mood. In any case, as soon as the route permitted we put spurs to our horses and got ahead of them, as we were unanimous in thinking that it was better to precede them than fall heir to any local animosities they might arouse.

It was about four o'clock in the evening when we arrived at Alessio. We had some difficulty in finding the *beg* or local dignitary to whom our host in Scutari had given us a letter. When we finally found him

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we discovered he could speak nothing but Albanian. He was a picturesque figure, as his costume was freely embroidered with gold and silver and his handsome silver-studded belt was filled with an arsenal of silver-mounted knives and revolvers. Through an interpreter he informed us that a telegram had been received from Essad Pasha, stating that a gendarme would be given to us to act as escort. When we interviewed the latter, however, he informed us we would have to wait another thirty-six hours in Alessio till the weekly Italian mail from Scutari arrived, as he had also to escort it to Durazzo.

As we were unwilling to lose another day we determined to push on without this addition to our force. We got off the next morning at seven o'clock. The route lay over an old Turkish causeway of cobblestones as large as a child's head, worn as smooth as glass by constant floods, over which the horses sliddered as if they were on roller skates. After riding for four or five miles, during which my horse nearly fell at least twice a minute, this proved too much for my nerves, and I got down and led him. A mile further I had to mount again, as we found that a river crossed this road at right angles and that half the bridge spanning it was gone. The extremity of the broken half remaining was buried in the water.

My horse waded in and soon the water was right up to his withers. On reaching the broken bridge I found that it did not touch the ground in the river-bed, but was suspended about four and a half feet from the bottom. My horse had therefore to rear

up, place his fore feet on the bridge and then give a spring on to the wet and slippery planks. As he could give a chamois points for sure-footedness he managed this apparently impossible feat, but came a cropper on the greasy planking, and we nearly rolled over the side again into the river. Fortunately the stump of a rotten side-post brought us up and we were able to struggle up.

After another mile or two of cobblestone causeway in ever-increasing disrepair, we got to a muddy kind of jungle through which a vague path seemed to wind. A heavy thunderstorm had been banking up on the horizon when we left Alessio and now it burst over us with all its fury. In a minute or two the mud had become a swamp through which we stolidly splashed our way, half blinded by the driving rain. Fortunately we came across a wayside hut in which were half a dozen truculent looking Albanians. One was in agonies of toothache, and asked me if I was a "hakim" or doctor. I had a few tablets of aspirin with me and gave him one, told him to take it and lie down till it took effect. In five minutes he was so soundly asleep that I got alarmed. I thought the dose might have a bad effect on a man who had probably never taken medicine in all his life. But when he woke up with his toothache gone a few hours later, his gratitude knew no bounds. He went out and hunted up lodgings for us in the house of a peasant friend. The latter drove a pretty stiff bargain, a gold louis for a night's lodgings, but once the commercial matter settled, treated us with patriarchal dignity as honoured guests.

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The walls of his house were made of wattle through which wind swept in a perfect gale on one side and out the other. It required the immense fire we had built in the centre to keep us from freezing, but the rush of air had one good point, it completely dried our soaking clothes.

We learnt that an hour away we would find the first of three fords over the Mati river, and as there were prospects that ferrying facilities might be primitive, we were off soon after sunrise next morning. The way lay through forest glades, and as brilliant sunshine prevailed, the ride was an enjoyable one. Our enjoyment came to an abrupt conclusion when we reached the ford. At this point the river is over a hundred yards broad. The ferry was a long and clumsy native boat, able to contain four horses and about twenty passengers. On the bank chaos and confusion reigned. Over three hundred people and about a hundred and fifty horses were waiting to cross. The ferry was run by a truculent Albanian aided by four rowers. On the banks a score or so of ruffianly natives were noisily shouting for "backsheesh" as the price of their assistance in embarking men and animals. They demanded ten francs in gold for each passenger and twenty francs for each horse.

Everybody was talking at once and every journey of the boat was preceded by endless discussions. About an hour later the Italian mail arrived with at least a score of pack-horses. The "Kavass" of the Italian consulate, who was in charge, at once commandeered the ferry by the simple process of laying

right and left with a heavy-thonged whip tumbling out the horses already on board and expelling the passengers. After his party had passed without the Kavass paying the ferryman anything but a shower of blows from his riding-whip, the former pandemonium recommenced. As we were seven passengers and five horses, there seemed little prospect of our being able to find accommodation. All day long we watched this scene of confusion, and when darkness fell the ferry ceased operations for the night.

We had therefore again to find lodgings. At this moment a particularly ill-favoured Albanian came up and offered us sleeping room in his hut, with stabling for our horses. He made the extortionate charge of two gold louis, or forty francs. When we got to his hut (a small one) we found it already in the possession of seven Austrian prisoners. I will sleep in a hut with almost anything, but I draw the line at Austrian prisoners, who had probably not had their clothes off for a matter of six months. As they refused to leave, I declared that I would rather go and sleep in the stable where our horses had been placed. As the night was not cold we could put them out of doors without danger. This we did, and found the stables quite as comfortable and rather more water-tight than the peasant's hut.

After dinner we held a council of war. It was clear that seven passengers and five horses was a large order for the ferry. As our riding-horses were really little use to us, I proposed that we should send two of them back to Scutari under the charge of the gendarme

and one of the soldiers. This would reduce our party to five, with two pack-horses. If we were at the river at dawn when the ferry started work there was every chance we could get across. At this moment we all started. A carbine had been fired just alongside the hut. I and du Bochet grabbed our revolvers and ran outside. We were just in time to find our gendarme firing a second shot from his carbine, and saw the white-clad figures of a number of Albanians running off in the darkness. The gendarme had heard whistling all round the hut, and suspected this was the signal of a band of horse thieves (as it in all probability was). He watched them creeping nearer in the darkness and had then let fly at them. As they had evidently bolted we returned to the hut. Five minutes later we received the visit of three of Essad's gendarmes, who wanted to know what the reason for the firing had been. They were accompanied by our rascally landlord, who, I strongly suspect, had given his thievish neighbours the hint that we had turned out our horses in the field. I arranged that the horses should be attached and that the gendarme, the soldiers and Stanco should mount guard in turn all night. As a result all our horses were still there when we awoke next morning.

We gave the gendarme and the soldier their marching orders and 100 dinars as *viaticum* for their return journey to Scutari, and betook ourselves to the ferry boat. We were fortunate enough to be the first to cross, for the trifling fare of 90 francs in gold, or nearly £4. In ordinary times the charge would have



been 25 centimes for each passenger and 50 centimes for each horse, or a total of 2 francs, 50 centimes (2 shillings). The ferryman and his rascally assistants were making about £100 per day. My only hope was that they would get their deserts when the Serbian troops began to cross. The *étape* to the next ford was uneventful, and we reached it before sundown. The first ferry had, of course, held back the crowd, so that at the two remaining ferries no time was lost, and the prices were only one franc a head for passengers and two for each horse. We passed the night in bivouac on the other bank and started next morning for the third ford. This was about the worst day's march of the whole journey. About a couple of miles from the river we entered a swampy jungle through which hundreds of paths seemed to run. In half an hour we seemed completely lost. All we could do was to steer by the compass. On consulting the map the course seemed to be south with about two points to the west. We took this course and began to burst our way through the jungle, splashing up to the knees in mud, tearing our clothes and scratching our leggings on hundreds of thorns. The chief difficulty was with our horses. We could edge our way among the trees, but the laden pack animals had to rasp their way by main force through trees and undergrowth. The condition of our baggage after three hours of this regime may be imagined. But we were in luck as regards our direction, for when we finally struggled clear of the jungle we found ourselves barely five hundred yards from the ferry. The boat was

unable to accommodate horses, so we had to unload them and swim them across and reload them on the other side, an operation which took time.

The road on the other side, though hilly, proved to be in good condition, and two hours later we were safely installed in the village of Ishmi, perched on the western slope of the mountains. Here for the first time we came in view of the sea. Forty-five kilometres away we could see the gleam of the Adriatic, with the white houses and graceful minarets of Durazzo nestling at the base of a high hill.

The accommodation at Ishmi was, for Albania, unusually good. The peasants with whom we lodged killed and broiled a fowl, and provided us with new-laid eggs and sour milk. Our host, a young Albanian who spoke a little Italian (he had been employed by an Italian company which owned a timber concession), offered to guide us to Durazzo by an easy path over the mountains. For this we gave him a gold louis and a pair of boots.

Next morning we set out in brilliant sunshine. Though we were only a few days from Christmas, by midday it was oppressively warm—but the road was so good we could swing along the whole day at a steady four miles an hour. We slept the night at Presa, in the house of a relative of our guide, and next day completed our last *étape* to Durazzo. Three-quarters of this was along an excellent high road which runs from Tirana to Durazzo and offered no difficulties.

As we drew near Durazzo we began to see abundant

signs of the presence of the remnants of the Serbian Army. On all the hills on either side of the road camps and bivouacs had been installed. On the road a constant stream of country carts were pouring empty toward the town, while an equal number filled with stacks of flour and potatoes, straw, hay, and huge pieces of freshly-killed meat were moving in the opposite direction. In addition to the carts innumerable fatigue parties, each man with an empty sack on his shoulder, were marching in the direction of Durazzo, and other parties, bending under the weight of their burdens, were returning to camp. Mounted officers were riding in all directions and groups of soldiers were running field telegraphs along the roads and across the fields to put the various camps in communication with one another and with Durazzo.

The camps and bivouacs were laid out in orderly lines, trenches to run off the water had been dug, horses were picketed in symmetrical rows or turned loose to graze on the mountain side. It was clear that military order and discipline had been already re-established and progress towards reorganization had already been made. Of course many of the men still bore evident signs of the hardships they had undergone, many were seated around in the camps and bivouacs still too weak and exhausted to undertake any military duties. But these were the minority. As we came closer to the town the number of camps increased and an ever-increasing animation was everywhere visible. It was a convincing proof of the marvellous vitality of the Serbian soldier. I had the

impression that in a few short weeks the army would be again a fighting machine ready to take the field.

Around Durazzo there were encamped about twenty thousand men, with probably four or five thousand horses. Many of the cavalry horses were in very poor case, but those that had survived the hardships of the march across the mountains were the animals possessing stamina and staying power, and a week or two's rest would make them fit for service. Of course there were no field guns or Serbian Army service wagons. All these had been either buried or destroyed before leaving Serbian territory. But as the pursuing enemy would also be unable to bring over his field guns he would be equally handicapped. But the men were sadly in need of boots and uniforms. The long tramp over the mountains had given the *coup de grâce* to footwear that had already been tried by the long retreat. The uniforms were in rags. In many instances they were badly burnt, showing how closely their wearers had had to gather round the bivouac fires on the freezing mountain heights.

With the soldiers were the men of the new "classe," youths of eighteen and nineteen who had been called out to join the colours. These had, however, suffered terribly during the passage into Albania. Not belonging to any military unit, they had no organization or commissariat. They had started out with a loaf or two of bread in their haversacks, and when this was gone they had simply starved. Many were without great-coats, and had faced the mountain snow with nothing but their ordinary peasant's costume. When they ar-

rived at Dibra, El-Bassan and Durazzo they were walking skeletons. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, succumbed to their privations. I was told that between thirty-five and forty thousand had managed to reach the bivouacs.

The great want was the insufficient number of surgeons and Red Cross Units to cope with the number of sick. It would have been necessary to establish special camps for these and give them special attention and treatment, but unfortunately this was out of the question. The floods and inundations which covered the lower part of the plain behind the town and towards Valona made it difficult to find good camping grounds, and in many instances the sick and starving were unable to make the effort necessary to reach the higher grounds.

When we reached the entrance to Durazzo the soldier of our escort and Stanco had to give up their rifles, for which they were given a receipt. By order of Essad Pasha no Serbian soldier in arms was to enter the town. In fact, no soldiers were allowed to enter it at all unless they were in possession of a regular pass proving that they had business there.

We were disappointed to see a three-masted sailing ship flying the American flag weighing her anchor just as we entered the town. Du Bochet thought that he, being Swiss and neutral, might have been able to reach Italy on board her, as the vessel, being American, would escape seizure or torpedoing by the Austrian submarines. We learnt afterwards that she would not have been a very safe ship to travel on, as

she was strongly suspected of being in the pay of Austria and to be cruising in the Adriatic to spy and report to the Austrian Admiralty at Pola.

In fact, we saw her back at her moorings next morning, and during the night we noted she used to hang out what seemed an unnecessarily large number of lanterns. As there was always an Austrian submarine cruising just outside the harbour this excited grave suspicion. She had been wandering about from one port to another—Italian, Austrian and Albanian—for two months past. As the amount of business she did did not seem sufficient to pay her working expenses, the reason for her being in these waters was not apparent. All this, as I have said, exposed her to considerable suspicions, and she was kept under very close observation. But as her papers as an American merchant vessel were all in order and she was never taken *in flagranti delicto* of espionage, nothing could be done to interfere with her movements.

The harbour presented a desolate appearance. Near the shore the funnels of two steamers sunk by the Austrians during the bombardment of the port on December 9th emerged from the water, while further out could be seen the tops of the masts of the sailing vessels sunk on the same occasion. Near the jetty a small steam transport was lying. She was a vessel of about 1,200 tons, and had safely made the run from Brindisi with food for the Serbian Army. She had taken over six hundred Serbian refugees eager to reach Italy on board, but could not leave, as an Austrian submarine was known to be cruising outside.

The refugees had been on board her for over five days. The sufferings of six hundred people packed like herrings in a barrel in the ill-ventilated hold of a small tramp steamer may be imagined.

In the town we found that, as usual, famine prices prevailed, due to the influx of Serbians. We had to pay twenty francs a day for a most doubtful-looking room in a fourth-rate Albanian inn. I suppose it would have been dear at a franc and a half in ordinary times. But though prices were high, this seemed due more to commercial speculation than to absolute dearth of provisions. There were a large number of shops run by Italians in which sausages, ham, macaroni, biscuits, fruit, wine, etc., could be procured. Such luxuries as pickles, Worcestershire sauce, chutney, Liebig's extract and Bovril were also visible in the windows.

Beer was also procurable, the first we had seen for two months. The bottles were small and the quality indifferent. But if the bottles were small it was more than could be said of the prices. We incautiously consumed three bottles without first inquiring the price, and were somewhat staggered when we got a bill for eighteen francs. The price in Italy would have been about fourpence apiece.

## CHAPTER XV

### AT DURAZZO

ONCE installed we sallied forth to see if we could obtain any reliable information regarding the military situation and the prospects of obtaining a passage to Italy.

As regards the military situation there was little difficulty in obtaining information. The remnants of the Serbian Army were still pouring into Scutari *via* Montenegro and by the Albanian route *via* Lioum-Koula and Puka. The same held good regarding the "classe" or young men liable to military service. Over fifty thousand men, soldiers and recruits, had managed to reach the environs of Scutari. Troops of the Second and Third Armies and young recruits were still arriving at Dibra and El-Bassan, and being pushed on towards Durazzo. Round Durazzo over twenty thousand were already encamped. It was calculated that, all told, about one hundred and fifty thousand Serbians, soldiers and recruits, had escaped from the disaster at Prisrend.

But unfortunately we learned that the Bulgarians were in close pursuit and that Dibra would in all probability have to be evacuated. This was actually done before we left Durazzo five days later, and the



troops moved on to El-Bassan. The Combined Divisions and some other units were still to be counted on as a military force, and were delaying the Bulgarian advance. I received the sad news of the convoy of the Combined Division with which we had travelled to Pristina. It had been attacked in the mountains by an Albanian clan and most of the "Komordjis" massacred. Among the victims were the major and his wife from whom I had had hospitality, as well as the veterinary surgeon attached to the column and his little fifteen-year-old son.

The advance of the Austrian and Bulgarian forces was beginning to arouse considerable anxiety, as it would still further complicate the already difficult problem of the re-victualling of the Serbian Army. Unless food was promptly forthcoming it would be impossible to count on any help from the Serbian Army in resisting or delaying the advance of the enemy. Two solutions were put forward. One proposal was that the Serbian Army should be withdrawn from Albania and conveyed to some other centre to be re-equipped and reorganized. The other proposal was that it should remain in Albania and be reorganized there. But for this it would be necessary to guarantee that the Adriatic should be efficiently policed, and this Italy seemed unwilling to undertake. It was also the desire of the Headquarters Staff that the Serbian Army should not quit Albania.

The Serbian Army is a peasant one and has little comprehension of the problems of tactics and strategy and still less of those of international politics. As

long as it was in Albania it saw the line of blue mountains on the horizon and knew that Serbia lay on the other side. But if conveyed to foreign countries it would feel *dépaysé*, torn up by the roots. Not one Serbian soldier had ever seen the sea, and if transported across it for hundreds of miles he would feel himself lost. It is possible to explain to a British or French soldier that when he is fighting in France, in Egypt, in Gallipoli or in Mesopotamia he is still fighting for his country and defending its cause. But such arguments would be lost on the Serbian soldier, they are beyond his primitive mentality. But of course everything depended on the maintenance of supplies, and for this it was necessary to clear the Adriatic of hostile war vessels, notably submarines. It would further be necessary to largely reinforce the Italian troops at Valona and send strong detachments to central and northern Albania to oppose the advance of the Austrian and Bulgarian Armies. It was specially necessary to check the advance of the latter from Dibra and El-Bassan.

It was evident that if the Bulgarians should reach Durazzo the fate of the forty or fifty thousand Serbians, including the Headquarters Staff, at Scutari would be sealed, as they would be completely isolated and shut in between the Austrian and Bulgarian Armies. During my stay in Durazzo the Austrian submarine was continually *en évidence*. She even engaged in an artillery duel with the small transport in the harbour, which was armed with a couple of small guns.

The following day when I called on Essad Pasha I found him anxious but far from depressed. He had that day formally declared war on Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria and had the Consuls of these countries arrested, and had placed them on board the American three-master to which I have made reference above. He told me the Allies could count on him to the death. It was certain that after his expulsion of the Prince of Wied, the puppet King imposed on Albania by the Central Powers, that the latter would show him no mercy. Of the ultimate victory of the Allies he had no doubt, though in common with everyone else he deplored the errors of their policy in the Balkans. He frankly admitted the critical nature of the situation created by the presence of the Austrian and Bulgarian troops in Albania. He himself, beyond his 6,000 gendarmes, did not dispose of any organized troops. It was clear that if Italy could not guarantee the safety of the transports of the Allies in the Adriatic, nothing remained but to evacuate the Serbian Army, and even do it promptly.

On leaving Essad Pasha I went to call on Baron Allioti, the Italian Minister in Durazzo, at the Legation—the handsomest and most imposing building in the town. It is flanked on one side by the Consulate and the Italian hospital, and on the other by the wireless station, by which the Minister is in telegraphic communication with Brindisi. He informed me that Italian torepedo boats were coming over to escort the transport in the harbour to Brindisi, and promised

that du Bochet and myself would be given means of reaching Italy.

On leaving the Legation I met the Italian battalion, which had just arrived, marching through the streets. They seemed a fine, sturdy body of men, in their workmanlike grey service uniforms. There were two more battalions in a village two hours' distance from Durazzo and others echeloned along the route from Valona. The road, however, was in bad condition owing to floods. The battalion in Durazzo had been eight days on the march from Valona. I was extremely glad that the promise given us by Baron Allioti made it unnecessary for us to undertake the march to Valona. After the experience we had undergone in the retreat from Prisrend and our journey from Scutari, we had no desire to negotiate another hundred miles of swamp and mountains in Albania.

The following morning we received instructions to present ourselves at nine o'clock in the evening to Lieutenant Musellardi, of the Italian Navy, who was acting as captain of the port. We expected that at that hour we would go on board the transport lying in the bay. But when we reached the jetty we were informed that we would cross on the Italian destroyer which was coming to escort the transport to Brindisi. By this time a score or so of persons had assembled on the jetty who were to be our fellow travellers. These included Prince and Princess Alexis Karageorgevitch and their suite and a number of Serbian staff officers. Two Albanian sailing-boats with huge lug sails, such as one generally sees during the coasting trade on the

Albanian coast, were rocking alongside the quay to convey us to the destroyer as soon as she should appear. But hour after hour passed. It was nearly midnight when two quick flashes in the Egyptian darkness of the horizon announced the arrival of the destroyer.

The baggage was hastily loaded on the boats, which at once pushed off and made in the direction the flashes had been seen. But it is one thing to go in search of a small vessel like a destroyer at night in an open bay and another thing to find her. For over an hour we cruised backwards and forwards in the black darkness. A heavy sea made the boat roll heavily, so much so that some of the passengers began to pay their tribute to Neptune. Then the destroyer risked yet another flash from her searchlight and we could at last locate her.

Once alongside the passengers and luggage were transferred with all speed to the destroyer, which turned out to be the *Ardito*, a thirty-six knot boat, one of the swiftest in the Italian Navy. Three more destroyers and a couple of French cruisers were, we were told, lying outside the bay. The period of waiting till the transport with the 600 Serbian refugees got up her anchor and got under way was the most anxious moment. Every instant we expected to see a torpedo launched from the Austrian submarine, which we knew, from optical proof, was cruising outside.

But nothing happened, and the *Ardito*, with her clumsy *protégé* (whose fastest pace was about seven knots) slowly but surely crawled out of the roads.

Half an hour later we rejoined the other destroyers outside and confided to them the task of escorting the transport. As soon as the transfer was effected the *Ardito* suddenly put on speed and began to walk through the water at twenty-six knots an hour. Everybody on board heaved a sigh of relief, as a ship travelling like an express train furnishes an almost impossible target for a submarine. Two and a half hours later we entered Brindisi harbour. There for miles on either hand lay scores of Dreadnoughts, battleships, battle cruisers, armoured and protected cruisers, destroyers, torpedo boats and submarines, all with steam up night and day. This display of Italy's naval strength only deepened the mystery of her apparent inaction in presence of the Austrian submarines and cruisers. With steam coal at over a hundred francs a ton it must have cost a small fortune to keep this magnificent fleet under steam pressure night and day. This only increased the surprise felt by the uninitiated at the apparent inaction of the Italian fleet.

Just as a grey and cheerless dawn was beginning to appear I set foot on Italian soil, which I had quitted nearly four months before. But in these four short months much history had been made, and one of the bravest, if one of the smallest, nations of Europe had, for the moment at least, ceased to exist.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE EVACUATION OF ALBANIA BY THE SERBIAN ARMY

**A**FTER my arrival in Italy I had an opportunity of discussing the position of the Serbian Army in Albania with a number of diplomatists and military men. I found opinions much divided. The British and French were in favour of the Serbian Army being revictualled, re-equipped and reorganized on Albanian soil. The British Adriatic Commission had already sent missions of officers to Scutari, San Giovanni di Medua and Brindisi. The Commission was under the command of Brigadier-General Taylor, who had his headquarters at Rome.

But the first condition for the successful achievement of the object of the Commission was the certainty that the transports containing food, arms, clothing, etc., should be able to reach their destination in safety. For this it would be necessary to assure them against attack by Austrian submarines. This was the task of the Italian navy. But the Admiral commanding at Brindisi was of opinion that it offered insuperable difficulties. The Albanian coast has no harbours. Durazzo and San Giovanni di Medua are open roadsteads. It is only possible to land goods in favourable weather. Only small vessels can be en-

ployed, as large ones cannot approach the coast. This naturally increases the number of the transports, and the difficulty of escorting and protecting them would overtax the powers of the fleet in Brindisi.

The Italian staff was also of opinion that the Serbians were not in a position to resist the simultaneous invasion of Albania by the Austro-German and Bulgarian Armies. This would have entailed the necessity for Italy of reinforcing her garrison at Valona and occupying other strategic points in Albania. This Italy was unwilling to do, as the difficulty of feeding and maintaining a large army there was too great. In addition the Italian troops might have found themselves face to face with German troops. Italy, however, had not declared war on Germany and was anxious to avoid possible points of contact with that Power.

While these discussions were going on between the three Governments events were moving rapidly. The Bulgarians advanced from Dibra to El-Bassan and threatened Durazzo, while the Austrians captured Mount Lovtchen and made themselves practically masters of Montenegro and threatened Scutari.

The position of the Serbian Army became critical in the extreme. There were over fifty thousand men in and around Scutari. If the Bulgarian Army at El-Bassan should reach Durazzo it would cut Albania in two halves and would leave the Serbian forces at Scutari no port of embarkation except San Giovanni di Medua. The problem of embarking such a force from a small open roadstead seemed insoluble. As



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the members of the Government and the Headquarters Staff were still at Scutari the capture of the troops there would have been an absolute disaster. As it was the task of transporting them to Durazzo and San Giovanni di Medua bristled with difficulties of every kind.

The next question to be settled, in case the evacuation was decided on, was the destination of the Serbian troops. Various places were suggested, Corsica, Tunis, Algeria, etc., but the spot finally selected was Corfu. The island, it is true, was Greek, and the Powers did not dispose of it as their property. But it was difficult for Greece to refuse hospitality to the Serbians as Serbia was an allied state. There had been a difference of opinion between the Serbian and the Greek Governments as to the obligations imposed on them by the Greco-Serbian Treaty of 1913. Serbia argued that by it Greece was bound to come to her aid if she was attacked by Bulgaria; the Athens Government took the view that it only became operative if Bulgaria alone attacked Serbia, but did not force Greece to come to the aid of Serbia if other Powers took part in the attack. But the treaty had not been denounced by either party, there was only a difference of opinion as to its interpretation. Greece and Serbia were therefore still technically allies, so that it was difficult for the former to refuse hospitality to the army of King Peter.

The island of Corfu offered many advantages. It was only a few hours' steaming from the Albanian coast. The risks of a long voyage for a large fleet

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of transports were therefore got rid of, and the evacuation could be carried out rapidly, as the same vessels could go backwards and forwards between the Albanian ports and the island. Climatically Corfu left nothing to be desired, as the temperature is much the same as that of Serbia. It might have been a risky matter transporting a mountain people to the warm climate of Algeria or Tunis.

Then the future operations of the Serbian troops had to be kept in view. It was clear that as soon as the army was rested, reorganized and re-equipped, it would again take the field. There were only two possible fields of action, Albania or Salonica. Under those circumstances it was desirable to keep the Serbian Army as near its future theatre of operations as possible. If the distance to be covered was small a small fleet of transports would suffice, as the same vessels could go backwards and forwards in a few hours. If the army had to be brought from Algeria or Tunis, a large fleet of transports would be necessary, and this would increase the cost, the loss of time and the risk of attack from submarines.

As soon, therefore, as it was decided to transport the Serbian Army to Corfu no time was lost in carrying out the operation. A large fleet of transports at once took the work in hand. An Italian force was sent to Durazzo to protect that town against attack, while the embarkation was going on. A part of the Serbian Army at Durazzo descended the coast to Valona. The embarkation was made from three ports, San Giovanni di Medua, Durazzo and Valona. Not

only were the troops transported, but several thousand horses were brought away safely.

British, French and Italian vessels took part in conveying the troops, while the warships of the three Powers policed the Adriatic with such success that the Austrian submarines were kept at a respectful distance. But it became clear that Essad Pasha and his troops would also have to leave Albania, as the Bulgarians and Austrians were now converging on Durazzo from all sides. After the Italian troops had successfully covered the embarkation at Durazzo they had themselves to beat a retreat to Valona.

All these difficult and delicate operations were successfully carried out, and though the Austrians and Bulgarians became masters of all Albania, they failed in their principal object, the surrounding and capture of the Serbian Army. A part of their forces advanced as far as Valona, but that town had little difficulty in defending itself. The invading force was unable to bring any artillery, beyond mountain and machine guns, across the mountains, so that it could not undertake an attack on a town defended by heavy Italian batteries brought by sea from Italy.

The Italians need not have had any anxiety regarding the Austrian and Bulgarian occupation of Albania, as this would come automatically to an end as soon as the expeditionary force at Salonica successfully invaded Bulgaria. That day the Bulgarians were forced to evacuate Albania, and even do it hurriedly, if they did not want to find themselves cut off from all return to Bulgaria.

The day this happened the Austrians had to evacuate the country, as they had lines of communication to guard running from Bosnia to Valona, through a territory which has no railways and few roads. Fifty per cent. of the population was absolutely hostile to them. Even the Catholic part of Albania was only pro-Austrian as long as the Dual Monarchy subsidized it, and would under no circumstances have taken up arms in defence of Austrian interests against a foreign foe.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE SERBIAN ARMY AT CORFU

ONCE it had been decided to transfer the Serbian Army to Corfu, preparations had to be made with all haste to receive it. It was no small matter to convey over a hundred thousand soldiers, with all that remained of their horses, mountain guns, machine guns and impedimenta of all descriptions, in a country denuded of good roads, to three open roadsteads, and then embark them on transports. It must be remembered that this had to be done under the constant menace of attack by the Austrian Army in Montenegro and the Bulgarian troops at El-Bassan.

But not only was it necessary to embark them in Albania, preparations had to be made for receiving them at Corfu. Corfu is an island of 100,000 inhabitants, and possesses only such resources as are required for their daily necessities. It is needless to say that it was out of the question to call upon the authorities or the population to provide even a tenth of the provisions necessary for the maintenance of the Serbian Army. It would have been a poor exchange to save them from starvation in Albania to allow them to die of hunger in Corfu.

The solution of the problem was left in the hands

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of the French Commanders, General de Mondesir and Admiral de Gueydon, and the French Minister, M. Boissonnais. Two bases were organized, a maritime base and a land base. The task of the former was to bring the Serbian troops on shore as fast as the transports arrived, and also to land the enormous mass of provisions and merchandise of all kinds sent from France and England. The harbour of Corfu presented a sight such as had never been seen in its history.

Scores of transports with the troops arrived daily and tramp steamers of every sort and size crowded the roads. The first great difficulty was the want of boats of all kinds, for landing men and goods. Those that the port possessed in ordinary times were, of course, totally insufficient. But the sailor has the reputation of being the "handy man" able to make use of the most unpromising material. The French Man-o'-War man is little behind his British comrade in this respect. Admiral de Gueydon's men showed themselves full of resource and ingenuity. Everything that would float was pressed into service, ships' boats, barges, fishing vessels, skiffs, and even rafts. So well did they work that they were soon able to disembark 20,000 men a day with 1,200 tons of provisions.

The *tours de force* realized by the maritime base inspired the land base with healthy emulation. In fact, all through this difficult period the military, naval and civil authorities worked hand in hand for the common aim, the prompt succour of the Serbian Army. Red tape was reduced to a minimum. General de Mondesir,

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Admiral de Gueydon and M. Boissonnais held a daily conference. This daily exchange of views suppressed all necessity for reports, letters, and useless correspondence which would have only delayed and complicated the work on hand.

The first duty of the land base was to assure a supply of bread. There was no want of flour, as large cargoes had been sent from France. But it was not sufficient to have flour, it was also necessary to find a means of baking it. The first difficulty was to find wood to heat the ovens. Corfu is rich in olive and orange trees, but it is not with such wood that fires can be made. As a first step the land base requisitioned all the available private ovens. Then a couple of companies of engineers set to work to construct field bakeries. Ships were sent off to Epirus to purchase wood from the Greeks. But until their return and until all the baking organization was completed, bread rations had to be distributed with a certain parsimony.

In a day or two's time, however, all difficulties were overcome, and two field bakeries of 32 ovens each, employing 490 men, were at work night and day. Each oven furnished 120 three-pound loaves every two hours, or 240 rations, as each soldier received a pound and a half of bread each day. The 64 ovens therefore furnished more than sufficient to feed the whole Serbian Army, and the refugees who had accompanied it.

At first some difficulty was experienced with the meat. The authorities distributed, with laudable

prodigality, large quantities of Australian frozen meat to the starving troops. But the Serbian soldier had never seen frozen meat in his life, and as the authorities omitted to give them directions for unfreezing it, he simply threw it into boiling water and proceeded to cook it. When the meat was taken out it was found to resemble a section of a pneumatic tyre, and proved just about as digestible. This caused not a little perturbation in the camps, till it was explained to the men that frozen meat must first gradually thaw and return to its normal condition before any attempt is made to cook it.

Of course the organization of the various camps was not an affair of hours or even days. The weather at first was most unfavourable, to an extent that caused great doubt as to the wisdom of choosing Corfu as a reorganization base. During the first few weeks it rained with persistence and a force that might have rendered a seal anxious. The unfortunate Serbs had no tents, and such huts as they were able to construct were a poor protection against the torrential downpour. If it was not raining it was hailing.

The result was that the various camps became seas of mud, while the roads began to give way under the excessive strain imposed upon them by the mass of traffic between the camps and the port. All this imposed fresh work on the officers and men conducting the various operations and assuring the provisioning and equipping of the troops. It also hampered considerably the training of the recruits.



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The Serbian soldiers, too, were badly clothed to meet such inclement weather. Their uniforms were in rags and their footwear for the most part in a lamentable condition. There were large numbers of new uniforms and boots sent from France and England, but it was not possible to begin the distribution till the men were organized into regular military units, sections, companies, battalions and regiments.

The new uniforms for the Serbian Army were sent from France and England, while the new footwear had been purchased in the United States. As soon as the army had received its new equipment, the various units were at once formed, and the reorganization of the mass of men as a fighting machine was begun.

Of course the length of time required for the reconstitution of the units was not great in the case of men who had already served, and possessed a military instruction. But with the army were thousands of young men of the new "classe" who were totally untrained. These, after they had rested from the hardships they had undergone during the retreat, had to be clothed, armed and instructed. The army was further without artillery or means of transport, as all guns and wheeled vehicles had had to be destroyed before it left Serbian soil. All that it possessed were the officers' chargers and several thousand cavalry and pack-horses that had served to carry provisions during the retreat across the mountains. There were also a number of mountain batteries and machine gun sections with their mules.

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It speaks well for the quality of the Serbian soldier that by the month of April certain units were again thoroughly reconstituted and were sent off to Salonica to take their place in the fighting-line.

## PART II

THE CAMPAIGN ON THE SALONICA FRONT



TO  
L. L. C.

Washington, D. C.  
November, 1919.



## INTRODUCTION

**D**URING the world-war just terminated, with its clash of peoples on a score of fronts, it was difficult for the public to follow the various phases and realize their relative importance. Military tactics and strategy were often divorced from policy, with the result that the co-ordination of the effort suffered, and the war, instead of being waged by the Allies as a whole on a well-defined plan, was split up into a series of water-tight compartments, each of which was regarded by those fighting in it as the crucial one for the decision of the whole war. Some fronts were given undue prominence, others excited little or no interest.

An example of the latter was the Salonica front. The Army of the Orient was the Cinderella of the Allies, as far as treatment was concerned. This front was in certain quarters regarded as one of merely secondary importance. The Army of the Orient, under the command of General Sarrail, was considered to have the mission of holding the line from Monastir to the Aegean, so as to exercise pressure on the German, Austrian, Bulgarian and Turkish forces defending it, immobilize them and prevent their utilization elsewhere. But there was no intention of so reinforcing the Allied Army as to permit of its undertaking an

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energetic offensive and, *coûte que coûte*, cutting the Berlin-Constantinople Railway.

This was, however, a completely false conception of the mission of the Army of the Orient. The Salonica front was not one of *secondary* importance; it was a front of *capital* importance. On no other front would such immense and far-reaching effects, military and political, have resulted from a successful offensive.

In stating this I am not expressing a merely personal opinion. During the eighteen months I spent with the Headquarters Staff of the Serbian Army, I had continual opportunity of discussing with officers of the highest rank the importance of the whole Balkan front, and in the ten months I passed on the Salonica front, of discussing the real mission of the Army of the Orient. I found them unanimous in their opinion as to the importance of the operations in Macedonia.

In their opinion, the objective of the Army of the Orient was the cutting of the Berlin-Constantinople Railway. It was notorious that Germany drew immense resources from Asia Minor, and that Bulgaria and Serbia were also laid under contribution. A swarm of German officials had been sent down to these countries, which had been cut up into sections like a chessboard, and were swept clean of everything that could be made use of. All day and every day trains filled with food were rolling up to Germany from the Balkan States and Asia Minor, while the trains travelling from Germany to Constantinople were filled with munitions, without which the resist-



ance of Turkey to the British and Russian Armies would at once have collapsed.

The possession of the Berlin-Constantinople Railroad further assured the Central Powers the mastery of the Dardanelles. As Germany controlled the entrances to the Baltic, Russia was practically isolated from her Allies. The only means they had of forwarding war material to her was *via* Vladivostok or Archangel. In other words "Mittel-Europa" was realized and a situation created which, if it could have been made permanent, would have assured to Germany the domination of Europe, the first step to world dominion.

There is not the slightest doubt but that the cutting of the railway would have brought about the immediate collapse of Turkey. This would have meant the reopening of the Dardanelles, the reprovisioning of Russia, then still in the field, with munitions, of which she was sorely in need, and the delivery to the Allies of the immense quantities of food stuffs accumulated in Southern Russia after the closing of the Straits. At the same time the collapse of Turkey as a military Power would have set free the British armies in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Palestine and the Russian army in the Caucasus for service elsewhere.

The appearance of the Allied fleets in the Black Sea would undoubtedly have called a halt to the intrigue of the pro-German court camarilla surrounding the Czar and even if the Russian revolution had taken place, the Kerensky army, as a "force in being," would have been maintained, Bolshevism would have been

nipped in the bud and the whole course of the war might have been changed. The failure to recognize these elementary truths constitutes the second capital error of the Allies in the Balkans and undoubtedly prolonged the war by at least two years.

Once Bulgaria and Turkey were disposed of, the Army of the Orient could have reoccupied Serbia, moved on the Danube and threatened Budapest. The Hungarian capital would then have been menaced from three sides—from the Danube, from the Roumanian front and by the Russian Army then operating in the Bukavina. The country around Budapest being one immense plain, on which there are no fortresses of any importance, the defence of the capital would have been most difficult, and would have called for an immense number of men, which Austria at that moment did not possess.

The chief arguments of the opponents of the Salonica front were (1) the excessive demands it made on tonnage, (2) the difficulties of communication, and (3) the mountainous nature of the country.

The excessive demands made on tonnage for the transport of troops and war material was due to the failure of the Allies to utilize all the means of transport at their disposal. For eighteen long months they only made use of the sea route. As a transport steaming at ten knots (the speed imposed on it by the scarcity of coal) took ten days to make the voyage from Marseilles to Salonica, a ship could only deliver a cargo per month. At the same time the Mediter-

ranean and the Aegean were swarming with submarines and a large proportion of the transports were sunk. It was only in December, 1917, that some one in the War Office in London perceived that if troops and stores were forwarded by land to Taranto in the South of Italy, they could be shipped over to Greece in a single night, thus avoiding the submarine danger. One ship going backwards and forward between Italy and the Greek ports could therefore do the work of ten running from Marseilles to Salonica.

As soon as this was realized a clause giving the Allies the right to disembark troops and stores at Itea, the Greek railhead in the Gulf of Lepanto, whence they could be forwarded by rail to Salonica, was inserted in one of the many ultimata sent to King Constantine. The Italians also constructed a "route Carossable" from Santi Quaranta to Monastir, a marvel of military engineering, by which they were able to send thousands of tons a day of war material by motor-truck.

As regards the second difficulty—the means of communication in Macedonia itself—an immense improvement had been made. When the expeditionary force first landed, in 1915, there were only three lines of railway—and these single track—and such roads as had existed under the Turkish regime. But the three hundred thousand men composing General Sarrail's force, reinforced by thousands of Macedonian peasants, in less than a year and a half, constructed thousands of kilometres of roads and hundreds of kilometres of light railways.

Mountains, on which a year before only sheep tracks

existed, were made accessible to heavy guns. An immense amount of motor transport was accumulated, and hundreds of thousands of pack animals were at the disposal of the Allied Army. The Army of General Sarrail was, therefore, *if reinforced*, in a position to undertake a successful offensive. The Serbian advanced lines were in January, 1917, only a matter of eighty miles from Nish, one of the principal stations of the Berlin-Constantinople Railway.

The third objection—the mountainous nature of the country—was greatly exaggerated. It did not offer, as I will show in a subsequent chapter, any insuperable obstacle to military operations. The brilliant campaign of Field Marshal Mishitch, which culminated in the capture of Monastir, is a proof of this. He attacked, with inferior numbers, an enemy intrenched in most formidable mountain strongholds and drove them from one position after another. In fact the superior skill of the Serbians in mountain fighting gave them a distinct advantage over the Germans in a country like the Balkans. The knowledge of the country enabled them to seize advantages to outmanœuvre an enemy who was not accustomed to that kind of warfare. It may further be argued that in no country has there ever been so much fighting as in the Balkans.

The mountainous nature of the country did not prevent the States composing the Balkan League from inflicting, in 1912, a crushing defeat on Turkey; neither did it prevent the German-Austrian-Bulgarian Armies in 1915 from driving the Serbian Army into Albania. On that occasion, as I have described in the first sec-

tion of this book, two hundred and fifty thousand Serbs resisted the invasion of seven hundred and fifty thousand Germans, Austrians and Bulgarians for over two months. The fact that they were able to do so is only attributable to their superior skill in this kind of warfare.

But the Salonica front had not only immense military importance, its naval value could hardly be overestimated:—by this I mean its naval value to the enemy. If, by any chance, the Germans and their allies had driven the Army of the Orient out of Salonica and seized the city and bay, the effect would have been simply catastrophic.

The port of Salonica is one of the most magnificent in the world; a land-locked harbour miles in extent, in which the navies of the world could lie at anchor. If this had fallen into the hands of the Germans, they would at once have formed it into a submarine base of the most formidable kind. Then would have followed the invasion of Greece. Once the Germans were in firm possession of that country, they would have established other submarine bases in the rocky and indented coast line of Greece, and in the hundreds of islands forming the Archipelago. Once they were firmly established there the task of driving them out would have been one of superhuman difficulty.

The result would have been that hundreds of submarines and submarine mine-layers would have been let loose in the Aegean and the Mediterranean. It would have been perfectly possible for them to have stopped all traffic by the Suez Canal, thereby cutting

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Great Britain off from direct communication with India, and depriving the large British Army holding Egypt from receiving supplies and munitions. The attack by the Turks on the Suez Canal would then undoubtedly have been resumed, as the difficulty of providing the army defending Egypt with munitions would have rendered the chances of success more than probable.

Under these circumstances, the Suez Canal being put out of commission, the Germans would have left no stone unturned to bring about trouble in British India. That this was their programme is proved by the prosecution of Hindoo conspirators held in 1917 in San Francisco. With the Suez Canal cut, the only means of communication between Great Britain and India would have been the long and difficult voyage *via* the Cape of Good Hope.

It was therefore, for the Allies, a life and death question not only to maintain themselves in force on the Salonica front, but it was also of highest importance that this front should be so reinforced as to allow the Army of the Orient to take an energetic offensive and cut the Berlin-Constantinople line.

There was, in addition, the danger that the Russian collapse might any day set free some hundreds of thousands of German troops for service in the Balkans. There is no doubt that the Grand General Staff at Berlin was thoroughly alive to the immense results which would follow from successful operations at Salonica; in fact, the loss of Salonica would have been irreparable. Once Germany was master of the Aegean

and the Mediterranean, victory for her would be in sight. That the German Grand General Staff did not undertake these operations only proves how hard pressed it was on other fronts. This renders the failure of the Allies to realize their opportunity all the more inexcusable.

On the Salonica front the only possible policy was therefore an energetic offensive. But in certain British circles it was argued that this front could perfectly well fulfil its mission by simply defending the entrenched camp of Salonica. This, supported by the guns of the fleet, was, they declared, impregnable.

There could be no greater error. Any abandonment of the line running from the Albanian frontier across the plain of Monastir and along the Moglene mountain range to Lake Doiran and the Struma valley would have been disastrous. It would have permitted the German troops and their allies to seize Greece and threaten Salonica both by land and sea. Once masters of Greece, Germany would have had little difficulty in rendering the access to Salonica by sea or land either impossible or a matter of extreme difficulty.

The entrenched camp could have been closely invested until such time as the Germans and their allies had established themselves solidly in Greece and Greek Macedonia and concentrated overwhelmingly superior forces for an attack. With the Aegean Sea swarming with hostile submarines the position of the force defending the entrenched camp would have been precarious in the extreme. The prize was too great for the Germans not to put forward every effort to win it.

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Such a policy would have cut off all communication between the Italian force in Albania and the Army of the Orient. Shortly after the capture of Monastir the *liaison* was successfully established between the Italian army of occupation in Albania and the forces of General Sarrail, so that the fighting line was practically continuous from Valona on the Adriatic to the Gulf of Cavalla on the Aegean. The successful expulsion of the Germans and Bulgarians from Greek Macedonia entailed ten months of hard fighting and cost the Army of the Orient forty thousand men. Its abandonment would have meant the loss of thousands of kilometres of roads and hundreds of kilometres of light railways constructed at a cost of millions of dollars. In addition the unfortunate population would have been delivered over to the tender mercies of a ruthless and cruel enemy.

No more suicidal policy could, therefore, have been imagined than any abandonment of the conquered territory by the Allies and the idea of confining the task of the Army of the Orient to the defence of the entrenched camp was in the opinion of all competent authorities on the spot with whom I discussed the question, strategically and tactically unsound.

But the months passed and nothing was done. The only momentary act of energy was the brilliant six weeks' campaign of Field Marshal Mishitch which resulted in the capture of Monastir. But as he possessed no reserves he was unable to follow up his victory. Not only did the British Government refuse to send reinforcements but the Army of the Orient was melt-



ing away as the result of the ravages of malaria. The armies sweltering on the plains round Salonica fell victim to it by tens of thousands. At one time there were not hospital ships enough to repatriate the sick.

In the early months of 1917, I had occasion to visit Paris and London and made it my business to find out the views of the French and British statesmen regarding the Salonica front. In Paris I had long conversations with M. Briand, then Prime Minister, M. Stephen Pichon, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, General Malterre, the famous French military writer, and a score or so of other public men and soldiers. I found them unanimous in favor of an energetic offensive on the Salonica front and equally unanimous in deploring the shortsightedness of the British military authorities.

When I spoke with M. Briand and urged the importance of the Salonica front he replied to me: "My dear Mr. Gordon Smith, you are preaching to the converted. It was I who sent the Army of the Orient to Salonica and who have kept it there. If you see Mr. Lloyd George in London tell him from me that M. Briand is more convinced than ever of the strategical and political importance of the Salonica front."

A week later I was in London and found myself face to face with a stone wall. The public knew nothing about Salonica and cared less. The "Daily Mail" had on January 18th published an article proposing purely and simply to withdraw the whole army from Salonica, a repetition of Gallipoli. The impression made in Paris by this article was simply disastrous, so

much so, that the censor "got busy" and issued a stern warning to the press to abstain from discussing the situation in Salonica.

The military censorship would allow no discussion of the situation in the Balkans. All the correspondents of London journals were expelled from Salonica with the exception of Mr. Ward Price, correspondent of the Newspapers Proprietors Association (a syndicate of the London journals) and Mr. Ferguson of Reuters Agency. As all their dispatches were strictly censored first in Salonica and a second time in London no news of any importance was allowed to transpire and the word Salonica had practically disappeared from the columns of the London press. It was openly declared that it was on the Western front alone that the war would be decided and no discussion of this theory was permitted.

After a number of conversations with Lord Northcliffe, I obtained his permission to state the case for Salonica in a letter to the Editor of the "Times." This I did in terms of extreme moderation but was informed two days later that it had been suppressed by the censor from the first line to the last and returned to the "Times" with the orders "not to be published" stamped on every page.

This was, of course, in the days before General Foch had been given supreme command and entrusted with the direction of the whole war. General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial Staff, and all the men surrounding him were out-and-out "Westerners" and refused to listen to any proposals to

undertake an offensive elsewhere. As a result the Army of the Orient, its ranks ravaged by malaria, due to the failure to advance out of the swampy plains surrounding Salonica, was melting away uselessly in complete inaction. It was an open secret that in England the military men had completely got the upper hand and had seized not only the military but also the political conduct of the war. The War Office and the Foreign Office were at daggers drawn. The Imperial General Staff turned a deaf ear to all counsels which did not square with their preconceived views.

It was only after weeks and weeks of sapping and mining that the civil power was able to assert itself once more. Mr. Lloyd George planned in secret the organization of the Supreme War Council in Versailles. When its creation was intimated to General Sir William Robertson he at once, in protest, tendered his resignation which (probably much to his surprise) was promptly accepted. Colonel Repington, the military writer of the "Times," also an out-and-out "Westerner" to whom the Salonica front was anathema, rushed to the assistance of his chief with such a want of moderation of language that he was promptly haled before the courts and fined £100 under the Defence of the Realm Act. Then General Maurice tried his little *coup d'état* and when the steam roller had passed over him also the power of the Imperial General Staff to impose its will on the statesmen was at an end. Mr. Lloyd George triumphed and General Foch was entrusted with the supreme direction of the war. The result was a complete change

of policy and strategy in the Balkans. General Sarraill was recalled and replaced by General Guillaumat, one of the most brilliant commanders from the Western front. As soon as he had the Army of the Orient reorganized and reinforced General Franchet d'Esperey, the commander of the Fifth French Army Group, was sent out to take command at Salonica and an energetic offensive was at once begun.

As before, the chief attack was entrusted to the Serbian Contingent of the Army of the Orient. It attacked with splendid *élan* the Bulgarian entrenchments on the Dobra Polie, drove in their centre and then rolled the opposing army up right and left. Through the breach thus made poured the French and British contingents, the retreat became a rout and in five days time the army of King Ferdinand capitulated.

The Serbs continued their triumphant advance, the Berlin-Constantinople Railway was seized and the Danube front reached. In a fortnight's time Turkey collapsed, the Dardanelles were opened and the Allied fleets entered the Black Sea. Austria, menaced by the attack of the victorious Army of the Orient, saw the game was up and sued for peace. The German Empire was therefore menaced from the rear. Field Marshal von Hindenburg saw that under these circumstances nothing could save the situation and begged for an armistice. Thus the war which began in the Balkans, for the Balkans, ended in the Balkans.

That this would have been the inevitable result of

an energetic offensive had long been clear to everyone on the spot but unfortunately the voices of those who advocated it had been the "voices of those crying in the wilderness." It is only when the historian begins a detailed study of the world war in all its phases that the astounding errors of the Entente in its Near Eastern policy will become apparent.

But the consequence of these terrible errors was not only to prolong the war but it caused unheard of suffering to the victims of these errors. What Serbia suffered is indescribable. Over twenty-five per cent. of her population succumbed, her territory was ruthlessly plundered and she has piled up a war debt that will tax her economic resources to the uttermost for many a day to come. As she had to incur this debt mainly through the incredible blunders of the statesmen of the Entente who refused to listen to her warnings, the least that the Allies can do is to pass all the credits with which they supplied Serbia to profit and loss.

In the following pages I propose to give an account of the marvellous services rendered to the Allied cause by the Army of King Peter.

## CHAPTER I

### THE FRANCO-BRITISH OPERATIONS ON THE SALONICA FRONT

AS my main object in this volume is to furnish a description of the rôle played by Serbia in the World War, the greatest amount of space will naturally be devoted to the operations of the army of King Peter.

But as these operations were only the continuation of operations already begun by the Franco-British force under the command of General Sarrail (known as the Army of the Orient) we must, in order to completely understand the rôle of this army, hark back to the month of September, 1915, and consider the genesis of the Salonica front.

The creation of this front was not a voluntary act on the part of the Entente Powers. It was imposed on them by the enemy. Since the end of 1914 the conduct of the war and all initiative had passed into the hands of the Central Powers. This was inevitable owing to the fashion in which the Allies had organized the conduct of the war. They possessed no central authority, no common council empowered to carry on the war as a whole.

Each time some German success placed them face

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to face with a *fait accompli* the Powers composing the Quadruple Alliance began hastily to take council. Paris consulted London, London got into touch with Petrograd and Petrograd obtained the views of Rome. But while the Allies were thus, to use a vulgar but graphic expression, "chewing the rag," events were moving swiftly. The contrast in the enemy camp was complete. There the will of the Kaiser was the only factor that counted. When he pressed the button Vienna, Sofia and Constantinople moved like one man. Napoleon once said "*l'Autriche est toujours en arrière, d'un idée, d'une année, d'un corps d'armée.*" This ironical phrase of the great captain completely describes the situation and policy of the Allies.

When therefore in September, 1915, it began to dawn on the statesmen of the Entente that the astute M. Radoslavoff and his still more astute King had been fooling them they began hastily to cast about to repair the errors committed. Their first act was to get into communication with Greece to find out the attitude and policy of the Athens Government. Greece had an offensive and defensive treaty of alliance with Serbia according to which Greece was bound to come to the latter country's aid in case of an attack by any third Power. But by the terms of this treaty Serbia undertook to put 150,000 men on the Serbo-Bulgarian frontier. As it was obvious that, in view of the impending attack by Germany and Austria on the Danube front, it was impossible that Serbia

could find these troops, M. Venizelos suggested that the Allies should provide them.

To this the Allies consented and on October, 1915, began disembarking troops at Salonica. At the same time M. Venizelos ordered the mobilization of the Greek army. But at this point a fresh complication arose. Though Bulgaria had mobilized her army she had not attacked Serbia so that the *casus foederis* provided for in the treaty did not actually exist and Greece was still nominally neutral. M. Venizelos was, therefore, forced, as a matter of form, to issue a protest against the landing of the Franco-British troops on Greek soil. At the same time the Greek general commanding at Salonica—General Moskhopoulos,—was ordered to make no opposition to the landing but on the contrary to show the French and British commanders every courtesy.

But both the Allies and M. Venizelos reckoned without Greece's pro-German King. A week later he dismissed M. Venizelos from office and replaced him by M. Zaimis, who was pledged to a repudiation of the Graeco-Serbian Treaty and the continuation of so called neutrality on the part of Greece. At the same time no active opposition was made to the continued disembarkation of Franco-British troops. But the succession of Greece had radically changed the situation. Instead of being flanked by 300,000 Greek allied soldiers the handful of men landed (about 20,000) constituted the entire force that was to save Serbia. These were afterwards reinforced by the 10th British Division from Gallipoli, 13,000 men. France also sent



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some further reinforcements so that at the opening stage of the campaign the army under General Sarraïl numbered nearly 40,000 men.

On October 11th actual hostilities began. On that date Bulgarian troops under General Boyadzhieff crossed the Serbian frontier at various points and the Serbian army, which was resisting the fierce attack of the Austro-Germans on the Danube front, found themselves taken in the flank by overwhelmingly superior forces. The first object of the Bulgarian army was to cut communications between Serbia and Salonica. This was accomplished by the capture on October 17th of Egri-Palanka and on October 21st of Varanje. On that date the Serbian Government and the foreign legations were forced to leave Nish for Kraljevo.

The chief objective of the invading Bulgarian army was the capture of Uskub (Skoplie). The strategic importance of Uskub lies in the fact that it is not only the principal town of the Vardar Valley but it is the point where the Salonica-Nish railway has its junction with the branch line to Mitrovitza, in the Sandjak of Novi-Bazaar, on which the Second Serbian Army was retiring. If the Franco-British force could have captured and held Uskub, a safe line of retreat would have been secured for the Second Serbian Army.

But it was not to be. On October 20th General Todoroff took Veles (Kuprulu) and two days later the victorious Bulgarian army entered Uskub. This placed the Serbian forces in the lower Vardar Sector

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in a perilous position and forced them to fall back on the Babuna Pass which commands the entrance to the Pelagonian Plain and covers the towns of Prilep and Monastir. The last hope of the Franco-British force for preventing a disaster was to effect a junction at Veles between the Serbian forces operating down the Babuna Pass and the French force advancing up the Valley of the Vardar. If Veles could have been won, the Allies, advancing over the flat plains to the east of the Vardar, known as the Ovche Polie, would have threatened the Bulgarian communications between Uskub and Kumanovo.

The attack on the Krivolac-Veles Sector was assigned to the three French divisions under the command of General Sarrail. The guarding of the rest of the Valley of the Vardar from Krivolac to Salonica was entrusted to the small British force under General Sir Bryan Mohon. On October 27th two battalions of the 10th British Division moved up from Salonica and took over the Kosturino—Lake Doiran front. The same day the French entered Krivolac and began the advance upstream to Gradsko.

Little hope was felt however of reaching Veles, the difficulties were almost unsurmountable. If this movement failed the last chance of establishing contact with the Southern Serbian Army was through the difficult country between Krivolac and Prilep. But first of all the position at Krivolac itself had to be assured. This was rendered difficult by the fact that the enemy kept up a continuous bombardment from the east of the river. On October 30th two Bulgarian

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battalions attacked the bridgehead on the left bank, but the attack was not pushed home and was easily repulsed. The French pushed forward to the heights of Kara Hojjali on the other side of the river and held them against repeated attacks. Four days later the French captured the bridges over the Tchernia River. A week later these detachments pushed across the Tchernia and seized the villages of Krushevatz and Orkva. The Bulgarians made desperate but vain efforts to recapture these positions, losing 4000 men in four days. The French continued to push forward along the left bank of the Tchernia and seized the lower slopes of Mount Archangel.

The Bulgarian positions were so seriously menaced that they rushed troops from Veles to the threatened points, the 49th Reserve Regiment, the 3d Macedonian Regiment and the 53d Regiment arriving in rapid succession. Anglo-French troops sent to reinforce the Serbians holding the entrance to the Babuna Pass aided them to repulse a Bulgarian attack on Iznor. But with this effort the Allies had shot their bolt. Ever increasing pressure from the Bulgarians forced the Serbians, on November 16th, to fall back on Prilep and the Babuna Pass fell into the hands of the enemy.

Encouraged by this success the Bulgarians renewed their attacks on the French troops holding the Tchernia and Rajec rivers. The French resisted valiantly for over a fortnight, but when on November 25th the Serbian armies were forced to again retreat further operations ceased to have any object or value. The troops were withdrawn to the right bank of the

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Tchernia and were massed around Kavadar. Thence, always keeping the *liaison* with the detachment falling back from Krivolac, they fell back through the Demir Kapu. This was a delicate and dangerous operation, for though the defile of the Demir Kapu is fairly broad at its entrance, its exit, twelve miles distant, is a narrow, rocky gorge, 500 yards long, from which the defile takes its name, Demir Kapu being Turkish for "Iron Gate."

After some days severe fighting the French troops on December 9th succeeded in traversing this gorge in safety and took up fresh positions on the Boyemia River, with the Tenth British Division on their right.

By this time considerable reinforcements both French and British had disembarked at Salonica but the greatest difficulty was experienced in making use of them owing to the state of communications. The roads to Doiran were mere cattle tracks which were soon churned into a quagmire in which it was impossible to move transport and guns. The position of the British force round the lake became so critical that General Sir Charles Monro, who had been in command of the whole British Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces with headquarters at Malto since October 28th, urged on General Sarrail the necessity of the immediate withdrawal of the French Divisions from Serbia. If this was not done there was danger that the German and Bulgarian forces would drive back the small British force holding the Strumitza Valley and would cut off the retreat of General Sarrail's army. On December 5th the Bulgarians at-

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tacked the British fiercely in overwhelming numbers and nothing but the tenacity of the Tenth Division,—composed of four crack Irish regiments, the Munster, Dublin and Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Connaught Rangers—saved the day. In falling back on positions to the right of the Boyemia line this Division lost 1500 men and 8 guns.

But even the Boyemia line proved untenable. The small Franco-British force was too much *en l'air*, too far removed from the Salonica base. In addition the Bulgarians, who on December 2d had occupied Monastir, threatened their flank and rear.

It therefore became questions of retiring on to Greek territory. This at once raised political difficulties. The Greeks were alarmed at the prospect of an invasion of Germano-Bulgarian troops in pursuit of the retreating allied army. A large number of Greek troops were concentrated around Salonica and it was known that at Athens in certain circles the idea of disarming and interning the retreating French, British and Serbian armies was gaining ground.

This caused the Allies to take drastic measures and on November 23d they presented the Skouloudis Government (which on November 7th had replaced the Saimis Cabinet) with a note stating that "In view of the attitude adopted by the Hellenic Government toward certain questions affecting the security of the Allied troops and their freedom of action (two privileges to which they are entitled in the circumstances in which they landed in Greek territory) the Allied Powers have deemed it necessary to take cer-

tain measures, the effect of which is to suspend the economic and commercial facilities which Greece has hitherto enjoyed at their hands."

King Constantine and his Government disavowed any intention of attacking or interning the Anglo-French troops. Their attitude was less clear as regards the Serbian troops and they were much opposed to the idea of withdrawing Greek troops from the zone of the Allied Armies or conceding to the latter the full use of railway and harbours.

The Greek Government offered to establish a "corridor" by which the Allied troops could retire on Salonica and embark there. Missions sent from France and England, headed by M. Denys Cochin and Lord Kitchener, failed to get anything but vague assurances from King Constantine. The blockade was accordingly maintained until December 12th, when the Athens Government gave way and consented to withdraw all the Greek troops except one division from Salonica.

On that date the entire Franco-British forces were on Greek territory holding a front running from Karasuli on the Vardar railway to Kilindir on the Salonica-Dedeagatch line. These two points are connected by a branch line of railway. It was on this line that the Allies prepared for the supreme attack by the enemy. But this attack never came. Why the Central Powers failed to take advantage of their opportunity to finally crush the Allied resistance and capture Salonica has never been explained. The Athens Government pretended that they deserved the

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credit for this as the Bulgarians feared the intervention of Greece if they invaded Greek territory; but in view of the subsequent treason of the Greek King and Government in surrendering Fort Rupel this seems little probable.

It is more likely that the Germans counted on King Constantine's "neutrality" to render the positions of the Allied forces untenable and lead them to abandon the whole Salonica front, the more so as the Germans were openly boasting of a coming invasion of Egypt and announcing their offensive on the Verdun front. In addition there was wrangling between Berlin and Sofia as to whether the forces in the Balkans should be under the supreme command of a Bulgarian or a German General. Vienna and Sofia were further in hot dispute as to the ultimate fate of Salonica, both Austria and Bulgaria claiming the right to annex it when captured. Whatever may have been the reasons for the hesitation of the Central Powers the fact remains that the Franco-British armies were able, unmolested, to take over their new positions on Greek territory.

When this was accomplished the whole mission and scope of the Army of the Orient had changed. Its original objective was an energetic offensive to save the Serbian army and prevent the Austro-German forces under General von Mackensen joining hands with the Bulgarians. In this it had failed. The Serbian Army, as I have described in the first part of this book, had been driven back to the confines of Serbia and forced to retreat into Albania. Salonica,

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instead of being a mere port of disembarkation, had changed to the base of a new defensive front, that of Macedonia. The task of General Sarrail's army was no longer that of driving out the Germano-Bulgarian army but was to prevent the port of Salonica falling into the hands of the enemy.

The first care of the Allied Commander-in-chief was to prepare the defence of the entrenched camps of Salonica. This was no easy task as the total number of soldiers at his disposal at this date did not exceed 200,000 men. On account of the smallness of his army General Sarrail could not dream of holding either the outer or the inner ring of mountains which surround the city and plain of Salonica.

As a consequence the western line of defence was established on the Vardar. Towards its mouth this river is marshy, forming a natural obstacle to enemy attack, and this made it possible for the line to be held with the minimum number of men. But the sector had one serious drawback, the fact that malaria raged here six months in the year. From the village of Topshin on the Vardar the line ran east to Langhaza and Beshik Lakes, reaching the Gulf of Orfano at Stavros. The total length of the line was fifty miles.

Behind this line lay the Chalcidice Peninsula into which, if hard pressed, the Army of the Orient could have retired. As this is bounded on the western side by the Gulf of Salonica and on the eastern side by the Gulf of Orfano the guns of the fleet could have powerfully aided the land forces and rendered the peninsula practically untenable for the enemy. Gen-



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eral Castelnaud, Field Marshal Joffre's chief of staff, who made a tour of inspection on December 20th, declared his opinion that the entrenched camp of Salonica was practically impregnable.

Nothing was neglected to still further strengthen the natural advantages of the position. A deep and elaborate system of trenches with formidable barbed wire entanglements was constructed from which numerous machine gun batteries commanded all the points from which the enemy could attack.

But if the military situation was fairly satisfactory it is more than could be said of the political one. As the Army of the Orient was on what was technically neutral territory, French and British politically enjoyed no more rights than the enemy. The presence in Salonica of Austrian, German, Bulgarian and Turkish consulates, together with hundreds of German and Austrian civilians and thousands of Turks and Bulgarians, was a constant menace against which a large force of military police had to be employed.

This soon found evidence that the various consulates, as was to be expected, were centres of enemy espionage. Their activities were undoubtedly at the bottom of the enemy air raids and after one of these General Sarrail ordered the consuls to be arrested. This action on the part of the French commander-in-chief caused loud protest from the Greek Government. This, however, died away when the French were able to bring proof that the consulates were not only the headquarters of enemy propaganda and espionage but were actually used as storehouses for arms and muni-

tions with which it was evidently the intention of the enemy to arm the enemy section of the population in case of a serious reverse to the Allies.

In spite of the loud assurance by the Greeks of their "benevolent" neutrality the policy of the Athens Government was viewed with profound (and as it afterwards turned out well merited) suspicion. The defence of Eastern Macedonia, of which the vital point was the great iron girder bridge of Demirhissar, on which the railway line from Doiran to Seres crosses the Struma, was in Greek hands. The northern extremity of the bridge was guarded by Fort Rupel, the key position of the Struma entrance into Greece. Fort Rupel was the most powerful fortress on Greek soil. But as General Sarrail had no confidence that the Greek garrison would put up an energetic defence against the Bulgarians he gave orders that the bridge of Demirhissar and a smaller one at Kilindir, near Doiran, should be blown up. This was done on January 12th.

A week later General Sarrail was officially entrusted with the supreme command of the Army of the Orient. Up to that time, General Sir Byran Mohon, the commander of the British contingent, had been independent of General Sarrail and subject only to the orders of General Sir C. C. Monro, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

General Sarrail's first act on assuming supreme command was to seize the fortress of Kara Burun, the "Black Headland," which commands the entrance to

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the inner Gulf of Salonica. This action caused some sensation at Athens and led to loud protest from the governmental press.

During the winter months operations were chiefly confined to skirmishes between the cavalry of both sides occasionally reinforced by light artillery. Meanwhile reinforcements, British and French, were arriving steadily so that by the end of the winter the Army of the Orient had increased to 300,000 men. Enemy air raids both by aeroplanes and Zeppelins were frequent, but after one of the latter was brought down in the Vardar marshes and its crew captured no further attacks by dirigibles were attempted. Such was the position of the Army of the Orient when in the spring of 1916 the transportation of the reorganized Serbian army from the Island of Corfu to Salonica was begun.

## CHAPTER II

### REORGANIZATION AND DISEMBARKMENT OF THE SERBIAN ARMY

WHILE the French and British contingents were opposing the advance toward Salonica of the Germano-Austro-Bulgarian armies the Serbian army was carrying out its now legendary retreat through the desolation of Albania and its transport to the Island of Corfu.

This retreat and transport I have described in the first part of this work. The total number of Serbian soldiers who were able to effect this retreat was about 150,000. Of these about 5000 succeeded in reaching the Salonica front, 10,000, mostly sick and wounded, were transported to the French military centre at Bizerta in Tunis and the remainder found refuge in Corfu. Of these large numbers were sick and all were in a state of extreme exhaustion. As the decision to convey King Peter's army to Corfu was only taken at the last moment no preparations had been made to receive them on that island. The result was that the era of hardship and suffering was not closed for the Serbs. As a consequence hundreds succumbed to exhaustion and wounds received during the retreat.

But there remained about 100,000 men who, after

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being rested and reorganized, would still be good for active service. With that incredible devotion to duty which characterizes the Serbian army it at once proceeded, with admirable energy, to reorganize a new fighting force and equip it for the field.

It was decided to form three Armies (each of two divisions of infantry) with the necessary technical and special arms; a division of cavalry of four regiments; the units necessary for the General Headquarters and, in addition, the Commander and Staff for the reserve troops to be drawn from the 10,000 men at Bizerta as soon as these should have recovered from their wounds and sickness and be able to return to active service.

The Divisions of Infantry consisted of four regiments, each of three battalions, one regiment of the first "Ban," the divisional Cavalry, the divisional Artillery (field, mountain and howitzer batteries), divisional engineer troops and the necessary sanitary and commissariat sections and the army transport service.

It was further decided to form first a division and later, if possible, an army corps, of the Jugo-Slav volunteers from the Russian front and elsewhere. The fundamental basis of the new organization was definitely laid down at a conference held at Paris in the month of March at which were present officers delegated from the Serbian Army and officers representing the French Ministry of war. All questions regarding equipment, field transport and provisioning

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of the new Serbian Army were taken over by France and Great Britain.

At this conference it was decided that in view of the political and military situation the Serbian Army, after its reorganization, should be transported to the Salonica front, with a view to undertaking as an autonomous army, military action in co-operation with the Allies to drive the enemy from the territory occupied by him and force him to capitulation. It was further decided that the Division of Serbian Volunteers operating in Russia should, for the time being, be left in that country to co-operate with the Russian armies and the army of Roumania, whose entry into the war on the side of the Entente was momentarily expected.

Thanks to the patriotism and admirable military qualities of the Serbian soldier, his high conception of duty and his marvellous spirit of self-sacrifice and thanks also to the systematic and energetic efforts of the Serbian high command, the work of the reorganization of the Serbian army was accomplished with a speed and thoroughness worthy of all praise.

When the army arrived in Corfu in the early winter of 1916 it was in the last stages of destitution. All that the men possessed were their broken footwear and their ragged uniforms. Of arms nothing was left but the rifle and bayonet each man carried and the few machine guns they had been able to transport on muleback through Albania. By the month of May reuniformed, re-equipped, formed into companies, battalions, regiments, brigades and divisions, with its

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staff completely reformed, it was again ready for the field. And this effort had been demanded from men who had been constantly at war since 1912, who had fought the Turks, the Bulgarians, the Albanians, the Austrians and finally the combined German, Austrian and Bulgarian armies. This resurrection of King Peter's army as a fighting force was one more proof of the wonderful virility of "The nation that can never die."

While the Serbian army was preparing at Corfu for the new campaign the war material for the army was being assembled in France. This was concentrated at the towns of Orange, Lunel and Mantauban in the South of France. As the entire artillery, pontoon train, field telegraphy, ambulance, transport wagons, motors, horses and all the thousand and one things that go to make up the impedimenta of a modern army in the field had to be transported to Salonica the task was a formidable one. At Salonica camps and magazines had to be established where this material could be stored till it was distributed to the troops.

But if the military part of the transportation of the Serbian army to the Salonica front ran smoothly enough it is more than could be said of the political part. The Entente Powers knew that the Mediterranean and the Ægean were swarming with enemy submarines. They also knew that the Central Powers would leave nothing undone to interfere with and if possible prevent the safe transport of King Peter's army. They, therefore, proposed that instead of making the long voyage round cape Matapan, where

it was notorious the submarines lay in wait for ships bound for Salonica, the transports should land at Itea or some other port in the Gulf of Corinth and be forwarded by the Larissa railway to Salonica.

But to this the Skouloudis Government raised endless objections. They claimed that the passage of the army would disorganize the ordinary traffic. Then the Serbs might bring infectious diseases into the country and, last but not least, the permission to cross Greek territory accorded to the Serbian army might be regarded as a breach of Greek neutrality and embroil them with the Central Powers. The real reason was of course, that the pro-German King Constantine desired to put every obstacle in the way of the Allies and delay as long as possible the arrival of the Serbian reinforcements on the Macedonian front, in the interest of his imperial brother-in-law, the Kaiser.

But while these long-drawn-out negotiations were going on at Athens the Serbian Headquarters began the transport of the troops by the sea route, preferring to take the risk of submarine attacks rather than lose any more time. For the transport France provided 21 vessels, Italy 5 and Great Britain 3. The army showed the greatest enthusiasm, the men being impatient to reach the new front where they could strike another blow for the liberation of their beloved Serbia.

The first transport left the island on April 8th. The embarkation of the First Army and the division of cavalry took place at the port of Govino. That of the Second and Third Armies at the port of



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Moraitika. The horses were embarked at the port of Corfu. The first troops to leave were the divisions of the Drina and the Danube, composing the Third Army, and the division of cavalry. Then followed the divisions of the Shumadia and Timok, composing the Second Army, and finally the divisions of the Morava and the Vardar, composing the First Army. The total number of voyages required was seventy-five. The transportation lasted two months, the first vessel sailing on April 8th and the last on June 5th. This latter carried the Headquarters Staff which was the last unit to leave Corfu.

Thanks to the tireless vigilance of the convoying fleets the Serbian army was transferred from Corfu to the Macedonian front without the loss of a single man. In order to reduce the danger of attack by enemy submarines the transports passed through the Corinth canal, thus avoiding the dangerous route by Cape Matapan. All that was left at Corfu was the Ministry of War, a battalion of old men of the Last Defence, a few gendarmes, some hospital units, a number of sick in convalescence and some labour companies, a total of about 10,000 men. When the troops left the island the Mayor of Corfu issued a proclamation in which he paid high tribute to the excellent conduct and admirable discipline of the Serbian army. Not one single crime, not one theft had been committed by this army of 150,000 men during the four months it spent on the island. In spite of the fact that when the Serbian army arrived it suffered intensely from cold, being without tents or other shelter.

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the troops had not cut down a single one of the thousands of olive trees which are one of the principal sources of the prosperity of the island.

The military authorities at Salonica decided that the Serbian army should disembark on the Chalcidice Peninsula, at the little port of Mikra. Here floating pontoons were established alongside of which the transports were moored and disembarked troops and material. The necessary magazines, field bakeries, etc., had been established in advance so that the feeding and provisioning of the troops proceeded smoothly from the first day of their landing.

A large number of bathing-houses had been erected where the troops were bathed and their effects disinfected. When this was accomplished each unit was sent to the camp at Sedes, where it remained five days in quarantine before being sent to the permanent camps. These camps had all been prepared in advance with food magazines, field bakeries, pure water supply, etc. They had been laid out by advance parties of Serbian troops, assisted by the 17th French Colonial Division which was encamped at Mikra Bay. The camps were very spacious, the troops having large quantities of ground for drill and manœuvres. The only drawback was the complete absence of trees. As a result of this the army suffered very much from the torrid heat of June and July.

Simultaneously with the landing of the army began the disembarkment of its war material which, as I have said, was assembled in the South of France. As fast as it arrived it was distributed to the troops who

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began at once, under the direction of a mission of French officers, to familiarize themselves with the new material. In spite of the tropical heat the training of the troops in the handling of their new war material was carried on in such an intense and energetic fashion that by the second half of June the army, completely equipped (with the exception of a small amount of artillery and transport) and trained, was ready to take the field once more.

The Prince Regent Alexander, Commander-in-Chief of the army and the General Headquarters were installed in Salonica. The Headquarters occupied a handsome and spacious house in the Quartier des Compagnes which had formerly been the Austro-Hungarian Consulate, while Prince Alexander established the royal Konak in a villa on one of the side streets at right angles, the main highway running along the bay.

## CHAPTER III

### FINAL CONSTITUTION OF THE ARMY OF THE ORIENT

**T**HE last Serbian transport landed its quota of troops at Mikra on the 6th of June, 1916. A few days later the Headquarters Staff arrived. The entire Serbian army was then on the Macedonian front.

But if there was a momentary lull in military operations on a grand scale, events of great political import were taking place. The complete abandonment of the offensive by the Allies and their retirement within the entrenched camp of Salonica had greatly encouraged the enemy and caused him to decide on an attack. The weak point of the Allied line was the position to the East of the Struma. The right bank of that river and the Greek frontier were guarded by French troops, but, except for the destruction of the Demirhissar bridge, nothing had been done to cover the eastern flank. It is true that this was occupied by Greek troops, but General Sarrail was filled with deep distrust of the soldiers of King Constantine. The positions they held should have guarded the Allies from enemy attack through the Struma valley. The entrance to this was commanded by Fort Rupel, the most formidable fortress in Greece. This fortress

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was strongly garrisoned by Greek troops and behind it lay two Greek army corps, one having its headquarters at Seres and the other at Kavala.

A few days later the French Commander-in-Chief received proof of how little confidence could be placed in the loyalty of the Greeks. On May 26th the Bulgarian army suddenly advanced on Rupel. The Commandant of the fort, after the merest pretence at resistance, surrendered it to the enemy. The key of the Struma valley was therefore now in the hands of the Bulgarians. It was subsequently discovered that this act of betrayal by the Greeks had been plotted months before. As far back as March General Yanakitsas, the Greek Minister of War, had sent instructions to all the Commandants of fortresses in Greece ordering them not to offer any resistance to the Bulgarian or German armies.

The surrender of Fort Rupel was a source of grave embarrassment to General Sarrail. It meant that he would have to immobilize a large number of troops to guarantee the holding of the Struma Valley as there was, of course, no dependence to be placed in the Greek forces making any serious effort to defend it. On the contrary the Greek troops became a direct menace to the Allies.

It is needless to say that this act of treachery led to an instant irremediable breach between the Allies and the Skouloudis Government. A blockade of the Greek ports was at once established. This, on June 21st, was followed by a peremptory demand for the immediate dismissal of the Skouloudis Government

and its replacement by a *cabinet d'affaires* which should be entirely without political color and which should guarantee the continuance of "benevolent neutrality" vis-à-vis the Entente Powers.

The Powers further demanded the complete demobilization of the Greek army, the dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies, the dismissal of certain objectionable police officials and the holding of fresh elections. It was stated that this note would be supported by a naval demonstration. This, however, proved unnecessary as M. Skouloudis resigned in all haste and was succeeded by a cabinet under M. Zaimis.

On June 3d General Sarrail proclaimed the city of Salonica and the territory occupied by the Allies under martial law. Thanks to the arrival of the hundred thousand Serbs and other French and British reinforcements, the total number of troops under the supreme command of General Sarrail now amounted to about 400,000 men.

On July 30th a considerable force of Russian troops disembarked at Salonica and were, a fortnight later, followed by 30,000 Italians under General Count Alfonso Petitti de Roreto. The arrival of the Russians, who had made half the circuit of the globe to reach the Macedonian front, created a great sensation. All Salonica turned out to welcome them. It would be difficult to imagine a finer body of men and as they swung along the quays and past the Square of Liberty, where Flocas and half a score of other large cafés are situated, the thousands lining the streets cheered them to the echo. Much speculation

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was indulged in as to the effect upon the Bulgarians of the presence of Russian troops. When it was remembered that it was to Russia that Bulgaria owed her very existence and that 400,000 soldiers of the Tzar, who died to free Bulgaria from the yoke of the Turk, lie buried on the plains around Plevna it was thought that in very shame the soldiers of King Ferdinand would not fire on their former liberators.

Such at least was the feeling of the loyal Serbians. When the arrival of the Russians was announced in their *näivcté* they believed that their presence would be a source of embarrassment to the Bulgarians. They did not see how, in alliance with the Turks, from whose yoke Russia had set them free, the soldiers of King Ferdinand could open fire on the troops of the country which had liberated them. Up in the front line trenches the Serbian soldiers wrote on a piece of paper word of the arrival of the Russian contingent, wrapped it round a stone and threw it into the Bulgarian trenches. But they did not know their Bulgarians. The reply, which was shown me by Colonel Pavlovitch, the Commander of the Divisions of the Shumadia, contained the words: "Our bayonets are just as sharp for the Russians as for you."

The Italian division also was composed of picked troops, men who had seen active service on the Isonzo front. As they tramped up Venizelos Street, swinging along with light, elastic tread in spite of their heavy packs, they were a body of troops of which any commander might be proud. The dark faces of the men, bronzed by the sun of the Isonzo and the snow-chilled

winds of the mountains, showed them to be veterans. As is always the case in the Italian army, their engineer contingent was a *corps d'élite*. The regiment of "Pontonieri" had one of the most admirable bridging outfits I have ever seen, strong, light and compact. The men were for the most part natives of Venice, accustomed to working in the lagoons of that city. I saw the pontoon section at work later at the front and can testify that they were smart and efficient soldiers, who knew their business thoroughly.

With the arrival of the Russian and Italian contingents the Army of the Orient was definitely constituted. It was, in many respects, the most remarkable force in military annals, consisting as it did of French, British, Serbian, Russian and Italian troops. But though this certainly made for picturesqueness it did not make it as efficient a fighting machine as it would have been had it consisted of troops of a single nationality.

Each army enjoyed military and administrative autonomy. Each army had its own commander and its own headquarters staff. The French contingent was commanded by General Cordonnier, the British contingent by Lieutenant-General G. F. Milne, the Serbian army by the Prince-Regent Alexander, the Italian division by General Count Alfonso Petitti de Roreto and the Russian division by General Leontieff. The supreme command of the entire Army of the Orient was in the hands of General Sarrail and the General Headquarters Staff working under his orders.

At first there had not even been unity of command.



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During the operations on Serbian soil the movements of the British contingent were directed from Malta by General Sir C. C. Monro, commanding the British Mediterranean Expeditionary force. Of course, General Monro made every effort to maintain close *liaison* with General Sarrail, but it need not be pointed out what a handicap this dual command was in moments when it was necessary to take prompt decisions.

General Sarrail was a soldier of eminence who had played an active and a brilliant part on the Western front in France. He had the reputation of being an energetic and resourceful leader. During the retreat to the Marne he commanded the Third French Army, which held the sector round Verdun. He was chiefly responsible for the field entrenchments round that city (he belonged to the engineering arm of the French army) which afterwards allowed the French to successfully resist the attacks of the German Crown-Prince's army.

He had, however, the reputation of taking a more active interest in French party politics than is advisable in a soldier. By many his rapid advance and the confidence he enjoyed was ascribed to the support he received from the Radical-socialist party. This made him many enemies among military men and caused much division of opinion as to his real merits as a soldier. When he first arrived in Salonica he organized a Political Bureau as a part of the General Headquarters Staff to which a number of militarized deputies from the French Chamber belonged. This was later, by orders from Paris, dissolved and the soldier-

deputies recalled. Many people believed further that he occupied himself too much with political moves in Athens and in Greek Macedonia to the detriment of his military effort.

At the same time his task was no easy one. All his plans had to be communicated to the Headquarters Staff of the various contingents. As there were five of those there was an increased danger of leakage and this in a city swarming with enemy spies. There was no means of preventing the enemy learning the numbers and constitution of the Army of the Orient, as every man had to be disembarked from shipboard. As hundreds of Greek harbor workers were in enemy pay the Germans and Bulgarians knew, to a company, the composition of the Army of the Orient. They were able to obtain easily information of the sanitary condition of the army, knew the number of sick repatriated and the number in hospital. Every regiment sent up to the front was noted and the positions and concentration of the troops were known to the Macedonian population, which contained thousands of Greeks, Turks and Bulgarians, each a possible spy. Athens was in daily wireless and aeroplane communication with the enemy headquarters so that King Constantine was able to keep his imperial brother-in-law, the Kaiser, informed of every move of the Allies. As the Greek General Staff had been carefully selected for its pro-German sympathies the ministry of war at Athens was nothing more nor less than a branch of the *Grosse General Stab* in Berlin.

Another problem confronting General Sarrail was

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the question of communications. In the whole of Macedonia there were only three railroads, and these single-track, the Salonica-Monastir line, the Salonica-Uskub line and the line to Seres and Kavalla. The means of communication were hopelessly inadequate to provide for a field army of half a million men. Before, therefore, military operations could be undertaken on a large scale thousands of kilometres of roads and hundreds of kilometres of light Decauville railways had to be constructed. The three hundred thousand men under the command of General Sarrail and tens of thousands of Macedonian peasants were put to this heart-breaking task on Salonica territory.

Once the roads were constructed motor trucks, horse and ox drawn wagons and pack animals had to be provided by the thousands. Only by this formidable *service d'arrière*, a service which absorbed one full half of the total force, could the army in the field be kept supplied with food and munitions. Telegraph and telephone lines had to be laid over hundreds of square miles of territory while a formidable pontoon train had to be held in readiness for bridging the numerous streams and rivers.

But the worst enemy of the Army of the Orient was the malaria. The country between Salonica and the mountain range is notoriously ravaged each year by malarial fever of the most virulent kind. Whole divisions were placed *hors de combat*. When the Shumadia division was holding the Topshin sector it had over 2,000 men down with malaria out of a total of ten thousand. At one time the sick rate of the Army

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of the Orient rose to 10,000 a week. The number of fatal cases was very great and in cases where the men survived the period of convalescence was very long and the number of relapses very high.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SALONICA BASE

**T**HE failure of the Army of the Orient to save the Serbian army and its retirement on the entrenched camp of Salonica caused, as I have stated, a complete change in the situation in the Near East. Salonica from being a mere port of disembarkation for the army operating in Serbia became the center and base of a new defensive front, the front of Macedonia.

The Headquarters of the Army of the Orient were permanently established in that city, vast spaces were laid out around the city as camps and cantonments for troops, centres for supplies of ammunition, railway material, food, clothing and base hospitals. Martial law was established in the city and the local police was reinforced by hundreds of military police of all the nationalities represented in General Sarrail's polyglot army.

The city of Salonica lies at the bottom of a basin formed by a double range of mountains. These mountain barriers enclose a plain shaped like a fan of which the city was the centre, while the principal sticks are formed by the roads and railroads running to Monastir, Uskub and Seres.

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On the Southwest of Salonica the imposing massif of Mount Olympus, its summit snow-covered all the year round, towers 10,000 feet toward heaven. Forty miles to the west the Vermion (or Neagush) ridge just fails to link up the Olympus group with the line of mountains formed by the Greek frontier. This ridge, running due north and south, culminates in the Kara Tash (or Black Rock) 6,234 feet high.

The outer circle of mountains runs from the Vistritsa (Haliakmon) to the northwest under the name of "Nerechka" (or Peristeri) into Serbia, then, under the name of Nidje Planina, to the Vardar. On this latter range, the giant of the chain, the Kaymakchalan, which played such a rôle in the Serbian offensive, towers 8,284 feet into the clouds. From the Vardar this mountain chain, under the name of the Belasitza and Pirin ranges, runs along the frontier till it joins on the north the Bulgarian Rhodope. Toward the Aegean it is continued by the lower spurs of the Kruska and Beshik and the rocky peninsula of Chalcidice.

Through the rich Bottiaian plain flow the rivers Vistritza to the southwest, the Bistritsa to the west and the Vardar to the north, while on the east, between the inner and outer circles of mountains, the Struma flows down to the sea through the rift in the Belasitsa-Pirin chain. It was here that the Greeks constructed Fort Rupel, the strongest fortress in the Kingdom, and intended to close the pass against invasion from Bulgaria.

There are also a large number of lakes in the va-

rious valleys but the only ones of importance are Lake Tachinos, on the east, through which the Struma flows to the sea and Lake Langhaza and Beshik (Greek Volvi) which almost isolate the Chalcidice mountains from the eastern Macedonian system.

As may be readily understood in such a rugged country communications are difficult. To the north the Valley of the Vardar with its single line of railway furnished Serbia with her one link with the Aegean. The ancient Roman road, the Via Ignatia, on its way west from Byzantium to Dyrrachium (Durazzo), passed through Pella, now Yanitza, the capital of Philip of Macedon and the still older capital of Aigai (Vodena) and then turned north to Florina, Monastir, Okhrida and El-Bassan.

This ancient Roman road is to-day the only easy exit to the northwest and the Salonica-Monastir railway line, after making a detour south to Veria (the Berea of the Acts of the Apostles) joins it near Vodena and then follows it right up to the terminus at Monastir.

Towards the east the railway line from Salonica runs a most circuitous course, first going due north to Doiran, then east to Demirhissar and thence through Seres and Drama to Constantinople.

The third line of railway, Salonica-Nish, runs due north to Karasuli and Ghevgeli and then through the Demirkapir Ghevgeli pass to Uskub. Such were the main topographical features of the territory in which the Army of the Orient was called upon to operate and the meagre means of communications which ex-

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isted at this moment of the landing of General Sarrail's force.

The city itself offered few advantages. In spite of the fact that Salonica contained over 200,000 inhabitants the city proper had few houses that had any architectural pretensions. Except for the sea front, where the principal hotels were situated, the Place de la Liberté, where the Cercle de Salonica (the principal club of the city) and the chief cafés were found, the rue Venizelos and the Via Ignatia, the streets were narrow, crooked and sordid, the typical thoroughfares of an Eastern city. The paving is of the most wretched description and the lighting utterly inadequate. Mud and filth reign supreme and on a wet day the streets become almost impossible.

A contrast to the city proper is the aristocratic Quartier des Compagnes, which lies just beyond the White Tower, the chief landmark of the city, which owes its existence to the ancient Venetians. From the White Tower half way to Mikra Bay all along the sea front lay a succession of magnificent Villas owned by the millionaire merchants of the city. Chief among these was the Villa Allatini in which the late Sultan Abdul Hamud was imprisoned after the Young Turk revolution. Here also were the consulates of the various nations and here were established the headquarters of the various international contingents making up the Army of the Orient. The Headquarters of General Sarrail and his staff was housed at the other extremity of the town near the docks.

Like many Oriental cities Salonica, seen from the



sea, made a most imposing appearance. The buildings on the water front, the picturesque White Tower, the scores of magnificent Villas in the Quartier des Campagnes, with their beautiful gardens running down to the beach, the many tall and graceful minarets of the numerous mosques, the towers and cupolas of the Greek Orthodox churches, stood out against the background of green hills topped by the old Turkish citadel. It was only when the traveller landed and had to traverse the narrow dirty and crooked streets that he realized the real sordidness behind the magnificent façade.

(I speak of it in the past tense for of the magnificence and wretchedness of Salonica nothing today remains. The whole city from the docks to the White Tower was completely destroyed by the great conflagration of August, 1917. In that month a fire started at the Via Ignatia on the eastern side of the city and swept a lane transversely down to the White Tower. As there is no Fire Department in Salonica worthy of the name, the whole existence of the city was menaced. The troops of the garrison and the sailors from the allied fleets fought the flames valiantly and at one time seemed to have got the fire under control. Then suddenly the "Vardar," the north wind which in Salonica blows with hurricane force, sprang up, caught the fire broadside on and caused it to sweep the city throughout its breadth. In the presence of a catastrophe of this magnitude human courage was powerless and in a few hours nothing was left of Salonica but a mass of blackened

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ruins. The origin of the fire was never satisfactorily explained but there is good reason for believing that it was due to incendiarism, the more so as enemy aeroplanes made an attack on the town simultaneously and by means of incendiary bombs helped the work of the flames.)

As may be imagined such a city did not offer ideal accommodations to a military expedition on the scale of the Salonica one. The army had not only to contend with material shortcomings but the composition of the population added to the difficulties of the High Command. No city in Europe had such a mixed population as Salonica. One half was composed of Spanish Jews who landed there some centuries ago, driven out of Spain by the fierce persecutions to which they were subjected. Though they had ceased all relations with Spain since that time they still continued to speak the Spanish tongue. Their newspapers were written in Spanish printed in Hebrew characters.

Under the easy-going regime of the Turks the Salonica Jews had the commerce of the city entirely in their hands. Over ten thousand of them were "dumne" or Jewish converts to Mohammedanism, who had grafted the Talmud on the Koran in a curious fashion and produced a religion which was a curious mixture of the Jewish and Mohammedan faith. These "dumne" took an active part in Turkish politics and engineered the young Turkish revolution which drove Abdul Hamid from his throne. It was from the balcony of the Cercle de Salonique that Field

Marshal Chefket Pasha, Djavid Bey and Enver Bey proclaimed the revolution. It was from Salonica that Chefket Pasha's army corps began its march on Constantinople that cost the Sultan his throne.

As may be imagined after the political rôle they had played the Jewish population of Salonica did not welcome the invasion of the Greek and Bulgarian troops of the Balkan League with any enthusiasm when, in 1912, after defeating the Turks, they made their triumphal entry into Salonica. They still less welcomed the invasion of Greek merchants and business men which followed the military one and which at once began to challenge the commercial supremacy of the Jewish community. All their sympathies were with the Turks whose easy going methods of government had given them ample opportunity to monopolize the commerce of the city.

In addition to Jews and Greeks there was a large Turkish population, about 40,000, who sympathized with the Germans as the Allies of the Sultan and hoped for the success of their arms. There was further a large Bulgarian section which hoped that a German victory would be followed by a Bulgarian annexation of Salonica.

As a consequence the Army of the Orient at Salonica was surrounded by a hostile population. Thousands of Greek, Turkish and Bulgarian spies filled the town. Such a thing as military secrecy was out of the question. The arrival of every steamer was watched and every company and unit counted as they landed. In every café scores of spies listened to the

conversation of men back on leave from the front. The difficulty of keeping the plans of the Allies secret was further increased by the fact that they had to be communicated to the Headquarters of the French, British, Serbian, Italian and Russian contingents, danger of leaking being thus quintupled.

In the whole course of history no military force was ever organized under such extraordinary conditions as was the Army of the Orient. The White Tower became a second Tower of Babel round which surged Latin and Slav, Mohammedan, Christian and Jew, Anglo-Saxon, Greek and Levantine. Order was kept in the streets by British policemen, Italian carabinieri, French Gendarmes and Provost Marshal's guards drawn from the Serbian and Russian contingents.

The railway lines were Austrian-owned with Greek employees. The Austrian management was, of course, at once eliminated, but it was difficult, if not impossible, to replace the Greek personnel by trained railway men from the Allied ranks. At no time were the Greek railway employees characterized by any great efficiency and in many instances their loyalty was more than doubtful. The rolling stock was in a very dilapidated condition while the track was not much better. Derailings were of daily occurrence and collisions were not infrequent.

Under these circumstances if the Salonica front had had the whole-hearted support of the Entente Governments the difficulties would have been immense. But the problem General Sarrail had to solve was

rendered doubly difficult by the fact that in London, Paris and Rome divided counsels prevailed and the support accorded to the expedition was of the most half-hearted kind.

## CHAPTER V

### THE OPERATIONS—THE FIRST PHASE

**B**Y the end of the first week in June, as I have already stated, the last Serbian battalion was landed at Mikra Bay and King Peter's army was ready to take the field. As I have indicated above, thanks to the aid furnished by the Allies, it was, materially, well equipped for the task before it. The only other point was its morale. After four years of constant warfare, after its struggle with the Turks, the Bulgarians, the Albanians, the Austrians and the Germans, after its retreat through the desolation of Albania, there would have been nothing surprising if its courage had been depressed and its *élan* blunted. But the contrary was the case. No army ever entered on a campaign with higher courage or a grimmer determination to carry its colors to victory than did the soldiers of Serbia in 1916.

What was the cause of this apparent miracle? It was due to the fact that during the two years of war the aspirations of Serbia for the realization of the final union of all the branches of the Serbo-Croatian race into a single state had been slowly but surely gaining ground. The harder the blows of destiny, the firmer the resolve of the Serbs to achieve this unity of their race or die in the attempt.

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For it must be remembered that the four and a half million inhabitants of Serbia are only a fraction of the total Serbian race. In addition to the half million Serbs inhabiting Montenegro there were yet another eight million Serbo-Croats (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) under the yoke of Austria. For half a century the idea of achieving *Velika Srbia* or Greater Serbia had inspired the Serbs of the Danubian Kingdom. This meant the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, part of Dalmatia, a considerable stretch of Hungarian territory and the Serbian-speaking portion of the Banat of Temesvar.

The unjust and indefensible action of the Peace Conference of Berlin in 1878, in handing over Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria for temporary "occupation and pacification," instead of allowing these provinces to unite with their Serbian brothers-in-race, had roused deep resentment in Serbia, a resentment increased and strengthened by the high-handed action of Austria-Hungary in 1908 in declaring that she would no longer be bound by the treaty of Berlin and would purely and simply annex these two Serbian Provinces.

From that date a latent spirit of revolt smouldered among the Austrian Serbs. This the Vienna Government met by measures of rigorous repression. But though every Serb desired to achieve, sooner or later, the national unity, the Belgrade Government did not take active steps to bring about any revolutionary movement on Austrian soil. National unity still re-

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mained a pious aspiration, much as *Italia irredenta* had been for the Italians for half a century.

And it might have long remained so but for the action of Austria. That Power made the act of a fanatical youth of 18 years of age, who threw the fatal bomb at Sara-jevo which killed the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his consort, the pretext for forcing a war on Serbia.

At first the only ambition of the Serbians was to defend their native soil, but as the war went on every Serb began to realize that his country had embarked on a duel to the death with the Dual Monarchy. No half measures were possible. If the Austrian Empire remained in existence after the war Serbia, as an independent state, would have ceased to exist. The defeat of Austria meant at least the creation of Greater Serbia.

The knowledge that it was a fight to the death gradually grew on every Serbian-speaking man, woman and child, a fight from which they would either emerge a free and united people or be forever crushed under the heels of Austria. The revolutionary movement for a Greater Serbia began to spread beyond the frontiers of Austria to the country of their brothers-in-race the Croats and Slovenes and the idea the unity of the entire Serbo-Croatian, or Jugoslav, race rapidly took form.

A number of eminent Jugoslavs succeeded in reaching London where they formed a National Committee presided over by Dr. Anté Trumbitch. This committee got into touch with the Serbian Government at



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Corfu and in June 1916 the Pact of Corfu was drawn up the *Magna Charta* of the future Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. By it the national aspirations of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were crystallized into a definite project. It was this final and definite realization of all that they had fought for, all that they were fighting for, that inspired the army which landed at Salonica. Two years before their only idea had been to successfully defend their country against Austrian aggression, in 1916 they were fighting to bring about the unity of their race, a result that could only be achieved by the complete defeat of the Central Powers and their Allies.

Though their numbers had shrunk to a hundred thousand bayonets the Serbs entered on the struggle with courage undismayed and with whole-hearted confidence in the cause for which the Allies were fighting. Beyond the blue line of the mountains lay their beloved Serbia and they swore to reconquer it or perish in the attempt. It was the spirit of the "nation that can never die," the indomitable resolve to bring about the triumph of right.

When, then, General Sarrail assigned to the Serbian army its sector on the Macedonian front the troops responded with enthusiasm and alacrity, in spite of the fact that it was plain that to the army of King Peter was given the most arduous part of the task of the Army of the Orient.

As soon as the Serbian army arrived at Mikra Bay General Sarrail began the final constitution of the Macedonian front. To the British contingent

under the command of Lieutenant-General G. F. Milne (who had on May 9th succeeded General Sir Bryan Mohon) was entrusted the defence of the part of the front to the east and north-east of Salonica. On June 8th, the date of the arrival of the last contingent of Serbian troops at Mikra Bay, General Milne's forces began to occupy advanced positions along the right bank of the Struma from Lake Butkovo to the northern extremity of Lake Tachinos. After the demobilization of the Greek army in the last weeks of July the front held by the British had been extended to Chai Agiz where the Struma River enters the Gulf of Orfano. Later on, between July 20th and August 12th, General Milne took over the line south and west of Lake Doiran in preparation for the general offensive that was to coincide with Roumania's entrance into the war.

The French contingent occupied the centre of the front, the line held by it running from Lake Doiran to a point west of the Vardar where it joined up with the sector held by the Serbian army. The French sector was the shortest of the three but it was perhaps strategically the most important as it extended across the Valley of the Vardar, the direct line of route for an invading army marching on Salonica. The French contingent opposed a composite Germano-Austro-Bulgarian army under the command of General von Winckler. The British and Serbian contingents were at first faced by purely Bulgarian armies under the command of General Lodoroff, though the army fac-

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ing the Serbians was also later strongly reinforced by German troops.

The Serbian contingent, as I have already stated, consisted of three armies and an independent cavalry division. The First Army, consisting of the Morava and Vardar Divisions, was under the command of the Voivode (Field-Marshal) Mishitch. The Division of the Morava was commanded by Colonel C. Milovanovitch and the Division of the Vardar by Colonel Lutsakovitch.

The Second Army, under the Command of the Voivode Stepanovitch, was made up of the Shumadia and Timok Divisions. The Division of the Shumadia had as its commander Colonel Zivko Pavlovitch, who had, in the preceding campaign in Serbia, been Assistant-Chief of the Headquarters Staff under Field Marshal Putnik. The Division of the Timok was under the command of General Militch.

The Third Army, composed of the Drina and Danube Divisions, was under the orders of General Milosh Vasitch. The Division of the Drina was under the command of Colonel Smilavitch and the Division of the Danube under that of Colonel Angelovitch.

The whole Serbian army was under the Supreme Command of the Prince-Regent Alexander with General Boyovitch as Chief of the Headquarters Staff.

Though the occupation of the sector assigned to the Serbian army did not take place till the month of June it was preceded by certain operations by the Serbian Volunteer corps which had been established and organized at the Chalcidice camp. This corps, on

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May 9, 1915, left that camp and six days later it was distributed along the Front Donji-Kalcnik-Cornji-Kalenik-Kleshtina-Chechovo-Vukovik-Link. Part of its forces protected the route Florina-Korcha. The special task of this sector was to prevent communications and smuggling of munitions and provisions between the Bulgars and Greeks east of Lake Prespa and Korcha and, at the moment of the concentration and operations, to cover the left wing and flank of the army.

A month later the Serbian contingent began to take up the positions assigned to it. On June 8th the Shumadia Division was sent to take up a position near the Dogandi railway bridge over the Vardar and occupied that front on June 11th. On June 10th the Serbian Volunteer Battalion was dispatched to Korcha with the object of closing all routes leading from Albania to Korcha and vice-versa so as to complete the work of the Volunteer corps and absolutely close these routes to all communication and smuggling.

On July 4th the Shumadia and Drina Divisions were sent to the border front, the Shumadia Division holding the Kozhuch-Kovil-Kukurus-Shozar-D. Rodivo line while the Drina Division held the G. Rodivo-Meteric-Tepesi-Chegan-Gornichevo front.

The mission of these two Divisions, together with the previously dispatched Volunteer Corps and Volunteer Battalion, was to cover the concentration of the Serbian army.

General Sarrail paid this army the high compliment of assigning to it as its field of operations the most

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formidable portion of the total front, the towering Moglene mountain range, a natural fortress of almost impregnable strength. This mountain range is the natural barrier defending the plain of Monastir.

The average height of the mountains is about 5,000 feet, though at several points this is exceeded, the cloud-capped summit of the gigantic Kaymakchalan towering up nearly 10,000 feet above the plain. These mountains are, for the most part, bare masses of granite, denuded of all vegetation and rising step by step by precipitous cliffs, up which an attacking force has to climb, often on hands and knees.

It was in this region that on July 25, 1916, the Serbian army began the attack on the Bulgarians. On that day the Division of the Shumadia drove the enemy back from certain positions on the Moglene range, notably the villages of Pojar and Strujisino. On the following day the Bulgarians brought up reinforcements and for twenty-eight hours a violent battle raged. Both sides repeatedly attacked with the bayonet but in spite of every effort the Bulgarians were powerless to regain the lost positions.

The vigor and the precision of the Serbian artillery fire proved too much for the enemy. But at the same time the success of the Serbs was only partial, for though they succeeded in gaining a footing on the rocky sides of the mountain range, the Bulgarians still held the summit. The operations in the last week of July were therefore chiefly of a preparatory character and paved the way for the second phase.

During the first half of August there was a lull in

the fighting, which the Bulgarians made use of to entrench themselves strongly and line their front with barbed wire entanglements.

Hostilities were resumed on August 17th. On that date the Bulgarians began a furious offensive along the whole front. This was developed in two directions.

On the one hand they attacked the Serbian positions on the Moglene range, held by the Shumadia and Timok Divisions, trying to hurl them back on to the plain, and on the other they attacked the troops of the First Army holding Florina with the object of driving them from that point to the other side of Lake Ostrovo.

The Bulgarian plan was revealed by documents found on Bulgarian officers taken prisoners. The attack was entrusted to the First Bulgarian Army. Its mission was to drive the Serbs from their position on the Moglene range and to occupy a line running from the Lake of Ostrovo along the base of the mountains.

If the plan had succeeded the Serbian army would have been forced to fall back on the entrenched camp of Salonica, as on the plain it would not have found positions capable of prolonged defence. This offensive was begun just at the moment Roumania entered the war and the evident desire of the Bulgarians was to inflict a crushing defeat on the Serbians so as to be able to send troops from the Macedonian front to reinforce its army facing the Roumanians on the Dobrudja front.

The effort, however, proved disastrous to them.

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Not only did their attack on the positions on the Katanatz and Pojar, held by the Second Serbian army, though executed with over 7,000 men, fail completely, but the Bulgarians were driven from certain of their positions by the furious counter attacks of the Serbs.

By August 21st they had been driven almost completely from Mount Vetrenik and Mount Kukurus. All they held were a few positions on the crests. The Serbian success on the Vetrenik was particularly important as it is one of the highest points on the Moglene range.

On August 22d the slopes of the mountain were in the hands of the 11th Serbian Regiment, belonging to the Shumadia Division, while the crests, which terminated in a precipitous cliff, known later as the "Rock of Blood" on account of the sanguinary struggle for its possession, were still held by the enemy. The fact that King Peter's soldiers stormed their way up the rocky sides of these precipitous mountains speaks volumes for their dash and tenacity and the brilliant fashion in which they were led.

The Bulgarian losses were very great. On the first day of their offensive they had 400 killed and 600 wounded. The following day entire regiments were decimated; Bulgarian dead lay piled up by hundreds. Their losses were so great that the troops were completely discouraged and they practically abandoned the offensive.

This successful defence of the Serbs was of the greatest importance. If the Bulgarians had succeeded in piercing the lines of the Second Serbian army the

position of the Serbian troops in the neighborhood of the Lake of Ostrovo would have been critical.

The Bulgarians were, however, much more successful in the direction of Florina. They were able to seize that town, as well as the important position of Malka-Nidge which lies behind it. Florina was only occupied by a weak advance guard furnished by the First Serbian army, which was unable to resist the onslaught of the Bulgarian main body. A Serbian Division, sent to the assistance of the troops holding Florina, for several days resisted the attack of two and a half Bulgarian divisions.

Finally the Serbian troops were forced to fall back on the country behind the Lake of Petroko and the Lake of Ostrovo. The intention of the Bulgarians was to prevent the Serbs establishing their position at this point and to drive them to the opposite side of the Lake of Ostrovo.

But as soon as they came in contact with the main Serbian forces the Bulgarians met with such obstinate resistance that their operations were brought to a standstill. They had, therefore, to content themselves with their partial successes at Florina and Malka-Nidge. But as they lost 10,000 to 12,000 men in the operations their success was dearly bought.

The Serbs also lost heavily in the desperate struggle, having about 5,000 men *hors de combat*. But their partial success at Florina did not justify the Bulgarians taking a single battalion from the Macedonian front to aid their troops facing the Roumanians in the



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Dobrudja. This marked the end of the second phase of the operations on the Macedonian front.

The third phase was entered upon on September 12th. On that date the First Serbian Army, reinforced by French and Russian troops, undertook a strong offensive toward Florina. At the same time the Second Army began an attack on the Moglene front, but this was merely a demonstration, the real attack being on the Florina line. After two days of artillery preparation the Serbs, by a vigorous attack, carried the Bulgarian positions, not only at Malka-Nidge but also at the Mola Reka.

The positions at Malka-Nidge had been strongly fortified by the Bulgarians on plans drawn up by German staff officers. These were a succession of trenches with redoubts for the guns and lines of barbed wire entanglements.

The assault of the Serbs was made with such irresistible force and the surprise of the Bulgarians was so great that the latter were hurled back in disorder, abandoning 40 guns and a large quantity of material of all kinds. The losses of the Bulgarians at this point were estimated at about 2,000 men.

It was not a mere check entailing the loss of a position but it was the defeat and destruction of a portion of the Bulgarian army.

Driven back from Malka-Nidge the Bulgarians retired on the line Krusograd-Sovie-Starkov Grob-Kaymakchalan, which lies for the most part along the Greco-Serbian frontier line. But the Serbs did not give the Bulgarians any rest even on this new line.

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On September 17th they gained a footing on the Kaymakchalan and on the 18th they occupied the highest crest. It was then that the long and bloody struggle for the complete possession of the mountain began.

The Bulgarians had always attached great importance to the position. During the whole of the summer they had worked on its fortification till it bristled, from base to summit, with lines of trenches and barbed wire entanglements, so that this position, naturally extremely strong—at its highest point it reached over 8,000 feet and on the eastern slope it is almost precipitous—was made seemingly impregnable.

The Bulgarians knew that as long as they held the Kaymakchalan they could prevent the Serbs from debouching on the Czerna Reka (Black River) and on the plain of Monastir, either by Florina or by the Moglène front. The Kaymakchalan was, therefore, the central point of the Bulgarian defence on the eastern side of the Czerna Reka.

When, therefore, the Third Serbian army succeeded in seizing the highest crest of the Kaymakchalan, which was at the same time the most elevated point on the whole front, it became a necessity for the Bulgarians to drive them from it at any cost. With this in view on September 23d they resumed the struggle with fresh troops brought from four different divisions and began a desperate attack on the Serbian positions on the Kaymakchalan.

The attack began on September 24th and reached its fiercest phase on September 26th. This was, up to that time, the bloodiest battle of the whole campaign.

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The result of the Bulgarian effort was, however, small. The enemy only succeeded in getting a footing in the Serbian advanced trenches. This small success had, however, been so costly that they were incapable of further effort.

They were completely exhausted by their vain attempts on the Serbian positions. Their companies of 280 men had shrunk to 90 bayonets and of fifteen officers per battalion only four were left. The 2d Bulgarian Infantry Regiment had 73 officers and 3,000 men placed *hors de combat*.

In addition to being exhausted the Bulgarians were demoralized. The soldiers refused to make further assaults which they saw would only end in their being annihilated. It is known positively that the First Battalion of the 45th Bulgarian Regiment refused to obey when ordered to attack the Serbian positions.

Under these circumstances the power of King Ferdinand's troops to resist the Serbian counter-attack may be imagined. On September 30th the Serbs were in complete possession of the Kaymakchalan. The Bulgarians fled in confusion abandoning five guns. For some days there was some intermittent fighting around some of the smaller hills in the neighborhood of the Kaymakchalan, but after that mountain was captured the enemy were less able to maintain the line they had occupied after their retreat from Malka-Nidge.

On October 3d they voluntarily abandoned the positions of Starkov Grob, Sovicet and Krusograd. The Serbian troops, which were following close on their

heels, crossed the Greek frontier, passed on to Serbian soil and debouched on the Czerna Reka, which they crossed at various points reaching the Bulgarian lines which directly defended Monastir.

The French and Russians advanced successfully to the north of Florina and soon the whole of Greek Macedonia on the right bank of the Vardar, with the exception of the crest of that part of the Moglene mountains against which the Second Serbian army was operating, was completely cleared of Bulgarians. The Serbian troops descended on to the plain of Monastir and began the struggle for the possession of that city.

The resistance of the Serbs was the more meritorious in view of the fact that at Ostrovo the Bulgarians had the numerical superiority and on the Moglene front the country was in their favor. They held the crests of the mountains while the Serbs had to attack the slopes.

The Malka-Nidge and Kaymakchalan positions were so fortified that they could without exaggeration be described as natural fortresses. It is true that the Serbian attacks were powerfully supported by artillery, but the heavy Serbian losses bore eloquent testimony to the fact that they were not entirely artillery battles.

Up to the September 23d, that is to say before the last effort of the Bulgarians to recapture the Kaymakchalan, the Serbian losses amounted to 10,000 killed and wounded.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GREEK BETRAYAL AND THE SALONICA REVOLUTION

**W**HILE the Serbian Army was carrying on its offensive in the sector assigned to it, events were happening at the other extremity of the front which did much to neutralize its relative success.

Simultaneously with the Serbian offensive active operations were ordered on the French and British fronts. The object of all these operations was, as I have stated, to facilitate Roumania's entry into the war by so engaging the Bulgarian troops in Macedonia as to render it impossible for them to detach any of their forces to reinforce their army facing the Roumanian frontier. The intervention of Roumania took place on August 27, 1916. The offensive of the French contingent was inaugurated on August 20th by a heavy bombardment of the town of Doiran. So violent was this that the Bulgarians were forced to abandon Hill 227 to the south of the town which the French at once occupied and with it the railway station of Doiran. The next few days were taken up with a heavy artillery duel, powerful howitzers playing an important rôle on both sides.

The next move of the French was the capture of "Tortoise Hill" near to the village of Doldjeli, which lies a mile and a half to the southwest of Doiran.

Then a sudden change came over the whole situation. The German Staff was perfectly well informed as to the condition of the Army of the Orient and what it could do. They knew that the persistent refusal of the Allies (for which the British Imperial Staff was chiefly to blame) to reinforce the Salonica front had left General Sarrail without the power of undertaking an offensive on a really large scale and pushing it home. Not only were his forces numerically insufficient but the material at his disposal left much to be desired. Guns which were no use on the Western front were considered good enough for Salonica. Thus the Army of the Orient had numbers of Debangé guns, which though at one time an excellent weapon, could no longer be regarded as up to date, modern artillery. Many of the mountain guns given to the Serbs were of an old pattern, quite inferior to those in the hands of the enemy.

The insufficiency of the numbers of his troops rendered it difficult if not impossible to so hold the line as to guard against a sudden attack in force on any given point. The enemy a few days before the entry of Roumania into the war took advantage of this to invade Greece in three main groups. On the eastern sector they advanced south from Demirhissar, the Greek troops withdrawing before them. The Greek forts of Lise and Starshiste surrendered on the first summons without offering the slightest resistance. Two days later the enemy *communiqué* stated that the Vrundi Balkan (or Shartiya Planina) had been

crossed and that the Bulgarian armies were advancing on Seres.

Meanwhile, on the eastern frontier, the Bulgarians crossed the Nestos (or Mesta Su) in the "Kaza" of Sari Shaban and sent out an advance guard to reconnoitre the road to Kavalo.

Further west, on the central sector of the Vardar Valley, a simultaneous advance was made by General von Winckler. In spite of repeated attacks, however, his troops failed to recapture the village of Doldjeli. Both there and on the Struma British troops checked the Bulgarian advance.

On August 10th General Milne sent out a brigade of cavalry, accompanied by a battery of field artillery, which carried out a "reconnaissance in force." They found a fairly strong contingent of the enemy on the Barakli-Prosenik line. After a sharp engagement the reconnoitring force withdrew to the right bank of the Struma.

On August 21st, in spite of the enemy's opposition the Anghista bridge was destroyed by British yeomanry, engineers and cyclists, but after this operation no further obstacle was put in the way of the Bulgarian invasion of Eastern Macedonia. The British forces withdrew to the Struma-Lake Tachinos line and left to the Greek armies garrisoning the country the task of dealing with the invader.

Kavalo was the headquarters of the 4th Greek army corps. The 6th Division, under the command of General Bairas, was stationed at Seres. In the temporary absence of the general this division was under the

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command of Colonel Christodonlou. The advanced fort of Phea Petra was the first place to offer resistance to the Bulgarian armies on the road between Demirhissar and Krushavo. The commandant of the fort, Major Kondhilis, refused to surrender it to the Bulgarians and lost his life in a fruitless effort to defend it. This gallant act on his part was not without its effect on the garrison of Seres. Colonel Christodonlou and the men of the 6th Division put up a good fight in which they claimed to have inflicted heavy loss on the enemy, themselves losing two officers and 100 men.

The only result of this gallant action in Athens was to cause King Constantine to relieve Colonel Christodonlou of his command and to issue strict orders against any further armed resistance to the invader.

Unfortunately these orders were strictly obeyed. The Bulgarians advanced without resistance to the environs of Drama and Kavalo. For some days they hesitated about seizing these towns, but on August 26th they occupied the forts around Kavalo but were promptly shelled by the guns of the British fleet, which brought about a pause in their operations.

In the meantime Colonel Christodonlou, who had succeeded in escaping from the Bulgarians, arrived in Kavalo with two regiments. But he did not find himself in congenial company. The commander of the 4th Army Corps, Colonel Khatzopoulos, was one of those Greeks to whom even the Bulgarians and the Germans were less distasteful than M. Venizelos. He faithfully carried out the orders of the Athens Gov-



ernment that no resistance should be offered to the invading army. On September 12th, therefore, he surrendered with the forces—8,000 men—under his command. The Bulgarian troops entered Kavalo. Colonel Christodonlou with 1,500 of his men and a large number of the civilian inhabitants took refuge on the British and French warships in the harbor and were conveyed to Thasos and Salonica.

The 4th Greek Army corps was disarmed and interned in "honorable" captivity in Seres, whence they were soon after removed to Germany and interned at Gorlitz in Silesia.

This disgrace to Greek arms was more than even the population of Athens could stand and a dangerous excitement made itself manifest in the capital. In order to calm this and to conciliate the indignant Powers of the Entente General Dousmanis, the Chief of the General Staff, who had given the actual orders for the surrender to the Bulgarians, was given 45 days' leave of absence and was temporarily replaced by General Moskhopoulos, who up to then had been in command of the 3d Army Corps at Salonica. Colonel Metaxas, assistant chief of Staff, was also relieved of his functions.

But these pretended functions deceived no one and indignant meetings were held in Athens at which M. Venizelos and other patriotic leaders took part. At one of them, held on August 27th, the ex-Premier adjured King Constantine, even at the eleventh hour, to put himself at the head of the nation and defend the national honour and the territory of Greece. M.

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Venizelos at the same time warned him that "if our cry is disregarded we shall then see what we can do to prevent the ruin into which we are being drawn. We cannot look on fatalistically while the catastrophe approaches without taking means to counteract it."

To this appeal, however, King Constantine turned a deaf ear. The military clique gave him its whole-hearted support. At the same time the "Reservist League," which it had formed out of the more undesirable elements of the population, was let loose on the streets of Athens to spread a reign of terror among the citizens.

The excitement at Salonica was even greater than in Athens. Indignation meetings were held daily at the White Tower, but for the first day or two those taking part in them contented themselves with noisy demonstrations and comminatory resolutions. It was not until August 30th that things came to a head. When I came down to lunch at the restaurant of the Olympus Palace Hotel on the afternoon of that day, I was informed that a revolution was to start at two o'clock. The idea of a revolution starting at a given hour seemed a trifle "Opera Comique" to me, but a number of excited individuals at an adjacent table were pointed out to me as the leaders of the movement. They were lunching in haste and discussing volubly in Greek, some of them drawing up hurried proclamations on the back of the menu cards. Two o'clock came and they still had not reached the coffee and liqueur stage and we were told the revolution was postponed till three o'clock.

Finally at that hour things began to get under way. Excited crowds thronged the streets and in a short time loud shouting proclaimed that something was happening. A few minutes later about a couple of hundred Cretan gendarmes, led by a lieutenant, came marching down Venizelos street. This was the "revolution" en route for the Headquarters of General Sarrail to inform him that Salonica no longer owed allegiance to King Constantine. The "revolution" so far had been of the "rose water" order. Twenty-four hours later it took a somewhat more tragic turn when the Cretan gendarmes marched to the barracks to bring out the Greek Infantry regiment in garrison there. The regiment refused to join the movement and slammed the gates in the faces of the revolutionists.

The latter promptly opened fire, to which the garrison replied. The only damage done was the killing of a couple of soldiers and a passing civilian struck by a stray bullet. As the revolutionaries had no artillery they were unable to do much damage, but they surrounded the barracks and prevented all egress. As the troops inside had neither food nor water things soon reached a crisis. The Colonel in command sent word to General Sarrail that he would surrender to the French but not to the revolutionaries. A regiment of Zouaves was accordingly sent to the barracks to receive his surrender and disarm his men. A certain number declared they would join the revolutionaries. The rest were disarmed, placed on board a couple of steamers, shipped off to the Piraeus, and the revolution was a *fait accompli*. A Provisional Gov-

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ernment was installed at the head of which was Colonel Zimvrakakis.

A short time afterwards news was received that M. Venizelos accompanied by Admiral Koundouriolis and General Danglis had left Athens and landed on Crete and proclaimed the revolution. Chios, Mytilene and other islands joined the movement. On October 9th M. Venizelos, Admiral Koundouriolis and General Danglis landed in Salonica and established their Government. Forty-eight hours later this declared war on Bulgaria and proceeded to recruit a volunteer army to fight alongside the Army of the Orient.

Meanwhile there had been some resumption of military activity on the French and British sectors. On September 10th the British crossed the Struma both north and south of Lake Tachinos. A number of small villages were occupied and the Northumberland Fusiliers drove the Bulgarians out of Nevoljen but afterwards retired and the activities of the force gradually died down. The net result of the total operations had been a brilliant success for the Serbians on the western part of the line, which, however, for want of reserves they were unable to push home, and the Bulgarian invasion of Drame, Seres and Kavalo. Thanks to the defection of King Constantine's troops this had been a success, but as the British and French troops on the Struma and Doiran fronts had more than held their own the Bulgarian advance was brought to a standstill and something like the previous position of stalemate again became the order of the day.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE POSITION AND OPERATIONS OF THE SECOND SERBIAN ARMY

**A**FTER the capture of Florina and the forcing of the Bulgarian positions on the Kaymakchalan, I profited by a lull in the operations of the First and Third armies to visit the positions on the right flank of the Serbian front held by the Second army under the command of Field Marshal Stepanovitch.

To reach these I left Salonica by the Monastir railway, my destination being Vertekop, a station about 40 miles from Salonica as the crow flies but about 70 by rail on account of the extraordinary detour made by this line, which first runs southwest to Veria and then turns at an acute angle due north toward Vodena.

The first difficulty was to find the train at the Salonica station. It was supposed to start at midnight so that it had to be found in the darkness of the night. As there were over a score of tracks each packed with flat trucks and freight cars this alone was an adventure. As all the tracks were filled from end to end, this meant climbing over the buffers of coupled freight cars and splashing about in the puddles of water that usually lay between the tracks. On account of the

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danger of enemy air raids the whole station was in black darkness and as most of the employees only spoke Greek it was no easy matter to locate anything.

The train when I did find it consisted of an endless succession of flat cars, box cars and cattle trucks, the latter used for moving the horses and mules necessary at the front. Up near the engine was a single passenger coach which had certainly seen better days. Window glass was conspicuous by its absence and one of the doors would not shut and had to be tied with string to keep it closed. As six passengers were placed in each compartment the possibility of sleep was reduced to a minimum. Though all the passengers were punctually on board at midnight it was nearly four o'clock before we got under way. The average speed was about seven or eight miles an hour and the stops were frequent and interminable. As the line was single track we were side-tracked at nearly every station to let empty trains coming from the front pass. The result was that it took us over ten hours to cover the sixty miles separating us from Vertekop.

Vertekop was the chief munition "dump" for the Second Serbian Army and all round the station were high piles of shells, munition boxes, tinned food and war material of every kind. A few hundred yards outside the station was a huge base hospital where the tired traveller, forced to wait over in Vertekop, could count on being received with cordial hospitality. This hospital was run by the British.

The station was run by a triumvirate of station

masters, French, Serbian and British. As I was bound for Dragamantzi, the Headquarters of the Second Army, a matter of ten miles away, I had to telephone for a riding horse and a wagon for my baggage. Until those arrived I sat in the office of the Serbian station master and drank endless cups of the weak tea which is always on tap in the Serbian army and watched the pitiless rain pouring down on the piles of war material accumulated all around the station.

A constant stream of military wagons, motor driven and horse drawn, kept pouring into the station yard to load up. Most of the work was done by German and Bulgarian prisoners who worked under the kindly eye of some grey-bearded old Serbian *Checha* or soldiers of the third "ban." The predominating feature was mud, sometimes watery, sometimes clayey, but omnipresent. All round the station it was churned into a quagmire a couple of feet deep through which trucks and wagons tore their way with difficulty.

After a couple of hours wait my horse and wagon arrived and I faced the pitiless down-pour. As I jogged along at a slow trot (all the horse could do in the sea of mud), I could realize the immense difficulty of keeping the army in the field supplied. Every now and then I would come across an army truck completely bogged with half a score of sweating drivers working to extricate it from the "slough of despond." The language they used about Macedonia, its climate and the war generally, was sulphurous.

The mountains begin right behind Vertekop so that

the road to Dragamantzi winds among a succession of bleak, granite-faced hills. Once these are passed one debouches on a second plain on the northern extremity of which, fifteen miles away, the mountains of the Moglene range tower into the clouds.

No one dropping into Dragamantzi would ever have imagined that the peaceful little village was a centre of warlike activities. Its six hundred inhabitants were mostly Turks. All day long from the village schoolhouse, where a couple of score of children sat crosslegged round the teacher, came a droning chant as they all repeated their lessons in unison. The only sign of the military occupation was when a staff automobile would shoot along the street carrying officers to or from the front. The only other sign of war was the continuous drone of the heavy guns which echoed from the distant mountains.

In a meadow near the exit of the village a score of tents were pitched. A narrow stream meandered through it, crossed by a simple plank bridge. On the other side a solitary tent was pitched. This was the home of Field-Marshal Stepanovitch, commander of the Second Serbian Army, the most taciturn soldier in the service of King Peter. When he was not in his tent, immersed in his maps and plans, he wandered alone. The only persons he ever spoke to were the little village children who little knew that the man in the shabby uniform was one of the greatest generals in an army that counts many *soldats d'élite*.

From the camp stretched a network of telegraph and telephone wires running to the headquarters of



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the divisions and over the plains to the mountains where they linked up brigades, regiments and battalions fighting amid the snow clad summits and controlled the thunderous *diminuendo* and *crescendo* of scores of batteries of every calibre. Every now and then the peaceful quiet would be broken by the shrill ring of a telephone bell or the tick-tack of a telegraph instrument. And yet from this scene of perfect peace a fierce life and death struggle was being directed in the mountains a score of miles away and the combat surged back and forth in response to the will of the taciturn soldier bent over his map in his solitary tent.

At mess, in a whitewashed building that had once been a stable, furnished with a table composed of a couple of planks laid on trestles, I heard the latest reports of the long and weary struggle going on in the distant mountains. The position was one of stalemate. Each side had dug itself in and while the Serbs were strong enough in artillery to checkmate any attempt of the Bulgarians to advance, they were not numerically strong enough to try conclusions with the bayonet.

Next day I rode on to Soubotzko, the Headquarters of the Division of the Shumadia. No one dropping into Soubotzko would have imagined that it was one of the storm centres of the Balkan campaign. It presented a picture of peace such as would have gladdened the heart of any pacifist. The two streets that form the village, the shorter one at right angles to the other, running along a sluggish stream of doubtful purity, were lined with a few wretched

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shops in which soap, petroleum, sugar and a few other strictly necessary articles were to be found. Luxuries there were none, unless one counts the inevitable tins of concentrated milk and a few stray boxes of sardines in that category. At the angle where the streets join, the solitary mosque of the village, and a marble fountain with a Turkish inscription, formed the last souvenirs of the regime of the Sultan.

Here, once a week, the populace of the surrounding country poured in on foot and on donkeys to hold a market. The goods on display did not have, however, a total value of more than a hundred francs or so, consisting mainly of onions, chestnuts, paprika and such oddments as pins, needles and thread. I saw one red-turbaned merchant spend the whole day cross-legged in front of a couple of dozen boxes of matches. As these sold for a cent apiece, even if he had disposed of his whole stock (which he certainly did not), his gross receipts would not have been twenty-five cents. The populace seemed almost to have realized the commercial conditions of that Sandwich Island where the inhabitants lived by taking in each other's washing.

From time to time a grey-bearded man with a red fez climbed on to the marble fountain and made a speech. At first I thought he was a political agitator, as he spoke with apparent eloquence and conviction, but I discovered he was only the town crier making known the latest municipal decrees. From the freezing cold reception given to his pronouncements, I

imagine he was proclaiming some fresh taxation, or something of the sort.

From 9 o'clock in the morning hundreds of peasants, the men, Turkish fashion, mounted on donkeys, and the women walking on foot, poured into the village. Even the small boys rode, while their mothers walked behind, the outward tribute to the predominant position of the male. The feminist movement has a long distance to go in Macedonia. The chief business of the males on market days seemed to be to sit cross-legged on the ground in the various cafés (wooden sheds with beaten earth floors open to the streets) and consume an endless number of microscopic cups of coffee.

As the immense majority of the people are Mahometans, 90 per cent of them wore either fezes or turbans. But their language was Serbian, though some of them had also a slight knowledge of Greek. It is a curious thing that in Greek Macedonia I met with every type of language except Greek. I have seen Roumanian villages, Bulgarian villages and Serbian villages, but never a Greek one. That the majority of the population was Mahometan is explained by the fact that by Turkish law only Mahometans could own land. After the conquest of Macedonia by the Turks the native Serbian population went over to Mahometanism to save their possessions, and their descendants are now followers of the Prophet.

The village lies in the centre of the plain. Five miles away towers the range of mountains which separates Greek Macedonia from Serbia. Opposite lie

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Mounts Kukurus, Vetrenik, Katunatz and Pojar, while to the left towered the cloud-capped Kaymakchalan, the giant of the range. The summits of the mountains were covered with snow, which glittered in the brilliant winter sunshine.

No one could believe that on the forty-mile front to right and left half a million men were in death grips and that the faces of the adjacent mountains were scarred by lines of trenches and pitted by batteries and redoubts. The only reminder of war was the dull boom of the guns all along the front. Now and again a salvo from the heavy French battery a mile or so away would shake the windows and stop for an instant the chattering of the red-turbaned crowd. But an instant later business resumed its sway and peace once more reigned.

And yet the village is the headquarters of a division. If one looked along the street and across the fields one saw on every hand long lines of field telegraphs radiating like a spider's web in every direction. If one traced them to their source one found they ran to what in time of peace was the primitive town hall of the village. Here, in its whitewashed rooms, devoid of all furniture but tables and chairs, sat the colonel, commanding the division, Colonel Zhivko Pavlovitch (one of the most famous soldiers in the Serbian army, who fought with distinction during five years' ceaseless war), and his staff. All day long telephone and telegraph wires were humming—wires that ran all over the plain to batteries of every calibre or climbed to trenches away up above the snow line in the moun-

tains. To the rear they controlled railways and motor transport, which kept moving up an endless line of supplies and munitions.

In the evening in the messroom (a whitewashed room, once a village shop), one found the thirty-odd officers composing the staff. The room was lighted by a couple of oil lamps and half a dozen candles. These shone on the bronzed faces of men who had been helping to make history in the Balkans for the last half decade. There was not a single man who had not been in a score of battles, who had not tramped the Balkans from the Danube to the gates of Constantinople, from Nish to Durazzo.

The spirit that reigned was essentially democratic. No army on active service is better disciplined than the Serbian army. In no army is more demanded from every officer, from sub-lieutenant to the commander-in-chief. But apart from matters of service, the spirit is, as I have said, essentially democratic. The officers were of all ages. The chief of staff, who sat next to me, was a colonel of thirty-four years of age. On the other side of Colonel Pavlovitch was a grey-haired colonel of artillery, who bore a singular resemblance to the late Field-Marshal von Moltke. The lieutenant-colonel at the head of the intelligence bureau was little over thirty; others, again, had grown grey in service. But the impression they all made was that they knew thoroughly what they had to do and how to do it.

Until late in the night the windows of the headquarters were ablaze with light. Every move on a

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twenty-mile front was being controlled with the ease and precision with which a pianist plays his instrument, while the diminuendo and crescendo of the distant batteries fell and rose like notes played by a virtuoso.

A couple of days later I rode out with Colonel Loukitch, the chief of the Military Police of the division, whose duties naturally took him at all times over the whole battle line to visit the front. It fell to him to examine Bulgarian prisoners and deserters (the latter averaged ten a day for the division alone, a proof that the morale of the enemy was not all it should be), to keep check on enemy espionage and to direct the spies sent out from the Serbian Headquarters. To the base of the Pojar we had a ride of about seven miles across the plain. A great part of the way lay over the dry bed of the river, which in winter time shrinks to a stream a few yards wide while in spring, when the mountain snows begin to melt, it spreads out over a couple of miles. As the whole bed of the river is covered with water-worn pebbles it was not easy to negotiate on horseback the smooth stones rolling under the hoofs of our mounts.

When we reached the centre of the plain one could form a good idea of the difficulties facing the Second Serbian army. To our right towered Mount Vetrenik, its lofty summit terminating in a precipitous cliff, christened by the Serbs the "Rock of Blood," on account of the toll of lives the attack on it had cost both them and the enemy. In the centre rose Mount Katunatz and alongside it the Kukurus or

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“Corn Cob Mountain,” so named from its peculiar shape.

On the left rose the Pojar, a mountain rising in three sections, the first extremely steep, while the two summits above were approached by an easier slope. Of this range the whole of the mountains were in the hands of the Serbs, with the exception of the extreme summit of the Vetrenik. That rocky eyrie was still in the hands of the Bulgarians. All day long we could see the shells from the Serbian and French heavy batteries in the plain splintering on its rocky sides. The flashes from the mountain artillery on the steep sides of the Kukurus and Katunatz also showed that the Serbs were bombarding the enemy on the mountains in the rear which were invisible from the plain.

It was nearly noon when we reached the village at the base of the mountain. As is customary in this region every village exists in duplicate, the village in the plain and the village in the mountain. In the winter time the villagers inhabit the plain, but when the spring comes and the snows have melted they move up to the village above, to pasture their flocks and herds. As we rode up to the upper village we met a steady stream of peasants carrying their primitive household furniture, making for the village below as the ever descending snow line gave notice that winter was at hand and that it was time to move if they did not want to be snow bound.

Their change of residence in 1916 must have been a much easier job than in former years, for they had

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at their disposal the well-made mountain road constructed by the Serbs to bring up their guns, instead of the sheep paths which formerly constituted their only highway. Up this road was marching a steady column of pack animals and light military carts carrying munitions and food to the troops above. The mountain village proved a picturesque old place. A score of houses stood in gaunt ruins. The village, it appears, had shown too much hospitality to the Bulgarians and as a punishment the French had burnt a part of it. Apart from this it had suffered but little, though the remains of formidable Bulgarian trenches with barbed wire entanglements could be seen running right and left. These had been stormed at the point of the bayonet by the Serbs a fortnight before.

This had enabled the troops of the division to push on to the summit above where they were now facing the Bulgarian entrenchments. Here we found half a score of batteries in position facing the enemy batteries on the Dobra Polie, a position separated from the summit of the Pojar by a gentle valley (hence the name Dobra Polie or "Good Meadow") about two miles broad. In the Serbian entrenchments we were on the frontier line, the Pojar being Greek and the Dobra Polie Serbian territory.

While we were enjoying the generous, if primitive, hospitality of Colonel Panta Djoukitch (food and drink are at a premium on a shell-swept mountain top) the Bulgarians favoured us with a full dress bombardment which lasted a couple of hours but which did no damage, most of the shells exploding harm-



lessly on the mountain side. The position was evidently one of stalemate; the Serbs were not in sufficient force to risk an attack on the Dobra Polie but at the same time they disposed of an artillery formidable to discourage any attack on the part of the enemy. Some of it, however, could hardly be described as modern, consisting as it did of French guns dating back twenty years. But inferior as it was, the Serbs knew how to use it to advantage, as the Bulgarians found to their cost.

The Bulgarians were evidently having a busy day of it as they favored us with a few shells on our homeward ride across the plain, but beyond making the stones fly in the dry river bed they did little damage.

Three days later I went to visit the positions on the summit of Mount Vetrenik. As the whole of the road winding up the face of the mountain was under fire from the Bulgarian guns and even rifles on the upper plateau, the ascent had to be negotiated in the darkness. We, therefore, first rode to Bachovo, the village at the base of the mountain where we were to dine and sleep till two a. m., when we were to begin the four hours climb.

Our hosts were three military surgeons of the ambulance installed in the village and a couple of officers in charge of the transport. As the village was under fire we had to dine by the light of a couple of guttering candles on the second floor of a peasant's house. Heavy horse blankets covered the windows in order to prevent the gleam of our primitive illumination be-

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traying us to the enemy batteries above us. During the whole meal we could hear ceaseless rifle fire from the summit of the mountain. I thought that an attack must be in progress, but my hosts explained to me that as the Serbian and Bulgarian trenches on the summit are only about fifty yards apart, to prevent their being rushed in the darkness, each side kept pouring a ceaseless rifle fire into no-man's-land in order to establish a barrage. This was costly in ammunition, but as the total Serbian garrison on the summit was less than 500 men they could take no chances.

Every now and then the French heavy battery a couple of hundred yards in our rear would send a shell whizzing just over our heads. An instant later we could hear the shattering crash as it burst among the rocks 4,000 feet above us.

When coffee was served one of my hosts asked me if I was fond of music and on my answering in the affirmative he proposed to bring in a Gipsy soldier, who was a violinist of talent in addition to possessing a fine tenor voice, and the company cook, who, it appeared, was a *virtuoso* on the accordion. They were brought in and for two and a half hours we had one of the most extraordinary and original concerts it has ever been my lot to hear.

The Gipsy violinist certainly did not belie his reputation. He was a Serbian Kubelik as far as mastery of his instrument was concerned, while the cook elevated the accordion to the dignity of an organ. As the part of the room in which they played was plunged in complete darkness the effect was extraordinary.

And all the while they played there was the accompaniment *en sourdine* of the pom-pom-pom of the ceaseless rifle fire from the mountain top, while every now and then the melody would be drowned by the scream of a six-inch shell from the heavy battery passing a few feet above our heads. The repertoire of the two *virtuosi* turned out to be an extremely large one, including selections from "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "I Pagliacci." As for the soldier's voice it deserved all the praise his captain gave it. He and his comrade further proved their quickness of ear by executing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Way Down upon the Suwanee River," after I had hummed them over to them a couple of times, with a precision and *maestrio* that Sousa might have envied.

So long indeed did this impromptu concert last that we gave up all idea of going to bed and sat up till our horses arrived for our climb to the summit. The ride was uneventful, except for the fact that it was a bit nerve-racking to skirt precipices in the Egyptian darkness and to be deprived of the soothing influences of a pipe or a cigarette. But as the glow from a cigarette is visible a thousand yards away, we had to abstain from the consolation of "My Lady Nicotine."

It was six o'clock in the morning when we arrived at the last stage of our journey, a point about 500 feet below the upper plateau. As the dawn was approaching and it was not advisable that the Bulgarians on the heights above us should catch sight of us, we decided to leave our horses and climb straight up the mountain side, instead of running the risk of

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being surprised by daylight by continuing to follow the winding road we were on. We accordingly dismounted and sent back our horses under the charge of the orderlies and began the last part of the ascent on foot. After forty-five minutes stiff climbing we arrived at the Serbian lines where we were welcomed with true Serbian hospitality by Colonel Tomsitch, the officer commanding the battalion of the 11th Regiment, holding the summit. After partaking of the inevitable coffee, we began a tour of the positions. At that season of the year it was risky work moving about the plateau as it was denuded of the cover furnished by the foliage of the trees in summer and fall. The absence of foliage enabled the Bulgarians from their rocky eyrie above, to follow the movement of anyone traversing the plateau. One had, therefore, to dodge from tree to tree. From time to time the whistle of the bullet in unpleasant proximity to one's head showed that the enemy was on the *qui vive*.

We managed, however, to gain the front line trenches without mishap and could get a full view of the Bulgarian positions. In front of the Serbian trenches and to the right there was about fifty yards of fairly level ground. Then the ground rose sharply till it reached the base of the cliff, the famous "Rock of Blood," which formed the highest peak of the mountain. So near were the Bulgarian trenches that one had to inspect them by means of a periscope, as it would have been as much as one's life was worth to have raised one's head above the parapet. The nearest enemy trench was only about fifty yards away,

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while the "listening posts" were only half that distance apart.

An amusing incident had happened in one of those a few days before. A young Bulgarian soldier had, it appears, received a letter from his mother in which she impressed upon him the necessity of not losing his life in the war, a point of view with which he was in complete agreement. She further told him that perhaps the best way to do this would be to give himself up to the Serbs, as she had heard that they treated their prisoners with humanity. This also appealed to him but his chief difficulty was how to carry it out. A few days later, with four other soldiers, he was sent to occupy a listening-post, only thirty yards removed from the Serbian lines.

He saw that his chance to desert had come. He, also saw, however, that, encumbered with heavy boots and great coat, it would be difficult for him to make a dash for the Serbian lines without being shot by his comrades before he reached them. Half an hour later he and his comrades laid their rifles against the parapet in order to have their hands free to eat their evening meal. This was his chance. He swept the five rifles together, clasped them in his arms and in an instant was "over the top" and rushing toward the Serbian trench, pursued by the objurgations of his incensed comrades. As soon as he arrived in the Serbian trench a patrol was sent over to capture the now defenceless quartet, but when it reached the listening-post they were gone. They had prudently bolted for the trenches behind. The reception the poor devils

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got from the German officer in charge in the rear was probably one they would remember, for their Teuton masters, on such occasions, were apt to make free use of their riding whips.

In order to encourage the growing tendency of the Bulgarian soldiers to desert we had brought with us from Soubotzko a packet of picture post cards, prepared by the photographic section of the General Staff, representing Bulgarian prisoners in the Serbian lines, giving evidence *de visu* of how well they were treated and signed on the back by the men represented in the pictures.

These were to be sent into the Bulgarian lines to convince the enemy soldiers that the tales spread in the Bulgarian ranks by the German officers of the cruelty of the Serbs were a myth. I asked Colonel Tomsitch how these cards would be conveyed to them. "Oh, that's quite simple," we replied. "We just call out to them, 'Don't shoot, we've got something for you.' Then a Serbian soldier goes out and lays them half way between the trenches and a Bulgarian comes and fetches them." "But will the German officer with them allow them to read them?" I asked. "He's never in the front line trench," the colonel replied. "He occupies a dug-out in the rear and only comes to the front line in case of attack."

During the months that the two armies had been facing each other on the Vetrenik a sort of *modus vivendi* had been established. A "gentlemen's agreement" had been come to not to attack during meal times. As soon as either side heard the rattle of the

tin plates showing the food had arrived the other side called out "half an hour" and during that time there was a lull in the firing. This did not prevent both sides coming at each other with the bayonet and the butt as soon as the period of grace had expired.

Life on the Vetrenik, except for an occasional raid from one side or the other, was deadly monotonous. The Serbs were not in sufficient force to risk an assault but at the same time their trenches had been made so formidable that the Bulgarians did not dare to attempt an attack. They simply sat facing one another like *chiens de faïence*, waiting for some movement on either flank which would force the hand of the enemy.

It had originally been agreed that I should wait till darkness fell before attempting the descent of the mountain, but towards the afternoon the wait became so tedious that I asked Colonel Tomsitch if there was really any great risk in going down in daylight. "Of course, there's always a chance that they'll open fire on you," he replied, "but, I think just now they're hard up for ammunition. They have not fired a dozen rounds in the last three days. I doubt if under the circumstances they would waste a shell on a single man. We'll try them out to see how they stand." We then telephoned to a mountain battery to begin firing. For a quarter of an hour we sent shell and shrapnel splintering among the rocks above but not one shot came in reply. "That settles it," said the colonel, "they must be hard up for ammunition. I think you can risk it."

He then called a non-commissioned officer to guide me down the mountain and charged him strictly to see that I ran as few risks as possible. This the non-com. considered would be achieved by descending the mountain side with vertiginous speed. He seemed more like a chamois than a human being. But encumbered by heavy riding-boots and spurs I could not emulate his speed. The sun, moreover, was blazing in a cloudless sky and I soon developed a temperature that threatened heat apoplexy. In a quarter of an hour I felt I must either rest or succumb to the heat and as I thought a Bulgarian bullet was preferable to sunstroke, I sat down in the lee of a rock which protected me from one line of Bulgarian positions and started to smoke a cigarette. My soldier-chamois stood below making wild signs for me to make haste but I stuck where I was till I felt sufficiently rested to resume the descent. It was a curious feeling to know that five hundred Bulgarian eyes on the cliff above, less than a thousand yards away, were looking down on me. I kept my eyes glued to the sky line, ready to jump if I saw the flash of a gun. But they probably thought the game was not worth the candle or shells were too valuable, for **nothing** happened and I finished my cigarette in peace.

An hour and a half later I was back in Bachovo drinking the welcome cup of the tea always on tap in a Serbian post. As my horse had been resting all day I put him to a sharp trot on the home stretch and an hour later I was back in the mess-room at Soubotzko.



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The impression I had gained by my visit to the front of the Second Serbian army was that unless it was reinforced the position was one of stalemate. But I little thought that, thanks to the indecision of the Allies, this state of things on this front would endure, as it did, for nearly two long years.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SECOND PHASE OF THE OPERATIONS—THE CAPTURE OF MONASTIR

**T**HE capture of Florina and the pushing forward of the Allied lines to Kenali and the seizure of the Kaymakchalan and the descent of the Third Serbian Army to the bend of the Czerna Reka or Black River marked the conclusion of the first phase of the offensive of the Army of the Orient.

Unfortunately the force under the command of General Sarrail proved unable at once to follow up its advantage and keep on forcing the Germano-Bulgarian army to continue its retreat. To this various factors contributed. It is difficult at the present moment, before all the facts have transpired and until we have access to documents at present shut up in the Archives of the General Staff of the Army of the Orient and in the pigeon holes of the French and British Foreign Offices, to come to any definite conclusion and apportion the blame.

General Sarrail has been accused of want of energy and resolution in commanding his troops and many have declared that a more energetic leader would have obtained better results. But many things militate against this view. It is certain that up to 1916 the

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forces at his command at no time exceeded half a million men. On account of the nature of the country, the fighting line requires a *service d'arrière* of most formidable proportions. For every fighting man on the front there had to be a man in the rear driving a truck, leading a mule, repairing a road, constructing a railway, driving an ambulance, unloading a ship or guarding railways, roads and bridges. Then the sick on his hands, thanks to the malaria, were numbered by tens of thousands.

Another handicap was the polyglot conditions of his army, with its five autonomous commands, French, British, Serbian, Italian and Russian. Each contingent had its own weapons and its own ammunition. The shell for a French 75 would not fit a British or an Italian field gun. The same held good of small arm ammunition.

Every operation had to be carried out under the standing menace of Greece. As long as the Kaiser's brother-in-law occupied the throne of that country there was no absolute security for the flank and rear of General Sarrail's army. It was notorious that if it had suffered a serious reverse the army of King Constantine would at once have fallen on its rear and yet months went by and the Ministers of the Allied Powers in the Greek capital contented themselves with bombarding King Constantine with diplomatic notes, more or less comminatory, but never followed by any energetic action, which were just about as efficacious as the proverbial "mustard plaster on a wooden leg."

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The diplomatic action in Athens in 1916 was a melancholy replica of that at Sofia twelve months before.

Then it was notorious that the British Imperial Staff regarded the whole Macedonian front with deep disfavour and gave it only the most grudging support. Such reliefs as were sent out barely replaced the victims to malaria. After Lord Kitchener's visit to Gallipoli and Salonica a year before he had actually proposed that the Allies should, purely and simply, evacuate Salonica simultaneously with Gallipoli. It required the energetic personal intervention of Field Marshal Joffre to prevent this suicidal project being carried out. But though on his urgent representation, the decision to evacuate Salonica was rescinded, the prejudice against that front still prevailed at the War Office.

All this did not make for resolution and energy in the supreme command at Salonica. The situation was further complicated by an open breach between the commander-in-chief and his next in command, General Cordonnier, head of the French contingent. The exact cause of the breach has not officially transpired, but the version commonly current in Salonica was to the effect that it was due to a difference of opinion regarding the operations against Florina. General Sarrail, it is stated, became irritated at the slowness of the operations on the eastern sector, the more so as Paris and London were daily calling for energetic action to aid Roumania's entry into the war.

General Sarrail, accordingly, went in person to the front and after a survey of the positions, ordered

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General Cordonnier to attack. The latter, it is said, refused, declaring that the artillery preparation had not been sufficient and that the number of troops at his disposal was not large enough to justify an attack. General Sarrail criticized his subordinate's views with such vivacity that General Cordonnier resigned his command on the spot and a few days later took a steamer to France where he laid his views before the Paris ministry. But General Sarrail, having the cable at his disposal, got in his version first. The result was that the French Government was in possession of two diametrically opposing statements and had no means of coming to any conclusion as to who was right. It, therefore, gave orders to General Roques, Minister of War, to leave for Salonica and hold an investigation on the spot.

No hint of his journey was allowed to transpire, with the result that he arrived at the Headquarters at Salonica absolutely unexpectedly.

On November 1st, when returning from a ride to the summit of the Kaymakchalan, I was surprised to see General Sarrail's private railway car side-tracked at Ostrovo station. A French soldier working at the station informed me that General Sarrail and the Minister of War had arrived that morning to confer with General Vasitch, the commander of the Third Serbian Army.

When I arrived at mess that evening the presence of General Boyovitch, the Chief of the Serbian Headquarters Staff, and a number of staff officers showed that important decisions were being weighed. From

what I could hear General Roques had, on the whole, adopted the point of view of General Sarrail but at the same time warned him that public opinion in France and England expected him to do something to justify the confidence placed in him. Unless the half million men under his orders did something to justify their existence their commander-in-chief was given to understand that he might expect to be recalled to France.

It was, therefore, a question of at once resuming the offensive, with the capture of Monastir as the objective. General Sarrail asked the Crown Prince Alexander to undertake this with his army. His Royal Highness entrusted the carrying out of this offensive to Field-Marshal Mishitch, commanding the First Serbian Army. The Field-Marshal accepted the mission on condition that his forces should be reinforced by a French division and by the division of Russian troops and that the whole force should be under his direct command. This request caused some little heart-burning in French military circles as it was the first time that French troops had ever been placed under the command of a foreign general. I must, however, hasten to state that this feeling was only momentary and that no one at the conclusion of the operations paid higher tribute to Field-Marshal Mishitch than General Jérôme, the commander of the French division working under his orders.

The troops under the direct command of Field-Marshal Mishitch, therefore, consisted of the First Serbian Army (made up of the Morava and Vardar

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divisions) reinforced by a brigade from the Timok Division borrowed from the Second Serbian Army; the French division commanded by General Jérôme and the Russian division under the command of General Leontieff. The operation of this force was, of course, supported by the offensive of the Third Serbian Army, under General Vasitch, which had crossed the Kaymakchalan and now held the bend of the Czerna river on the plain below.

In front of the Serbian and French troops on the Florina front extended the plain of Monastir, about ten miles broad and twenty-five miles long. To the east is a range of mountains in a cleft of which nestles the town of Monastir. To the west, beyond the Czerna river, lie a mass of mountains dotted with villages. On this side the difficulty of an offensive was immense, the mountain peaks towering one above the other as far as the eye could reach.

To the Russian division Field-Marshal Mishitch entrusted the operations on the mountains to the east. The French held the plain and the line of trenches at Kenali which directly menaced Monastir, ten miles distant. For himself he reserved the most difficult part of the operations, the driving of the enemy from the mountain fortresses to the west of the plain.

The Serbs had no illusions as to the enormous difficulty of their task. They had to attack an enemy of equal, if not superior, force entrenched in a series of mountain positions, each more formidable than the other.

In the first days of October after their victory on

the Kaymakchalan the Serbs of the Third Army were faced by the triple barrier of the Czerna Reka, the rough Morihovo plateau and the Selechka Mountains.

On October 4th that army reached the Czerna Reka through Petalino. Two days later they forced their way past the Dobra Polie (where the Bulgarians still held in check the troops of the Second Army, occupying the Pojar, the Katunatz and the Kukurus) and descended to Budimirca and Grunishte. On October 9th they crossed the Czerna Reka at the important point known as Skochivir, where, as its name indicates, the sluggish-flowing river breaks into rapids in the narrow defile into which it is forced by the close proximity of the Selechka and Starkov Grob Mountains.

The First Army under the direct orders of Field-Marshal Misitch crossed the Czerna Reka between the villages of Dobroveni and Brod and on October 11th gained a footing in the latter village. The Serbs, however, met with desperate resistance. This was, however, broken on October 17th by the capture of the villages of Volyesedo and Brod. The enemy fell back precipitately toward the north pursued by the Serbian cavalry. The capture of Gardilovo threatened to cut off the Bulgarian forces facing the French and Russians on the Kenali River-Sakulevo line. They began to fall back across the Czerna Reka by the bridge at Bukri. This retreat uncovered the way to Monastir, but until the enemy was driven from the mountain positions to the west it was not possible for the French to take full advantage of this success.



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With the object of driving the Germans and Bulgarians from the mountain positions the Serbs pushed north from Gardilovo toward Baldenci. On October 19th and 20th they captured a large number of guns and about 1,000 prisoners, among the latter a German officer and 43 men, part of the reinforcements which had arrived from East Prussia a few days before. Encouraged by this success the Serbs pressed forward with renewed vigor toward Baldenci and north of Skochivir, but just at this critical moment there came a break in the weather. Furious rain storms impeded the advance of the Serbs and held up the army of Field Marshal Mishitch at the very moment that speed of movement was most essential.

This delay allowed the enemy to bring up fresh German troops to reinforce his beaten army. Encouraged by this support the Bulgarians on October 22d tried to recover the ground lost three days before, but all their attacks were repulsed with heavy losses. A vigorous counter-attack by the Serbs advanced their lines 700 metres farther north.

Two days later the enemy was driven from the steep sides of the Starkov Grob and the Serbians seized the fortified height at the confluence of the Czerna Reka and the Stroshwitza. For the next few days there was fierce fighting to the north of Brod. Gardilovo, which had succumbed to a Bulgarian counter attack, was recaptured by the French on October 28th. The open weather greatly interfered with the operations but in spite of rain and mud the Serbs pushed forward slowly but surely. Their objective

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was the bridge at Novak which serves the eastern entrance to Monastir. On October 29th the Serbian artillery fire demolished the wooden bridge over the Czerna River at Bukri. The Bulgarians attacked the Serbian right wing south of the villages of Polog and Budinirca on November 4th and 5th but the attacks were repulsed. Renewed on November 7th and 9th they had no better success.

On the following day came the Serbian reply, delivered with crushing force by the Division of the Morava, under the command of Colonel Milovanovitch. This division, of which the headquarters were established at Vrbeni, received orders to storm the heights of Mount Chuke, on which the Bulgarians had established positions of great strength. On October 8th I rode out to the observation post established a few miles from Vrbeni, from which a magnificent view of Mount Chuke could be obtained. This mountain, which constitutes the southernmost point of the Selechka range, rises some 1,500 feet above the valley. Half way up to the first summit, which is about 1,000 feet high, lay the village of Polog, which the Bulgarians had strongly fortified. Five hundred feet above lay the second rocky crest, the summit of the formidable natural fortress. It was clear that the Serbs had before them a task that would have dismayed troops of less dauntless courage.

The assault on the Chuke positions was ordered for the following morning. In view of this the artillery preparation began on the evening of October 8th at seven o'clock and was continued with the greatest

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violence till ten o'clock the next morning; batteries of all calibre, from mountain guns to heavy howitzer batteries, taking part in it.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when I arrived on the summit of the mountain on which Colonel Milovanovitch had established himself to direct the attack of his division. On the windswept plateau the commander of the Morava division had placed his campstool between two boulders. Behind were grouped a dozen officers of his staff with whom were three or four French artillery officers. Under cover of the rocks and boulders the telephones were installed which placed Colonel Milovanovitch in touch with a score of batteries, large and small, distributed in the valley below and on the lower slopes of the Chuke. From our coign of vantage we had a complete view of Mount Chuke, only three short miles away. The battle developed itself with the precision of a cinematograph show.

When I arrived at nine o'clock every battery was pouring shell and shrapnel into the village of Polog. In the dry water courses, behind rocks, boulders and one or two stone walls that zigzagged along the face of the mountain, we could see the dark masses of the Serbian infantry awaiting the order to attack. Every instant the artillery fire grew fiercer. The thunder of the guns rolled in a crescendo and diminuendo, according to the curt orders transmitted over the network of telephone lines. We could see the side of the mountain being searched by shell and shrapnel from base to summit. The Bulgarians evidently real-

ized that the infantry attack was impending and tried to send reinforcements to Polog. Three times their infantry debouched round the shoulder of the mountain but each time the pitiless rain from the batteries drove them back to cover.

Meanwhile we could see the Serbian infantry leaving cover and swarming up in a succession of rushes toward the village. Finally they were within striking distance. A curt order from Colonel Milovanovitch and the artillery fire directed on the village suddenly ceased, as the Serbs rushed with fixed bayonets toward Polog. At the same moment shot and shell began to rain on the ridge above to establish a barrage and prevent the Bulgarian troops massed behind it making any effort to come to the aid of the defenders of the village. An instant later the long lines of Serbian infantry disappeared into the village. Then followed a few minutes of anxious waiting. Suddenly long brown columns began to debouch from Polog. Turning my field glasses on them I saw they were Bulgarian prisoners. The Serbs had taken the village at the point of the bayonet.

But little respite was given them, they had to brace themselves for the second effort, the capture of the first ridge. At little after three o'clock we could see the lines of Serbian infantry pouring out of the village and swarming up the slope above. Every gun the Bulgarians could bring to bear was trained on the advancing troops. But the Serbs are past-masters of mountain fighting and know how to take advantage of every scrap of cover. We could see them crawling

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through the ravines, working their way along the dry water courses, in and out of the boulders and trees, everywhere that nature had provided barriers against the bullets and shrapnel of the enemy.

Steadily, relentlessly they pushed forward. Then once more the fire of the Serbian batteries ceased, a sign that the last assault was imminent. A few minutes after four with an overwhelming rush the ridge was carried.

But there still remained the crest of the mountain. Colonel Milovanovitch called on his men for a final effort. They responded nobly and in the gathering dusk massed themselves for the supreme effort. Foot by foot they fought their way toward the summit. By this time darkness had fallen and we could only follow their progress by the spurts of flame from their rifles and the lines of bursting shells. About six o'clock a telephone message announced that the Bulgarians on the left bank of the crest were making a last desperate effort to send reinforcements to the threatened positions. The French heavy batteries in the valley below were at once ordered to smother this shoulder of the mountain under shell fire. It was efficacious and a quarter of an hour later a telephone message announced that the pressure was relieved. At seven o'clock the order to assault was given and the Serbians, forgetting the fatigue of their eight hours of desperate battle, rushed forward with irresistible *élan*. As one battery after another shut down its fire an uncanny silence settled down on the Chuke, only broken by the distant rattle of rifles and machine gun

fire. There was an anxious wait then the shrill ring of the telephone bell broke the silence. Colonel Yourousitch, the Chief of Staff, leaned over the receiver. "The Serbs hold the summit," it announced; "the enemy is in full flight. We have captured seven howitzers, one field gun, nine machine guns and over 600 prisoners including five officers."

The battle of Chuke was won. Colonel Milovanovitch rose from the camp stool from which he had not moved since early morning, and snapped his field-glasses together. An instant later the horses of the Staff arrived. The Colonel swung himself into the saddle and with a curt "Good night, gentlemen," to the group of French officers galloped off into the darkness.

Quarter of an hour later nothing was left on the wind-swept mountain top but the men of the Field Telegraph Corps rolling up the long lines of telephone wires and loading them on the wagons that would carry them forward to spin the net afresh in the rear of the retreating enemy.

During the assault on Polog and Mount Chuke the French and Serbian troops on the plain made a demonstration to prevent the Bulgarians sending any help to the troops holding the mountain. Strong patrols were sent forward to simulate an attack. The Bulgarians sent thousands of men to man the line of trenches facing Kenali. As soon as they saw that the trenches were manned the French and Serbian artillery poured a tremendous fire into them with disastrous effect.

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Two days after the fall of Chuke the Bulgarians by a series of counter-attacks tried to regain the lost ground but were driven back on each attempt, leaving over 1000 prisoners in the hands of the Serbs. On November 12th Iven, a village further north, fell into Serbian hands and the whole of the First and Third armies were across the Czerna Reka. On November 13th the village of Tepavci was taken with over a thousand prisoners mostly German. Two days later Chegel fell and the victorious Serbs and French pushed forward to the 1212 metre hill, the key position on which the fate of Monastir depended.

This the Bulgarians defended with the courage of despair. The French brought up a *regiment d'élite*, the 2nd Zouaves, the *enfants perdus*, who swarmed to the attack with their bugles sounding the old battle call of Algeria.

“Il y a la goutte a boire là-haut  
Il y a la goutte a boire.”

The capture of the 1212 metre hill sealed the fate of Monastir. From it the heavy guns could not only shell the city but also the only line of retreat across the Czerna Reka at Novak. If this line of retreat had been closed the whole Germano-Bulgarian Army would have been driven to disaster in the marshes which fill the northern end of the plain of Monastir. The German Staff saw that there was not a moment to lose. On November 18th the Germano-Bulgarian army was pouring through Novak in rapid retreat

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leaving only a strong rearguard to hold back the advance of the French troops lining the trenches at Kenali. At midday on November 19th, the fourth anniversary of the capture of the city from the Turks in 1912, the victorious Allies entered Monastir. The Serbs did not want the French to alone enjoy this triumph so the 4th Serbian Regiment of Cavalry swam their horses across the Czerna Reka and galloped for the town, the dripping troopers entering it from the north side at the same moment that the French regiments, with bands playing and colors flying, marched in from the south.

Thus closed as brilliant a series of operations as was fought on any front in the World-war. The indomitable Serbs, the army of the "Nation that will never die," were once more in possession of the second largest town in King Peter's Kingdom.

But unfortunately with this effort the Army of the Orient had shot its bolt. It had no reserves to follow up the fleeing enemy and turn their retreat into a rout. King Peter's gallant army had fought itself once more to a standstill. The men of the First and Third armies had, by eight weeks ceaseless campaigning, reached the limit of human effort.

As a consequence the enemy returned practically unmolested in the direction of Prilep, where it again proceeded to entrench itself, and the whole weary game of trench warfare began afresh.

The Second Army on the Pojar-Vetrenik line facing the Bulgarians on the Dobra Polie were not in sufficient force to take the offensive which would



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have cost more lives than the depleted Shumadia and Timok divisions could spare. The fact that the Bulgarians held the rocky, precipitous crest of Mount Vetrenik on the west of the Dobra Polie and the summit of the steep sugar-loaf-shaped Mount Sokol on the east allowed the Bulgarian artillery on these positions to enfilade any force advancing across the valley from the Pojar to attack the positions on the Dobra Polie. Another division would have rendered a successful attack possible but this was not at the disposal of Field Marshal Stepanovitch. The result was that the war resolved itself into a position of stalemate which lasted nearly two years.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GENERAL OFFENSIVE OF THE ARMY OF THE ORIENT

THE capture of Monastir, important though it was politically, had little tactical and less strategic significance. The failure of the Army of the Orient to pursue its advantage, due to the lack of troops to follow the fleeing Bulgarians and transform their retreat into a rout, neutralized, to a great extent, the momentary success achieved. The enemy was given time to occupy and entrench strong mountain positions, barring the advance of the Serbs to Prilep and the Babuna Pass. It was even in the power of the enemy to bombard the city of Monastir with long range artillery, which they did for weeks, more than half of the city being laid in ruins.

The positions of the Army of the Orient toward the end of January, 1917, were as follows: The Morava and Vardar Divisions held a line running from the Kaymakchalan through Petalino, Budimirca, Grunishte and Iven to beyond the 1378 metre hill. This line faced the Bulgarian trenches barring the advance on Prilep and the Babuna Pass.

From the base of the Kaymakchalan the line ran almost at right angles, along the summits of the

Pojar, Katunatz, Kukurus and Vetrenik mountains to the Vardar Valley which was held by the French contingent.

The French were linked up with the British forces stretching across the Valley of the Struma. The only result of the brilliant offensive of Field Marshal Mishitch had, therefore, been to free the city and plain of Monastir of the enemy and to drive them into mountain positions about twenty-five miles to the west.

The First Serbian army was so exhausted by the effort it had made that General Sarrail ordered it to be brought to the rear and given some weeks of well deserved rest. In consequence the Morava and Vardar Divisions were, toward the end of January, 1917, brought back to the neighbourhood of Florina and their places in the front line taken by French troops.

After that things settled down to their former condition of stalemate where the operations were confined to long range artillery fire with an occasional trench raid. It was at this moment that I left Salonica to visit Rome, Paris and London. It was then that I realized how divided were the counsels of the Allies in regard to the Salonica front, the French favouring an energetic offensive and the British General Staff opposing it.

There was, however, in the following months, some slight improvement in the political situation. After the conference held at Rome in December, 1916, the

necessity for closer co-operation of the Allies became more clearly apparent and some time later the Supreme Council at Versailles, composed of the Premiers of France, Great Britain, Italy and a representative of Russia, came into being. Its constitution brought the dispute between Mr. Lloyd George and the Imperial General Staff to a head, with the result that General Sir William Robertson resigned and was replaced by General (now Field Marshal) Sir Henry Wilson, a soldier who possessed the confidence of the Premier.

A more energetic political attitude was adopted in regard to the Near East and drastic measures were taken to curb the pro-German intrigues of King Constantine, and when that monarch proved recalcitrant, he was deposed on June 12th and replaced by his second son, Prince Alexander. M. Venizelos was appointed Prime Minister, Greece declared war on the Central Powers and their Allies and proceeded to mobilize her armies.

In the month of October General Sarrail was replaced at the head of the Army of the Orient by General Guillaumat, a soldier of great energy and decision of character, who had distinguished himself on the Western front. He at once began a thorough reorganization of the Salonica front. Large reinforcements were sent from France and England and the newly mobilized Greek army was added to the forces in Macedonia.

On March 18, 1918, the Allies at last succeeded in

realizing unity of action by the appointment of Field Marshal Foch to the Supreme command of all the Allied forces. One of his first actions was to order the Army of the Orient to prepare for a general offensive. General Franchet d'Esperey, who commanded the Fifth French army group on the Western front, was sent to Salonica to carry out the operations. He arrived on that front toward the end of June, 1918. After a rapid survey of the positions he arrived at the conviction that the departure of the greater part of the German troops, together with the reinforcement of the Army of the Orient, to which were added the Greek divisions (nine in all), had created a situation on the Macedonian front which would allow the Allied troops to undertake an offensive on a large scale with, this time, every prospect of a definite result.

The favourable turn of events on the Western front, and the weakening of the *morale* of the Bulgarian troops, due to the extreme lassitude caused by the prolongation of the war, which was clear from information reaching the Allied lines, greatly increased the chance of a successful offensive.

The idea of a general offensive was conceived for the first time toward the beginning of July (about the 5th of the month) that is to say, shortly after the arrival in Salonica of General Franchet d'Esperey and the entry of Field-Marshal Mishitch on his new functions as the Chief of the General Staff of the Serbian Army.

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The first instructions were given on July 27th and the definite decision to attack was taken August 9, 1918, that is to say, nearly two years after the capture of Monastir in November, 1916.

The plan of General Franchet d'Esperey was, by operations undertaken on the Serbian front, in the mountainous region lying between the Souchitza and the Lechwitza rivers, to bring about a rupture of the enemy's lines on a front of 30 kilometres (20 miles) and by rapidly following up this success to widen the breach and by a vigorous forward push to reach the Demir-Kapu-Kavadartze line. By these operations two results would be achieved:

(a) The separation of the Bulgarian forces in the Valley of the Vardar from those holding the Monastir region.

(b) The cutting of the enemy's principal lines of communication, those which ran along the valley of the Vardar and those which linked up Gradsko with Prilep.

Every precaution was taken to keep the plans of the Allies absolutely secret and to assure the rapidity and vigour of their execution.

The Allied commander-in-chief counted, as the natural consequence of this manœuvre, that the enemy would be forced to abandon trench warfare and adopt a war of movement. The result showed that these expectations were justified and even exceeded.

The forces on both sides were:

## (1) On the whole Macedonian front:

	Allied Army	Enemy
Battalions . . . . .	289	297
Fighting effective . . . . .	177,562	181,160
Machine guns . . . . .	2,682	2,539
Machine rifles . . . . .	6,424	—
Guns (including trench mortars, 58 and 240) . . . . .	2,069	1,850
Guns, 37 millimetres . . . . .	289	—
Squadrons of cavalry . . . . .	47½	26
Aeroplanes (about) . . . . .	200 (about)	80

## (2) On the Serbian front:

	Allied Army	Enemy
Battalions . . . . .	75	26
Fighting effective . . . . .	36,500	11,600
Machine guns . . . . .	756	245
Machine rifles . . . . .	2,610	—
Guns (including trench mor- tars) . . . . .	580	146
Guns of 37 millimetres . . . . .	74	—
Squadrons of cavalry . . . . .	18	3
Aeroplanes . . . . .	81	24

In consequence, the Allies, on the Serbian front, were three times stronger than the enemy, both in infantry and artillery. The reinforcements attached to the Serbian army for these operations are included in the effectives given above.

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These reinforcements were made up as follows:

(a) Two divisions of French infantry (the 122nd division of Infantry and the 17th division of Colonial Infantry).

(b) Thirteen batteries of light artillery.

(c) Aeroplanes, Stokes guns, fire-throwing apparatus, labor detachments, etc.

The front was further strengthened by being diminished almost by half by bringing in the two divisions on the extreme flanks, the Timok division on the east and the Morava division, with the detachment from Prilep, on the west. The front of operation of the Serbian armies was thus reduced from 60 to about 30 kilometres (40 to 20 miles).

As soon as the decision to take the offensive was adopted the following preparatory operations were undertaken:

(a) The construction of new roads and the repair of those already existing. About 30 kilometres of new roads and numerous footpaths were constructed in very mountainous regions and on very difficult ground.

(b) The construction of a Decauville narrow-gauge railway linking Dragomantzi and Bizovo (15 kilometres) and the augmentation of the daily carrying capacity of the existing Vertekop-Soubotzko narrow-gauge line from 300 to 700 tons.

(c) The transport and placing of the artillery, the construction of redoubts and artillery ammunition dumps.

(d) The transport of munitions to the gun posi-



tions (7 days' supply for the old and 4 days' supply for the new batteries).

(e) The establishing of new telephone and telegraph lines.

(f) The reinforcement of the aviation and the establishment of an aerodrome at Yenidje-Vardar, etc.

The relieving of the flanking divisions was carried out, for the Timok Division on August 28th, for the Morava Division on August 27th and for the Prilep detachment on August 15th.

The arrival of the 122d French Infantry Division on this sector was terminated on September 8th and that of the 17th Division of Colonial Infantry on September 9th.

The entire preparations were thus terminated about the middle of September, 1918.

At the moment of beginning the attack the Serbian forces were distributed as follows:

Second Serbian Army.

Souchitza-Soko front (17 kilometres)

First line	}	Division of the Shumadia:— Souchitza-Kamen, 6½ kilometres, 85 guns
		17th division of Colonial infantry: Kamen-Testerast Kamen 3.8 kilometres; 112 guns
		122d division of French infantry: Testerast Kamen-Sokol, 5½ kilometres, 136 guns

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Second line { Division of the Timok behind the 17th  
 Division of French Colonial infantry  
 Jugoslav division behind the 122d di-  
 vision of French infantry  
 Corps artillery, 18 guns

### First Serbian Army

First line { Division of the Drina:—Soko-Gradech-  
 mitza Pass, 11½ kilometres; 100  
 guns  
 Division of the Danube:—Gradechnitza  
 Pass—Lechnitza, 5 kilometres; 81  
 guns

Second line { Division of the Morava, behind the  
 centre of the line  
 Corps artillery, 14 guns

Artillery under the direct orders of the High Com-  
 mand at Floka, 12 guns.

The idea of the manœuvre was the following:—  
 To bring about a breach in the part of the enemy line  
 between the Kamen and the Soko, facing the Second  
 Serbian Army (9½ kilometres) and to extend it at  
 once right and left along the whole Serbian front,  
 to undertake the pursuit of the enemy with the two  
 second line Serbian divisions (the Jugoslav and Timok  
 divisions) in the direction of Demir-Kapu and Kava-  
 dartzi, by pushing forward with the greatest energy  
 and to execute a similar movement in front of the

First Serbian Army in the direction of the Czerna Reka.

The attack on the Serbian front was to be followed by an attack near Doiran and another near Monastir so as to widen the breach on both sides.

The artillery preparation for the general offensive began on September 14th. In principle, this was to have been as short as possible and should only have lasted a few hours. But at the request of certain divisional commanders it was decided to prolong it for 24 hours.

It began at 8 o'clock in the morning. The weather was fine but not very clear. At the hour fixed all the guns opened fire on the enemy's two fortified lines. Reports received at midday from the First Army stated that patrols sent out by the Shumadia division were received at certain points by rifle fire and grenades. At the extreme left breaches were opened at several points. The first line trenches were for the most part destroyed. The enemy shelled a number of points in the rear of the division of the Shumadia.

The 17th Division of Colonial Infantry reported a number of lucky hits with its trench mortars, but the dust raised by the bombardment was so great that it was difficult to observe the results. The enemy artillery responded very weakly.

In front of the 122d Division of French Infantry the artillery preparation was carried out according to plan. The return fire of the enemy was intermittent.

The heavy artillery of the corps shelled all the enemy units signalled by aeroplanes and such posi-

tions as it had been able to locate from its observation posts.

The artillery preparation of the First Army also began at 8 o'clock. Patrols were sent out to report the progress of the destruction effected by the guns. The enemy artillery responded in very feeble fashion. The Serbian listening posts learnt that the bombardment had caused heavy losses to the enemy, torn up his telephone lines and destroyed the trenches. Observations were, however, very difficult on account of the heavy dust caused by the bombardment.

The action of the artillery continued all afternoon on the front of the two Serbian armies. On the front occupied by the division of the Shumadia the effect of the fire was generally speaking good. In front of the 17th French Colonial Division many trenches were torn up and the woods behind them shattered. From three o'clock onward the enemy returned the fire with more vigour. In front of the 122d French division all the destruction foreseen was realized. The corps artillery held the enemy artillery in check and proceeded to register its batteries in the direction of Koziak. The aviation reported no movement in proximity to the front, but about half past four an aeroplane signalled that five convoys of fifty wagons each were moving in the direction of Kosisk. A patrol was sent to open fire on them.

In general the destructive fire on the front of the Second Army was very well executed and the artillery, from this point of view, may be considered to have accomplished its task. The rear of the 17th

Colonial Division suffered from the fire of the enemy artillery. The division suffered some losses.

In the course of the night the artillery maintained its curtain fire and kept the ruined trenches of the enemy continually under shell fire.

The artillery of the First Army, in the course of the afternoon, undertook certain concentrations of fire and a number of barrages on the enemy lines facing the Division of the Drina and a strong preparatory bombardment of the Sokol. But all the same, Serbian patrols sent out were received with rifle fire. The return fire of the enemy artillery gradually weakened and he contented himself with intensifying his barrage on the Rovovska Kossa.

During the night Serbian patrols raided the enemy trenches, penetrating them at certain points. At some points they even pushed forward to the supporting lines. It was found that the whole line of enemy trenches facing the Division of the Drina had been practically destroyed.

The same held good of the front facing the Division of the Danube. Here, however, the patrols were checked by a powerful barrage, supported by machine guns, rifle fire and hand grenades.

During the night the infantry took up its positions of attack. The second line troops were moved up to within a thousand yards of the first line, the Division of the Timok behind the 17th French Colonial Division and the Yugoslav division behind the 122d French division.

At half past five on the morning of September 15th

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the three first line divisions of the Second Army attacked on the whole front. With such vigour was the assault given that the Division of the Shumadia advanced beyond the Slonovo Uvo to the north and reached the eastern summit of the Vetrenik. On the 1570 metre hill it captured 300 prisoners, 2 howitzers and 2 field guns. On the Vetrenik it took one officer, 20 soldiers, a machine gun and a small *minenwerfer*. The enemy fled by small groups from the Gola Rudina to the Poiate.

The 10th Regiment of the 17th French Colonial Division reached the summit of the Kravitza. The prisoners taken numbered 21 officers, 125 noncommissioned officers and 791 men. A great mass of material was also captured.

The 122d French Division captured the Dobra Polie but was checked in its advance toward the north. A major and a captain were among the prisoners.

The reserve divisions then moved forward to the foot of the captured positions. As the result of a counter attack on the 17th Colonial Division its reserves were used up but these were at once reconstituted by detachments taken from the Serbian unities in the immediate vicinity so that the positions conquered were maintained.

In the afternoon the division of the Shumadia, by a brilliant attack, captured the whole of the western summit of the Vetrenik and pushed forward its advance guard toward the north, attacking the Gola Rudini. It captured a howitzer battery, which it immediately turned against the enemy holding Borova

Chuke, and sent forward detachments to capture that position. The manœuvre was intended to facilitate the action of the 17th Colonial Division which had been stopped in its forward movement by the fierce resistance of the enemy.

At four o'clock the division carried the Borova Chuke and sent some infantry detachments towards the 1606 metres hill, the Olla Chuke and Poroy. At this moment the Gola Rudina was also captured and by five o'clock the left flank of the division reached the Souchitza River, while a detachment pushed on toward Chlem. Later the Shumadia Division captured the Kravitchki Kamen. In doing this the Shumadia Division had not only accomplished the mission confided to it but had done much more as, by its capture of the Borova Chuke and the Kravitchka Kamen, it contributed to the final capture of all the enemy's front line positions. It played a decisive rôle in the day's fighting though, according to the original plan, it should only have executed an attack of secondary importance.

The 17th Division of French Colonial Infantry about one o'clock in the afternoon captured the Golak-Kravitchki Kamen line of trenches. Its left wing advanced toward the Kravitchki Kamen-Olla Chuke and Borova line. The enemy, reinforced by the entire 53d regiment of Bulgarian infantry, launched three counter-attacks against this division. They were so violent that the division had to fall back behind its advanced lines and, as stated above, bring up all its reserves. The Serbian General Headquarters at once

sent orders to the Field Marshal commanding the Second Army to send his second line division to the support of the 17th Colonial Division and to aid it in the accomplishment of its mission. This was done at once, the enemy was repulsed and the division attained its objective, carrying the summit of the Sokol by a night attack.

In spite of the exhausting effort made by the Second Army in this day's fierce fighting it was called on to make yet further sacrifices. The General Headquarters telegraphed to the Field Marshal commanding it pointing out the importance of its continuing its advance during the night to follow up the retreating enemy and keep contact with him.

The First Serbian Army, after an artillery preparation of the same intensity and the same duration as that of the Second Army, began its attack at 5:30 a. m., by an attack on the Sokol. This was carried out by the Division of the Drina. By a quarter past six the right wing had seized the right hand peak while certain groups managed to secure a footing on the left hand peak and in the depression to the west. But this company and the left of the 122d French Infantry Division had to fall back before the fire of the enemy artillery. On the whole the right wing of this division did not achieve any notable success and the commander of the column received orders to continue his action in *liaison* with the left of the division.

Patrols from the Division of the Danube had discovered that the artillery preparation had had as its result a destruction of the enemy's defences sufficient



to justify a general attack. The fire of the artillery was continued but chiefly directed on the rear of the enemy. On some points the enemy artillery responded by a vigorous fire. Orders were given to continue the artillery preparation till three o'clock so as to give the Second Army time to carry out the task assigned it.

At that hour the Field Marshal commanding the First Army gave orders for an attack all along the line. As a first result of this, two companies succeeded in getting a footing in the Grba and on the isolated mamelon alongside it, but as the 1338 metre crest of the Rovovoka Kossa was still in the hands of the enemy, and also on account of the difficulties of the *terrain* and the intensity of the enemy's fire these companies had to regain their trenches.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the infantry of the Division of the Drina advanced toward the enemy positions on the Sokol-Gradechnitza part of the front, but was brought to a halt by an excessively violent machine gun fire coming from the Veza and the summit of the Sokol. On the part of the front between the Pass of the Gradechnitza and the Rovovoka Kossa, the first wave of the Serbian attack reached the enemy trenches.

The divisions received orders to continue the attack during the night and to capture the enemy's first line. The manœuvre succeeded completely and the right wing of the right division captured the Sokol at the same moment as the 122d French division. This success was extended to the 1338 metre hill so that by

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5:30 a. m., the whole of the enemy's first line was in the hands of the First Army and the advance of the infantry continued in the direction of the Lechnitchka Kossa.

All the enemy's first line positions facing the right of the Division of the Danube were captured, but the action of the left wing was much hampered by heavy enemy artillery fire. The centre and the right wing continued to push on in the direction of the Lechnitza.

In spite of the unfavorable atmospheric conditions the Serbian aviation displayed great activity, carrying on reconnaissances in the enemy lines and rear, keeping up the *liaison* of the infantry, shelling the retreating convoys of the enemy and generally acquitting itself brilliantly in its various missions. In addition the aeroplanes bombarded the railway station and camp of Gradsko. The fact that two Serbian pilots were forced on account of wounds to come down on enemy territory and that most of the apparatus returned riddled with bullets gave proof of the courage of the Serbian aviators.

In the course of the day's fighting on September 15th over 3000 prisoners were taken while 33 guns were captured. The Bulgarians in addition, rather than surrender them, threw a large number of guns into the ravines in the mountains where they could not be found. The losses for the day were: 17th Division of the French Colonial Infantry, 1200 men; 122d Division of French Infantry, 500 men; the Division of the Shumadia, 500 men, and the Division

of the Drina, 200 men. The other units had slight losses.

On September 16th the 17th Division of the Colonial Infantry and the 122d Division of French Infantry remained on the conquered positions. The principal task of the day was entrusted to the Jugoslav Division which was ordered to carry the Koziak, the most important point of the enemy's second line. The Division of the Timok advanced by the ravine of the Poroy to attack the Topolatz. The Jugoslav division which had approached the Koziak during the night succeeded about midday, after a fierce combat, in carrying the 1810 metre crest with its left wing while certain sections of its right wing, about eleven o'clock, got a footing on the 1825 metre crest.

The enemy thoroughly understood the great importance of the Koziak position and sent reinforcements to this essential strategic point from all sides.

In the course of the afternoon these reinforcements (the 53d and 81st Bulgarian Regiments) made a series of counter attacks on the Koziak and even succeeded for an instant in recapturing the 1810 metre crest.

But a vigorous attack by the Jugoslav Division drove them once more from the position and the Serbs remained finally master of the mountain summit.

The First Serbian Army, after breaking through the enemy's first line positions, continued its advance with all speed. By 10 o'clock the Division of the Drina had passed the Gradechnitza and directed its

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march on the Gradechnitchka Kossa. The retreat of the enemy giving way before these units was very disordered and forced them to abandon many of their wounded and an immense quantity of material.

On the left wing of the Division of the Danube the enemy offered obstinate resistance in order to cover his retreat on Razimbey.

The Division of the Morava was on the march toward Koutchkov Kamen and deployed in the direction of the slopes of Mount Koziak, placing itself to the right of the Second Army, that is to say between the Jugoslav Division and the Division of the Drina. It stopped at this point.

The First Army had made an exceptional effort on a very difficult *terrain*, crushing the obstinate resistance of the enemy on successive lines, strongly fortified. It advanced to a depth of fifteen kilometres. The cavalry division attached to the First Army followed close on the heels of the infantry awaiting the favorable moment to intervene.

The Serbian aviation was again very active. Its chief activity was in the neighbourhood of the bridge of Razimbey, where the converging roads were blocked with convoys of all kinds, which the aeroplanes attacked with machine guns and bombs. It also furnished valuable information regarding the movement of the enemy and was able to ascertain that he was constructing trenches in all haste on the Kutchkov Kamen and that three enemy batteries were advancing from Poltchichte on the Koziak. One Serbian pilot was wounded by a rifle bullet.

The Serbian Army had succeeded in its mission, which was to make a breach in the enemy's centre and then roll up the Bulgarian troops right and left so as to widen this to such a degree that the enemy's forces would be split in two parts.

The Serbian troops marched without respite during the whole of the night and all day on September 17th kept forcing the Bulgarians to further retreat. By eight o'clock in the evening the Timok Division completed the occupation of Topolatz and approached Sutdena Voda. The Jugoslav Division in co-operation with the Division of the Morava, after capturing Kutchkov Kamen, continued its advance to Alsar, while the divisions of the First Army continued to pursue the fleeing enemy. At eight o'clock in the evening it passed the Bechlchte-Melnitza line, while the Drina Division at the same hour reached the Vitolichte-Melnitza line.

The Division of the Morava, supported by the Jugoslav Division, at 4:45 p. m. captured the Kutchkov Kamen and continued its march toward the north. By a night march the cavalry division advanced beyond Poltchichte while the Division of the Danube, keeping the *liaison* with the 11th Division of Colonial Infantry, reached the bridge of Razimbey.

By 8 p. m. on September 18th the Timok Division occupied Blatetz and continued to pursue the enemy in the direction of Golulatz. By sundown, the Jugoslav Division, which in the afternoon had captured and burned the village of Rozden, reached Mrejintze and Kanopichte. The Shumadia Division passed the night

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on the Topolatz and the 17th Division of Colonial Infantry on the Koziak.

The division of cavalry of the First Army sent a brigade with a battery of mountain artillery *via* Poltchichte, Vitolichte and the *massif* of the Tchaterna toward Kavadon. The commander of the division, with the 2nd Brigade and a battery of field artillery, advanced on Razimbey *via* Vitolichte and later re-joined the 1st Brigade.

The Drina and Morava divisions in spite of the bad roads and rocky nature of the ground continued to push steadily forward. By night the former divisions had reached Vitolichte while the advance guards of the Morava divisions reached the Czerna of Polochko to the south.

On account of the ever growing difficulties of the *terrain* the Serbian Headquarters ordered the cavalry division with the First Army to be transferred to the Second Army. In consequence on the night of September 18th it was concentrated at Razden with orders to take part in the operations of the Second Army on the following day in the direction of Kavadar.

On September 19th solid bridge heads were established on the left bank of the Czerna Reka which assured the passage of the main body of the army in the bend of that river, from which the enemy's lines of communication Gradsko-Prilep were threatened on the one hand, and on the other, the whole fortified system of the bend of the Czerna Reka and the region of Monastir.

The operations of the Second Serbian Army on Sep-

tember 20th were only a continuation of the preceding operations which were destined to bring it to the banks of the Vardar on the east and to the Czerna Reka on the west between its course and the right wing of the First Army.

With this in view, the Division of the Timok pushed forward its two columns on the front Gornia Drabovitz-Barova, on which the enemy was now putting up a stronger resistance to the advance of the columns to the left and less resistance to the column on the right. The Yugoslav division continued its action, which had for its objective the conquest of the Drtchevitchko Brdo, on which its right column was in action during the whole day, because the enemy was putting up a strong resistance in order to protect the Vardar railway line.

The left of this division advanced in the direction of Kavadar and Vozartzi. This column acted in *liaison* with the cavalry division, which was operating in front of the infantry. In the course of the day it seized the bridge at Vozartzi which had not been destroyed and entered Kavadar. This division captured twelve field guns.

As regards the other divisions of this army that of the Shumadia was in the environs of the village of Glavitch, while the 17th division of Colonial Infantry was in echelon in the region of Mrejintze-Rozden.

The *terrain* was excessively difficult and the roads were in a state of collapse which rendered the provisioning of the troops of the Second Army almost impossible. The use of motor trucks was out of the

question. The circulation of the camionettes and horse-drawn vehicles encountered the greatest difficulty though the weather was dry. In general the *terrain* was not suited for military movements and the provisioning of large bodies of men. The Serbian troops displayed exceptional energy and ability to do without many necessary things in order to triumph over the obstacles they encountered.

On the right of the First Army the left wing of the division of the Morava, at half past ten in the morning, seized the heights to the northeast of Godiyak on which, at eleven o'clock, it placed a battery of mountain guns. It then pushed forward struggling against the difficulties of the *terrain* and breaking down the resistance of the enemy, which was weak. The reserve of the division was still on the right bank of the Czerna Reka. About five o'clock the enemy launched a counter-attack on the heights occupied in the morning and succeeded in recapturing one to the northeast of Godiyak, while the height to the west remained in the possession of the Serbs. This action was carried out by combined detachments of Germans and Bulgarians.

In the course of the day the left column succeeded in capturing Galichta and the first summit to the north of the village. It was not possible to ascertain the importance of the enemy effectives. During the night the Serbs consolidated the positions seized.

During the night the commander of the division of the Morava was unable to establish the *liaison* with his right column. Dispatches which reached him later



announced that it captured the positions to the north of the Pravednik, on which the advance guard passed the night, while the main body remained in the village.

In order to inform the commander of the army of the difficulties met by the troops of the division of the Morava the general commanding that division sent the following description of the country over which his right column was marching: "The whole of this country is absolutely deprived of all means of communication. The distance which separates Polochko from Godiyak is only about 20 kilometres (13 miles) as the crow flies, but the country is so difficult that everyone loses himself. No night patrol sent out has, up to the present, returned so that I have not yet received a single report from my subordinates."

The right column of the division of the Danube, composed of two regiments and two groups of field artillery, advanced on the Vepretchani-Sama Bouka line and shortly after midday reached the latter positions. The left column—a regiment and a group of field artillery—was stopped in its advance by the resistance which it met with at the bridge-head on the right bank. All further movement was arrested by the barrage fire of the enemy. Six groups of enemy artillery were observed in the direction of Razimbey. At half past five in the evening the column had still failed to seize the bridge-head so that the 11th division of Colonial Infantry, forming the neighbouring column, could not advance toward Technichte, both columns being stopped by powerful enemy artillery fire.

The right column kept its position, however, in

spite of a surprise attack delivered about eight o'clock, accompanied by a heavy rifle and machine gun fire and the throwing of hand grenades.

The regiment at the head of the division of the Drina crossed the Czerna Reka shortly after nine o'clock in the morning and continued its march on Godiyak. The crossing was effected on two bridges formed of captured ox-wagons. At half past five in the evening the first echelon and the artillery attacked the enemy's rearguard, which still occupied the hill without a name, to the east of Godiyak, the pass near it and the upper crest of the Sama Bouka. At half past five the whole of the first echelon deployed, reinforced by a battalion. This attack, executed in co-operation with a part of the division of the Danube, was forced to slow down by the difficulties of the ground, but it brought the Serbs very close to the enemy positions. The fusillade did not cease during the whole night.

The Germano-Bulgarian army was split in two and it was now a question of rolling it up right and left in order to thoroughly isolate the two portions and crush them in detail. Through the gap thus made poured the victorious Army of the Orient. The knowledge that victory was in their grasp spurred the Serbian troops to fresh efforts and caused them to forget their fatigue and the terrible natural difficulties with which they had to struggle in the mountainous country in which they were fighting.

On September 21st the division of the Morava captured the Sedan Chuke and the Sama Bouka, but on

account of insufficient artillery preparations had to call a halt. The enemy had received considerable reinforcements and kept up a heavy rifle fire on the Serbian right while he tried to hold the left wing in check by an intense artillery fire. Finally the Serbs pushed a number of small detachments across the river. But at the bridge-head the enemy resisted obstinately. Finally at eleven o'clock in the night the right of the Division of the Drina by a vigorous attack seized the bridge-head and pushed forward rapidly. The retreating enemy blew up over twenty ammunition depots.

On the following day (September 22d) the Timok division of the Second Army, which the evening before had reached the Vardar, pushed forward detachments to Davidovo and Miletkovo to cut off the retreat of the 5th Bulgarian Division, and occupied Kuretmitza on the left bank of the Vardar. The left wing captured Dubliani and the mountain crests to the northeast and advanced on the Kiriz-tepe position, on which the enemy had begun to entrench himself. The cavalry division pushed on to Hudovo. Here it learned that the 2nd Bulgarian Infantry Regiment, with two batteries of field artillery, had taken up their positions to cover the retreat of the 5th Division which was retiring on Radovichte.

The Jugoslav division crossed the Czerna Reka at the point where it joins the Vardar and at Krivolak and pushed on toward Mujantzi and Pepelichte. The enemy's cavalry offered feeble resistance.

The enemy, in addition to the positions mentioned

above, held the Kolatz and the western slope in the direction of the Monastery of Tchitchevo and positions to the west of the railway station of Drenovo from which he held Vozartzi and the route to Kavadar under the fire of his artillery. After four counter-attacks, which all failed, the enemy retreated on Koba.

The division of the Shumadia held the Gornia Drabovitza-Barovo line. The cavalry division continued the pursuit of the enemy in the direction of Chtip with a view of reaching the summit between Toplik and Dragovo which would increase the liberty of movement of the Serbian troops in this sector.

When the second army entered Krivolak it captured three locomotives and 170 wagons filled with flour and salt, two new German aeroplanes, two automobiles and material of all kinds.

The Morava Division of the First Army continued its pursuit of the enemy in order to completely cut his lines of communication Gradoko-Drenevo-Prilep. The enemy burnt all his depots of provisions and munitions to the west of Paitzi. The enemy was in full retreat on all sides, such resistance as he offered being intended to cover the destruction of his stores and depots. This was carried out with such precipitation that an hospital with 100 wounded was burnt down, all the patients perishing in the flames. A depot for sick horses was also destroyed. This work of destruction was entrusted to a special corps of German troops.

On the 23d of September the Second Serbian Army continued its victorious march. At four p. m., the left

wing of the Timok division occupied Kiriz-tepe. The right of the Yugoslav division pushed forward to the highest crest on the Kara-Hodzali range while at half past five the left column pushed on to Choba, the enemy fleeing in disorder.

The 17th Division of Colonial Infantry pushed forward to the Kolatz-Tchitchevo line while the Shumadia division moved on the Trennik-Przdevo region.

The right of the division of the Morava of the First Army forced the defile to the north of Drenovo and completely cut the enemy's communications with Gradsko. This rapid advance surprised the enemy, according to the prisoners taken, and prevented his concentration at Drenovo. They fled toward Prilep in great disorder. The left flank of the Morava division reached Faris, to the north of the main road, thus further cutting the enemy's communications.

The division then pushed on so as to reach and hold the Vardar from Gradsko, in the north, to the Babuna. In the course of the day it captured 7 guns, 12 limbers, 46 horse-drawn wagons, 6 travelling kitchens, 30 horses, 20 oxen, 2 provision depots and a large quantity of arms, munitions and other material.

On September 24th the Timok division fought the whole day to capture the principal crests of the Beli Kaman but met with obstinate resistance.

The left wing of the Yugoslav divisions, operating in *liaison* with the cavalry, had more success and at three o'clock in the afternoon carried the Toplik-

Dragovo positions, the routed enemy fleeing in the direction of Chtip, throwing away rifles and knapsacks as they ran. This position was defended by the 12th Regiment of German Landsturm. The division of cavalry continued the pursuit until a late hour in the night. It captured among others the Colonel commanding the 85th Bulgarian regiment and his adjutant.

The booty captured by the Yugoslav division was enormous. It included 19 guns (13 heavy artillery) including one 210 mm. gun, 30 limbers, 40 to 50 narrow-gauge locomotives, a great number of wagons, railway material, provision depots and engineering material.

The Morava division of the First Army in the course of the day reached the Vardar between Gradsko and the Vodenitchka river, while the Drina division pushed forward toward the Babuna on the right and Voinitza and Golik on the left.

On September 27th the Timok division of the Second Army, after a fierce combat, captured the principal summit of the Beli Kamen and the positions to the northwest and east. The capture of these important positions made the Serbs definitely masters of the valley of the Vardar. In the course of the day the Second Army took 214 prisoners, 3 mountain guns, a number of machine guns, 5 motor trucks, 10 wagons of salt, 200 tons of wheat, an enormous quantity of hay and straw and a very great number of wagons and oxen. The fact that the division of Timok alone took prisoners from the 4th, 14th, 20th,

46th, 54th, 65th, 67th and 84th Bulgarian Regiments and from the 12th German Regiment showed the complete demoralization of the enemy.

The following day, the cavalry, following close on the heels of the retreating enemy, entered Kotchane. The Morava division of the First army, advancing toward St. Nikola, met with resistance at the village of Novo-Selo, which was held by German troops, but after several unsuccessful counter-attacks they fell back precipitately.

The Division of the Drina early in the morning attacked Veles. By the evening they were in the vicinity of the town, of which railway station and other buildings were in flames. The *morale* of the enemy kept falling daily. Even the fresh troops they brought up only put up a mediocre resistance. The Germans declared that the Bulgarians abandoned them and left them to face the Serbs alone.

During the whole day of the 27th of September the victorious advance continued. The aim of the enemy in holding the line to the south of St. Nikola was to cover the only line of communication with Bulgaria, the route from Kumanovo to Kriva Palanka. But the Division of the Morava broke down all resistance and drove the Bulgarians back in rout. It was, however, when the Serbians occupied the line of communication Kumanovo-Kriva Palanka that the Bulgarians felt the full force of the disaster.

The armies of King Ferdinand and that of his German ally now began to enter on their death agony,

which was prolonged for yet another forty-eight hours.

On September 28th the Bulgarians still put up a somewhat obstinate resistance on the front Ostrech—the 1050 metre hill—Tzarevo Selo. The advance guard of the Jugoslav division pushed forward toward the latter town but met with considerable resistance in the villages in the environs. The division of the Morava, after capturing the St. Nikola position, reached, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the Baslovo-Tzutzub front. At St. Nikola the Serbs captured 4000 pounds of bread and a large depot of rye and wheat, which bore eloquent testimony to the haste of the enemy's retreat.

The division of the Drina resumed the pursuit of the enemy at half past five in the morning. It met with some resistance on the right flank but soon constrained the Bulgarians to resume their retreat. The left wing met with no resistance to its advance till Djurichte was reached. Here the enemy attempted to make a stand but the Serbs carried the village shortly before five in the afternoon and continued their pursuit of the fleeing enemy.

On September 29th, the 3d and 5th Bulgarian divisions moving on Pliatch Kavitzza left a strong rear-guard to hold the line Ostrech—the blockhouse of Tzarevo-Selo-Bogdanovatz and cover their retreat. This force was attacked by four battalions and two batteries of artillery of the Jugoslav divisions and driven from its positions. The Jugoslav division then



pursued its advance on Tzarevo Selo and the upper valley of the Bregalnitzza.

The division of the Timok pushed on to Vinitza and Tchavka, the main body passing the night in the former town. The division of the Shumadia concentrated to the east of Kōtchane, sending forward a detachment toward Tzar and Vrl.

The First Army also continued to advance rapidly, its outpost being placed in the evening on the Topolovik-Ketenovo-Vakouf line. A strong detachment was sent to occupy the Kuklitza-Vidim-Stratzen, thereby completely cutting the enemy's communications between Kumanovo and Kriva Palanka. The division of the Drina all day long kept driving the enemy before it and halted for the night on the Rudjentze-Ollavoke Plavina line, to the south of Voinik. The division of the Danube formed the reserve of the First Army, marching in echelon behind the division of the Drina.

The divisional cavalry of the Danube and Drina divisions were directed on Alescandrovo on the Skoplie (Uskub)—Kumanovo line in order to cut the railway.

It was the following day that the *coup de grâce* was administered to the Army of King Ferdinand. The preceding day Bulgarian plenipotentiaries had arrived at Salonica to sue for peace and a few minutes before midnight an armistice was signed putting an end to hostilities, to go into effect at midday of September 30th. As a consequence the movements of the Army of the Orient on that day up to the hour of the sus-

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pension of hostilities were made up with a view of placing the army in superior tactical and strategical positions.

The cavalry division and the divisions of the Shumadia and Timok with the Yugoslav divisions were placed *en cordon* along the frontier of Bulgaria, ready to march into that country if the enemy should not carry out the conditions of the armistice.

There still remained, of course, the German and Austrian troops not only in Serbia but also in Albania. Until they either surrendered or were driven from these countries the mission of the Army of the Orient operating in Serbia and the Italian army operating in Albania was not finished. This task occupied the next six weeks and was completed just about the time Germany, seeing that with the collapse of the Germano-Bulgarian army her cause was irremediably lost, sued for an armistice on the Western front.

The resistance offered by the retreating German and Austrian troops was considerable and retarded the Serbian advance the more so as they deliberately and methodically destroyed all the means of communication as they retreated, tearing up the railway, blowing up bridges and tunnels, cutting telegraph and telephone lines and removing or destroying all the rolling stock.

Finally, however, on October 12th, the Army of the Orient captured Nish. The first troops to enter that city were the French cavalry division and the division of the Morava. With the capture of Nish the

Berlin-Constantinople railway was definitely cut and Turkey isolated from the Central Powers. A few days later the Sultan sued for peace. The defection of Turkey was followed by the collapse of Austria, leaving Germany single-handed against the world in arms. The Kaiser and his generals saw the game was up and that even if they could hold the enemy in check on the Western front the Army of the Orient, together with the Italians and the Roumanians, could invade Germany by the rear.

They, therefore, sued for an armistice. Thus the war which began in the Balkans, for the Balkans, ended in the Balkans. The brilliant and victorious campaign of the Army of the Orient completely justified the arguments of the "easterners" and rendered it doubly regrettable that a section of the Allies were so short-sighted as to refuse to make the effort eighteen months before. If the Salonica front had been reinforced by 200,000 men at the end of 1916 or in the early months of 1917, the war would have come to an end in six months. That it dragged on till 1918 is largely the fault of those responsible for this short-sighted policy.

The whole world suffered by this terrible error but most of all Serbia. During two long years that country was handed over to the tender mercies of a cruel and ferocious enemy. The story of Serbia's crucifixion has yet to be told, but what is already known of the horrors of the Bulgarian occupation transcends belief.

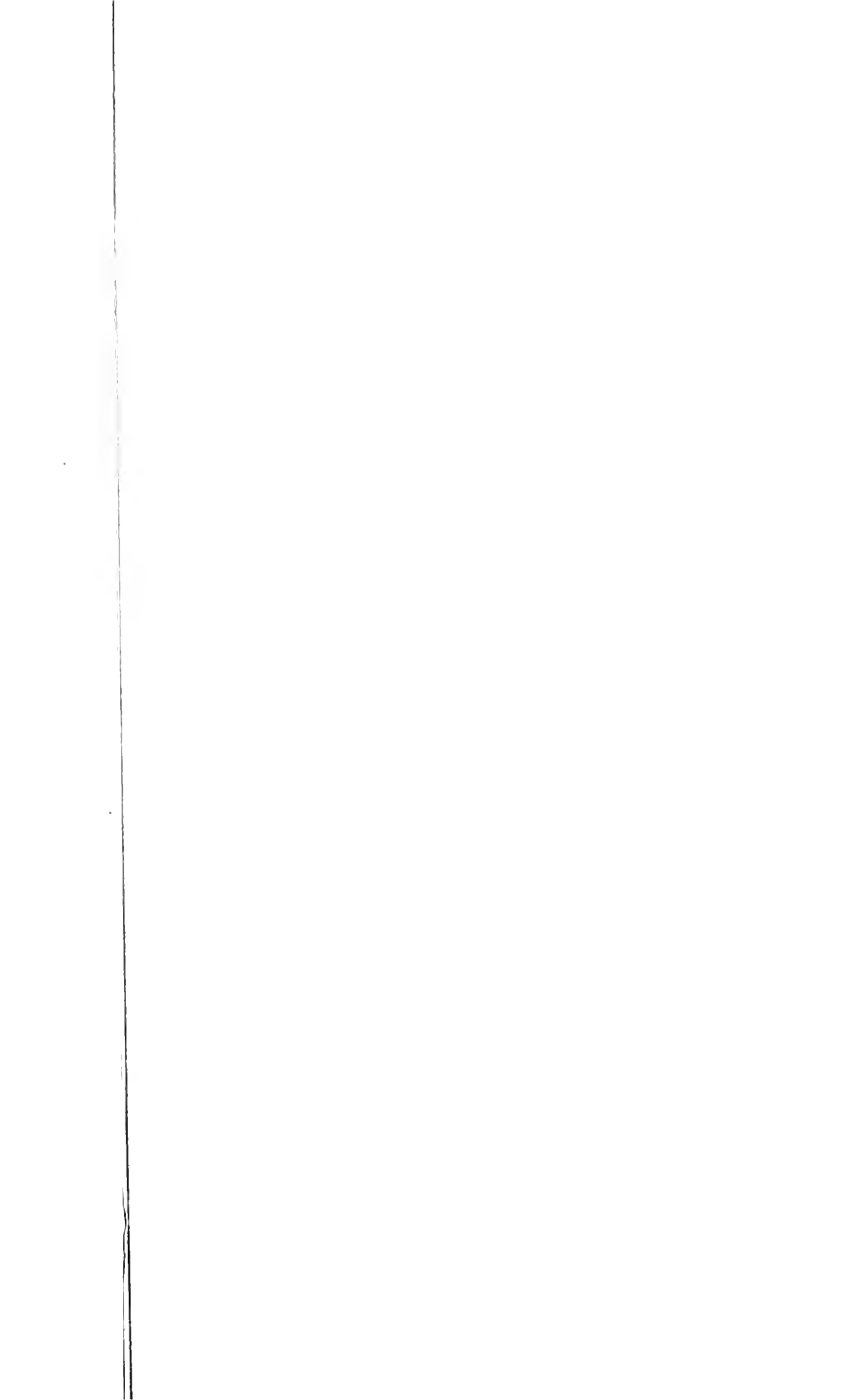
But in any case the martyred Kingdom had at

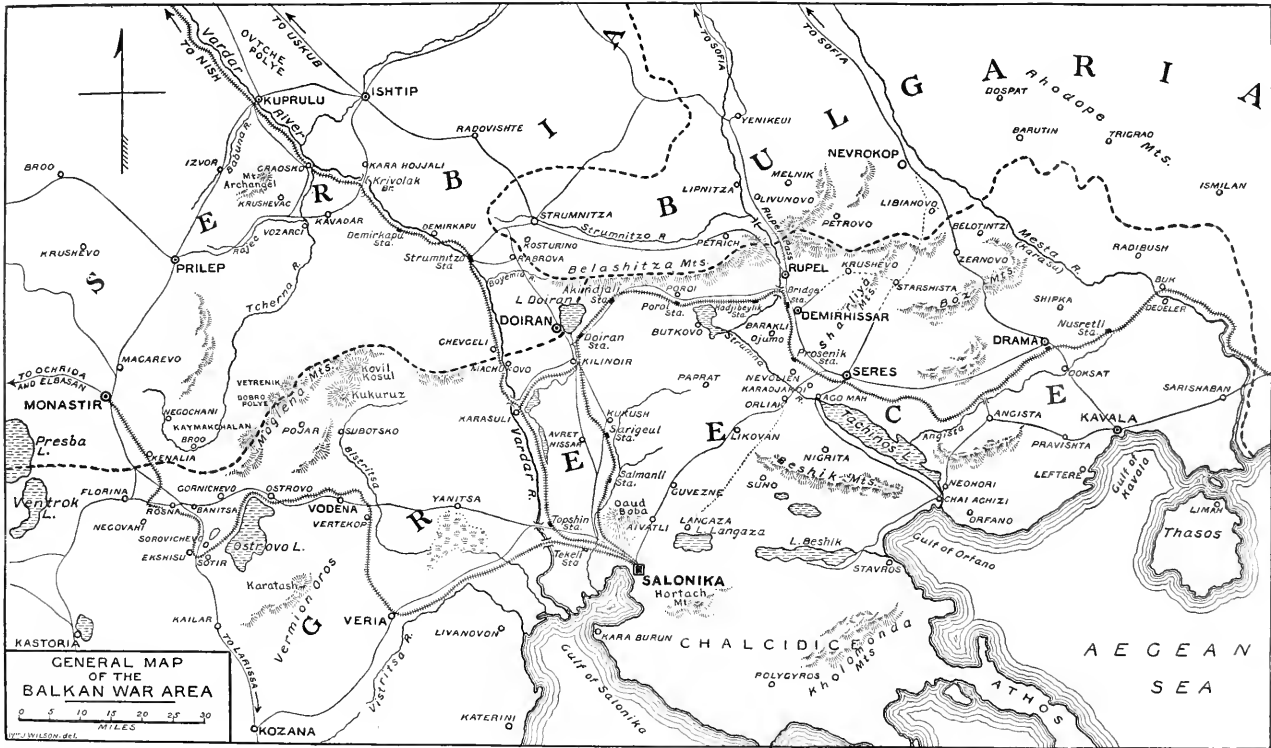
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least got out of the furnace of six years of ceaseless war which had consumed the manhood of one of the bravest peoples in the world. Its armies had fought from the Danube to the frontiers of Thrace, from the Black Sea to the Adriatic and the Ægean. It had for six long years borne the burning heat of the Balkan summers and the freezing cold of the winters. It had been driven into exile, but had there reformed its depleted ranks, disembarked on foreign soil and forced its way over every obstacle to the reconquest of its beloved Serbia, the indomitable army of the "Nation that can never die."

But the nation has had its reward. As the fruits of its victory eight million of its brothers-in-race rallied round the Serbian Piedmont and Jugoslavia, long a dream, has at last, become a reality. Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, the Banat and the Batchka hailed King Peter as their ruler and now thirteen million Jugoslavs have once again assumed their proud mission as the "Guardians of the Gate," holding in their hands the Key of the East. Germany's dream of "Mittel-Europa" and world dominion, thanks to the realization of Yugoslav unity, has forever vanished like the "baseless fabric of a vision, leaving not a wrack behind." And as long as Jugoslavia, free and independent, endures, the world can sleep in peace. *On ne passera pas.*

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