



An act of humanity

Primer humanosti

Among various catastrophes that strike the human race, wars are undoubtedly the most disastrous ones. However, although the wars are inhuman, the acts of humanism regularly appear in each war¹. Unlike victories and defeats, in which bloodshed prevails, the acts of humanism among enemies are rarely memorized, unless somebody record them in writing.

Recently, during the visit of the Museum of the Serbian Medical Society, we have been told about an unusual event that happened during the Serbian-Bulgarian conflict in 1885–1886.

The Serbian Army entered unprepared this unhappy three-month long war. In particular, military medical supplies were scarce and insufficient². The Serbian Red Cross, founded few years earlier (in 1876), and Bulgarian Red Cross, founded only in September 1885³, used to help according to their possibilities, but their help was insufficient. Several foreign countries' Red Cross Organizations (Austria, Hungary, Romania, Germany, England, and Russia) sent

several medical missions (surgeons, nurses) and medical supplies to both countries involved in war.

In this regard, the situation in Bulgaria was harder than in Serbia. When this became known, humanitarian help consisting of medical supplies was collected throughout the Europe. However, a problem arose: it was impossible to use river transport, since Danube was frozen, and land transport was impossible because the Serbian Army stood between Bulgaria and Europe.

Then, a surprising event occurred: upon the petition of the Austrian Red Cross, supported by the expressed demand of Serbian surgeons, the Serbian Army Headquarters proclaimed the one-day armistice and opened the state border, thus allowing the delivery of medical supplies to Bulgarians. The two delegations met near the small town Pirot, close to the Serbian-Bulgarian state border (Figure 1), and transport was done using ox and horse carts⁴ (Figure 2). But, that was not all: Serbs opened the magazines and added their own medical supplies to the enemy....

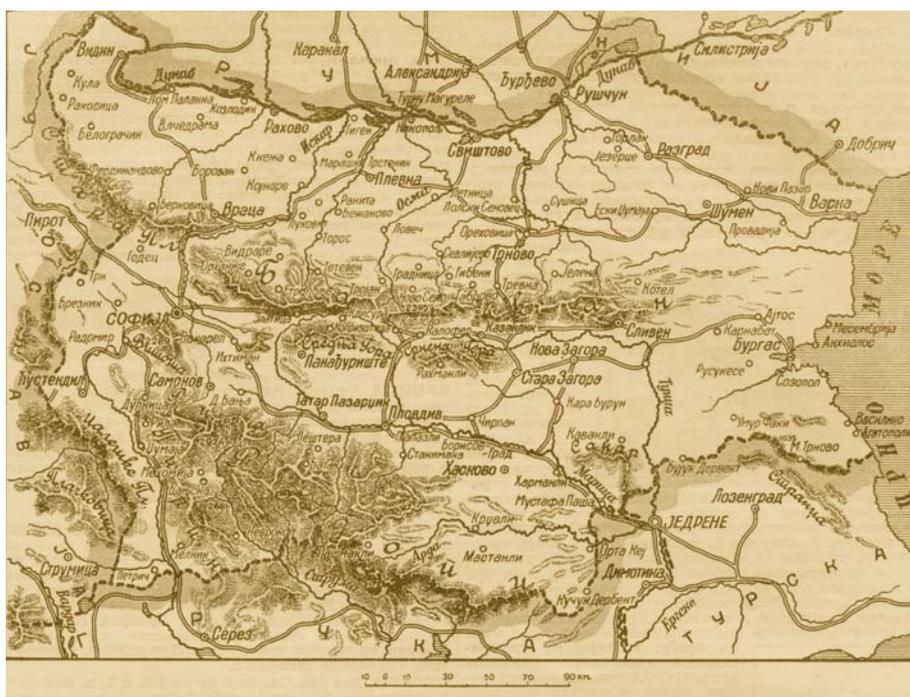


Fig. 1 – The Serbian-Bulgarian state border

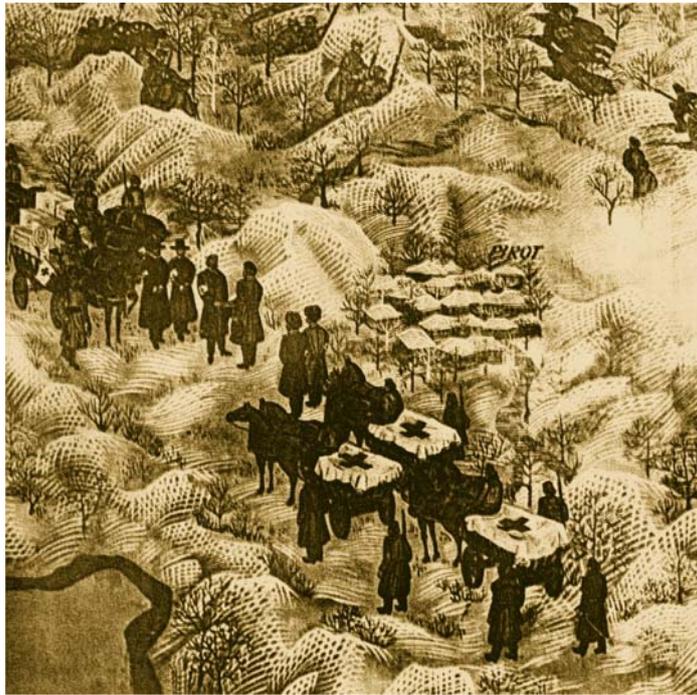


Fig. 2 – The meeting of the Serbian and Bulgarian Red Cross delegations near Pirot, Serbian-Bulgarian state border, January 26, 1885 (a painting found in the Russian Red Cross Organization, kept in the Serbian Red Cross Organization, and then presented to the Bulgarian Red Cross Organization)

This act of humanism did not pass unnoticed. Serbs won a commendation of the International Red Cross Organization in Geneva ², in which it was written: “Be humans to

your enemies as Serbs were in the Serbian-Bulgarian war in 1985” (Pavlović B, personal communication).

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R E F E R E N C E S

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