

Међународни тематски зборник

# ПРВИ БАЛКАНСКИ РАТ 1912/1913. ГОДИНЕ: ДРУШТВЕНИ И ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЈСКИ СМИСАО

(ПОВОДОМ СТОГОДИШЊИЦЕ ОСЛОБОЂЕЊА  
СТАРЕ СРБИЈЕ И МАКЕДОНИЈЕ 1912)



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(поводом стогодишњице ослобођења Старе Србије и Македоније 1912)



Међународни тематски зборник

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Књига I

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# THE FIRST BALKAN WAR: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MEANING

(ON THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION  
OF THE OLD SERBIA AND MACEDONIA 1912)

Book 1

Editor

Associate Professor Aleksandar Rastović, Ph.D.



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## OTTOMAN PRISONERS OF WAR AND THEIR REPATRITION CHALLENGE IN BALKAN WARS

*Abstract:* When the diplomacy is desperate, then war engages not only the people of the fighting country but also the surrounding countries and people who have nothing to do with war. When the Balkan Wars, which shaped the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was put forth as one of the main reasons of the World War, ended, it left behind an incredible wreck. While thousands were dead, there were hundreds of thousands of people wounded, disabled, left penniless, died of epidemics and were forced to leave their homes. Resulting in war casualties counted in thousands, with thousands of souls surviving but with permanent disabilities and/or rendered homeless and even more dying of hunger or plague in the forthcoming times, the Balkan War created a horrendous trauma not only among the people of Balkans, but also among the Ottoman community, as well. The trauma experienced by every soldier not only affected them, but also their families and friends in their homesteads located thousands of miles away. One of the agendas of the negotiations was doubtlessly the exchange of the prisoners of war. Exchange of the prisoners requires the handing over the prisoners taken during the war period when there is peace. In this article, the repatriation challenge will be discussed and the situation of the prisoners of war will be criticised.

*Key words:* Prisoners of war, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria, Ottomans, Balkan Wars, Repatriation

### Introduction

Balkan Wars have been a war, comprising some very important consequences in view of both the history of the Ottoman Empire and in view of today's Republic of Turkey, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Greece, and Romania's history. Wars have been the last chance in diplomacy as is the most abrasive and last harbor to resort. When the diplomacy is desperate, then war engages not only the people of the fighting country but also the surrounding countries and people who have nothing to do with war. When the Balkan Wars, which shaped the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was put forth as one of the main reasons of the World War, ended, it left behind an

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incredible wreck. While thousands were dead, there were hundreds of thousands of people wounded, disabled, left penniless, died of epidemics and were forced to leave their homes. Anatolia and Balkans are full of these painful stories. We won't explain the Balkan Wars in detail here. We neither have time nor knowledge for that. In this short time, we will just try to mention about the soldiers of the Ottoman Empire captivated by the Balkan countries and their repatriation challenges and investigate if the efforts were successful or not.

The Treaty of Berlin in 1878, which signs that the Balkans were no longer dominated by the Ottoman Empire but by the new independent countries, wasn't that pleasing for Bulgaria at all. As soon as she gained her independence in 1908, Bulgaria, who couldn't get what she hoped, extended her Balkan policy and became dominant. On the other hand, the annex of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 by Austria- Hungary Empire led Serbia to follow a similar policy.

In 1912, Russia negotiated between Serbia and Bulgaria to prevent their interest conflicts. The Kingdom of Greece and, right after her, Montenegro took their seats in this alliance of Serbia and Bulgaria against the Ottoman Empire. Balkan countries, who felt the support of Russia, decided to overthrow the Ottoman Empire from Balkans. In this initiative, the Tripoli War between Italy and the Ottoman Empire encouraged the Balkan alliance.

While the Balkan countries were getting prepared for the war sneakingly, the Ottoman Empire declared mobilization on October 1, 1912. However, this was a late date to declare mobilization because, before long, the Balkan Wars broke out upon the war declaration by Montenegro on October 8, 1912, and, in a domino fashion, upon the engagement of Serbia and Bulgairia on October 17 and Greece on October 19 spread over a large territory. It is a fact that the Ottoman Empire was caught unprepared by the war. So much so that, the officials who could not regard war as possible sent the 75 thousand educated Ottoman soldiers in the Balkans home<sup>2</sup>.

When the war began, Ottoman Empire increased the customs taxes on goods from the countries and it was decided as 100 percent. On a text written about that, it is mentioned elaborately and claims that this was necessary<sup>3</sup>. Moreover some of these goods were banned as they were considered war contraband. The admittance of all types of guns and rifles and equipment regarding these guns and all the explosives and stuff that were likely to be used to fabricate guns was banned. There was a list of the banned made up of seventeen articles<sup>4</sup>. One of the things that was banned was the newspapers printed in Balkans. During the war, newspapers printed in Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro were banned and this was done meticulously<sup>5</sup>.

Austria took cautions by alerting her troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia in case Serbia and Montenegro invaded *Taşlıca (Pljevlja)*. It was strategically

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<sup>2</sup> Ömer Seyfettin, *Balkan Harbi Hatıraları*, Hazırlayan: Tahsin Yıldırım, DBY, İst. 2011, s. 69.

<sup>3</sup> BOA (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*), MV, 227/253, (Hicrî 11/Za/1330-Miladi) ; BOA, İ.MMS, 155/1330/Za-18, (Hicrî 12/Za/1330).

<sup>4</sup> BOA, MV, 170/54, 13/Za/1330 (Hicrî); BOA, BEO, 4103/307700, (Hicrî 13/Za/1330).

<sup>5</sup> BOA, MV, 174/72, (Hicrî15/Ra/1331- Miladi 22.02.1913).

important to form a friendship with Austria, so a treaty was signed<sup>6</sup>. The Ottoman Empire replied these campaign calls by campaign calls as well and alerted the provinces. Another challenge the army suffered was the cholera, and they had to do their best to prevent these attempts<sup>7</sup>.

The Ottoman Empire, who struggled in two warfields, eastern in Thrace and western in Macedonia and Albania, encountered Bulgaria in the eastern warfield while encountering Montenegro, Serbia and Greece in the western warfield. Having been a war of both land and naval where even the warplanes were made use of, there were numerous reasons why the Ottoman Empire lost the war. The dissensus in political view in the Ottoman army could be regarded as one of these reasons<sup>8</sup>.

The 8<sup>th</sup> army corps under the command of Hasan Tahsin Pasha situated in Thessalia against Greeks was outstanding with its soldiers numbering 40.000<sup>9</sup>. When the Ottoman armies had been defeated by Bulgaria on October 23 and by Serbia in Komanova on 23-24 October, the army commander Tahsin Pasha knuckled under the Greeks despairingly with his 35.000 soldiers in Thessaloniki. Previously, as a consequence of the fights on 22 October in Thessalia in *Sarantoropos* mountain pass, 701 Ottoman soldiers were captivated as prisoner of war. According to Richard C. Hall, upon Tahsin Pasha and his 26.000 soldiers' surrender, the gates of Thessaloniki were opened to the Greek<sup>10</sup>. This defeat had a bombshell impact on the domestic politics. Soon after, on 29 October, the Ahmet Muhtar Pasha cabinet resigned. These occurrences made the step by step approaching military coup d'état of İttihat Terakki Party named "*Bab-ı Ali Baskını*" (Sublime Porte Raid), so registered in history, eligible. In terms of the Ottoman State, the state of affair worsened<sup>11</sup>. The same scenery was visible in *Jannena* where a struggle against Greeks was being staged. Esat Pasha surrendered with his 33 thousand soldiers unconditionally. On the contrary, after the fall of *Jannena*, Cavit Pasha, the commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> army corps, did not quit fighting with his 24 thousand soldiers. After Cavit Pasha, fighting against Serbian troops, had been defeated in the north of *Lushe*, around *Balagat village*, 188 Ottoman soldiers were captivated as prisoners of war<sup>12</sup>. Serbia had also taken 5600 Ottoman soldiers as prisoners after the Bitola fight in November 16-19, 1912. This conquest of Bitola with the "sybolicly" important town Ohrid means the holding over the control of Macedonia by Serbia<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> BOA, A.MKT.MHM, 741/19, (Hicri 08/Za/1330).

<sup>7</sup> BOA, DH.SYS, 112-02/1-02, 15/Z /1330 (Hicri).

<sup>8</sup> Cevdet Küçük, "Balkan Savaşı", *DİA*, C.5, TDVY, İstanbul 1995, pp. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913 Prelude to the First World War*, Roudledge, London and New York 2000, pp. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Hall, *ibid*, pp. 61.

<sup>11</sup> Küçük, *ibid*, pp. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Hall, *ibid*, pp. 85.

<sup>13</sup> Philip S. Jowett, *Balkan Harpleri'nde Ordular 1912-13*, Illustrations: Stephen Walsh, Tranlate in to Turkish by Emir Yener, İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul 2011, pp.11; Hall, *ibid*, pp. 52.

On the other hand, when the Montenegrins marched to Berane, 30 miles north of Novipazar, they took hold of the control of the military stations on the borders and took approximately 54 Ottoman soldiers as captives. Even though the Ottoman Empire warned the Montenegrin government to retreat from Berane and promulgated to step in "by violent means" otherwise, the war proceeded at full speed<sup>14</sup>. Montenegrins captured approximately 14 guns with these prisoners of war in Berana. According to *The Examiner*, Montenegro captivated 700 Ottoman soldiers as prisoners of war. King Nicholas in the same newspaper praised the captivated Turkish soldiers since they had fought bravely, and promised that they would be treated well and hospitably<sup>15</sup>. King Nicholas, after a three-day negotiation with Esad Toptani Pasha, captured the city on 22 April. Interestingly enough, the Montenegrin king let 12 thousand Ottoman soldiers leave the city with their foodstuff and guns but for the cannons. The exchange done without firing even a single bullet and in the presence of the states exasperated Austria while startling the other states<sup>16</sup>.

In another warfield of the Balkan wars, Edirne, the situation was no different. Sukru Pasha defending the city against the Bulgars had to give up due to the pressures, and on 26 March he surrendered to the Bulgar commander Ivanov. The Edirne siege where 60 thousand soldiers were captivated as prisoners of war initiated a new dispute. Since Sukru Pasha surrendered at the point where he was fighting against the Serbs, the Serbs regarded him as their own prisoner. On the contrary, the Bulgars assumed him as their prisoner since he gave up to the Bulgar commander Ivanov<sup>17</sup>.

It seems that the new government embarking on the objective to retrieve Edirne could not meet the expectations, and it lost *Jannena* to the Greeks on March 6, on 26 March Edirne to the Bulgars and on 23 April *Shkoder* to the Montenegrins as a consequence of the aid delivered by the Serbs by means of sea<sup>18</sup>. Eventually the Ottoman Empire was beaten. The peace talks were commenced the moment the Ottoman Empire reminded her London ambassador Tevfik Pasha that she accepted the great powers as mediators. Trade and Agriculture minister *Mustafa Reshid*, Navy vice-minister *Salih Pasha* and Berlin consulate *Osman Nizami Pasha* were appointed as delegates and sent to London to work and sign on the terms of the peace treaty in 5 May 1913<sup>19</sup>. And a notice about that was published<sup>20</sup>. On the Ottoman wing there also were the ministers of Public Works *Beserya Efendi* and

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<sup>14</sup> BOA, BEO, 4075/305567 Tarih: 08/N /1330 (Hicri)

<sup>15</sup> *The Examiner* "Balkan War, Berana Captured by Montenegrins Seven Hundred Prisoners, Fourteen Guns Secured" *The Examiner*, 18 Oct 1912, Launceston, pp.6. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article50675651>>.

<sup>16</sup> Sacit Kutlu, *Milliyetçilik ve Emperyalizm Yüzyılında Balkanlar ve Osmanlı Devleti*, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2007, pp. 378

<sup>17</sup> Hall, *ibid*, pp. 87.

<sup>18</sup> Küçük, *ibid*, pp. 24.

<sup>19</sup> BOA, MV, 228/18, (Hicri 28/Z/1330).

<sup>20</sup> BOA, MV, 228/19, 28/Z /1330 (Hicri).

*Babiali* law adviser *Reşid Bey*<sup>21</sup>. Travel and other expenses of the delegates sent to London were also paid<sup>22</sup>. On 30 May 1913 the treaty was signed. The borders of post-Balkan Wars were drawn on a map<sup>23</sup>. Consequently, this was the peace treaty ending the war between the Balkan countries and the Ottoman Empire<sup>24</sup>. The animosity between these countries came to an end by that treaty<sup>25</sup>. However, the peace was not the end of the trouble but the beginning, for the division problem emerged over the victorious lands.

According to many writers and historians, the Balkan wars have been bloody and costly. Thousands of men, women, and children died not just from disease but also privation, and massacre. It is said that losses of the dead and wounded for Montenegro, 11.200, for Serbia 71.000, for Greece 68,000, for Bulgaria 156.000, and for Ottoman Empire it was 156.000 the same as for Bulgaria. Schurman says "*The military expenditures are estimated at figures varying from a billion and a quarter to a billion and a half of dollars. This of course takes no account of the paralysis of productive industry, trade, and commerce or of the destruction of existing economic values*"<sup>26</sup>.

## The Challenge of Captives

One of the agendas of the negotiations was doubtlessly the exchange of the captives. Exchange of the captives requires the handing over the captives taken during the war period when there is peace. According to Article VII in London treaty which was signed in London, on May 30, 1913, *Questions concerning prisoners of war, questions of jurisdiction, of nationality, and of commerce shall be settled by special conventions*<sup>27</sup>. As it may be viewed, there exist no article directly regarding the prisoners of war in London Treaty, but it is stated that the conflict be settled by the bilateral treaties by the conflicting states. So what is war captivity then? War prisoners are people who during wars, regarded as an extraordinary interlude, are captivated by the victorious side either in the warfield or behind the warfield when still the war is ongoing. The norm of captivity depends on the person captivated and the social structure of the sides. Whereas some warring factions discriminate as warriors/non-warriors, men/women, old/young, some warring factions view all the people alive as prisoners of war<sup>28</sup>.

This is seen in many treaties signed after the wars. How to treat the captives

<sup>21</sup> BOA, BEO, 4169/312662, Tarih: (Hicri 28/Ca/1331).

<sup>22</sup> BOA, MV. 171/97, (Hicri 29/Z /1330).

<sup>23</sup> BOA, HRT.H, 124/159, Tarih: (Hicri 29/Z /1330).

<sup>24</sup> BOA, DH.HMŞ, 22/78, Tarih: 10/Ca/1331 (Hicri).

<sup>25</sup> BOA, DH.HMŞ, 22/79, Tarih: 10/Ca/1331 (Hicri).

<sup>26</sup> Jacob Gould Schurman, *The Balkan Wars: 1912-1913*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1914, pp. 125.

<sup>27</sup> Fred L Israel (Ed), *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History, 1648-1967*, Vol. II, Chelsea House in Association With McGraw Hill, New York 1967.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmet Özel, "Esir" *DİA*, C.11, TDVY, İstanbul 1995, pp. 388–389.

is defined in international law, and there is a consensus among countries on that. As a result there was the agenda of exchange of captives. Whereas some criterion and provisions have been set on the prisoners of war in the Islamic world, in Europe there has been some works on the issue since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1856, by declaring *Paris Declaration*, laws of war were regulated through a variety of agreements. Concordantly, the regulation regarding the prisoners of war first crystallized by Brussels Declaration in 1874 by an agreement prepared in 12 articles. Unfortunately, this agreement was not approved and could not become valid. Eventually, by 1899 Hague Conference agreement II and by 1907 Hague Conference agreement IV, a highly significant step was taken by clarifying the procedure that had to be applied to the prisoners of war in 17 articles<sup>29</sup>. At the beginning of and after the Balkan War, this was the knowledge about the procedure on the existing prisoners. So how much of the matter was implemented?

*Chapter II* of the agreement signed in 1899 is on Prisoners of War. In these articles, all the issues regarding how to handle the prisoners of war, their rights, their nourishment, their making use in the workforce, freedom of religious practise and when they would be repatriated were discussed one by one. This convention was signed at The Hague and undersigned by not only Ottoman Empire but also Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece. His highness the Prince of Montenegro, His Majesty the King of Roumania, His Majesty the King of Servia, His Royal Highness the Prince of Bulgaria and His Majesty the Emperor of the Ottomans, had appointed some diplomats as their Plenipotentiaries. Those Plenipotentiaries had the signature under this Convention<sup>30</sup>

In 1907 Hague Conference, by and large, the same articles were dwelled on. In agreement IV Chapter II, the following articles took place with respect to the Prisoners of War. *Article IV* declares that "*They must be humanely treated*". Additionally, *Article VII* states that "*The Government into whose hands prisoners of war have fallen is charged with their maintenance. In the absence of a special agreement between the belligerents, prisoners of war shall be treated as regards board, lodging, and clothing on the same footing as the troops of the Government who captured them*". Furthermore, *Article XX* proposes that after the post-war agreements, the prisoners of war be repatriated right away by declaring that "*After the conclusion of peace, the repatriation of prisoners of war shall be carried out as quickly as possible*"<sup>31</sup>. These four states including Ottoman Empire participated in the Balkan War, had the signature under this convention. This convention would be a reference point on the sanctions to be implemented to restrain breakdowns on the post-war prisoner repatriation.

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<sup>29</sup> Ahmet Özel, *ibid*, pp. 388-389.

<sup>30</sup> Charles I. Bevans (Ed), *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America 1776-1949*, V.1, (1776-1917), Department of State Publication, Washington, DC 1968, pp. 247-251.

<sup>31</sup> Bevans (Ed), *ibid*, pp. 644-647.

## The Ottoman Prisoners of War in Montenegro

Montenegro began to repatriate the Ottoman soldiers, whom she captivated during the Balkan War, in June 1913 and permitted that they be transported safe and sound. Thereupon, the Ottoman government decided to sail a boat to the Bar harbour of Montenegro to return them to their villages, and Akdeniz Vapuru (The Mediterranean Boat) embarked for Bar. In order not to keep the boat waiting and, as a consequence of this, not to give rise to any maltreatment, the Ottoman soldiers had to be kept ready at the Bar harbour<sup>32</sup>. However, the remittance and the release of the prisoners had a financial load. The Montenegro government asked for a certain amount of finances for the expenses during the transport of the prisoners and conditioned that the amount had to be paid regularly and without any postponement to the officials. The German ambassador to Cetine had to be the mediator in the evacuation of the warprisoners and the payment of the finances. Having initiated an act by an official letter on 29 May 1329, the Ottoman government communicated with the German embassy and let them know that 30 thousand kron would be paid to the embassy in return of the evacuation of the Ottoman warprisoners in Montenegro, among whom were 73 officers, 49 women and children and approximately 1000 soldiers. The additional 10 thousand kron would be sent in bill of exchange by telegraph<sup>33</sup>.

At this point, timing was crucial. If the prisoners are transported to Bar and the boat arrives late, the government having already difficulty in accomodaiton would have hard time providing food to the prisoners. On the other hand, colonel Halid Bey appointed to adopt the prisoners was well aware of the fact that so long as he did not take and hand in money in the capital Cetine, the prisoners at Podgorica would not be allowed to go home. Even if the boat arrives, if money does not arrive, it had to wait in vain<sup>34</sup>. Toward the end of June, money in question made up of 30 thousand kron was transferred twice to the German embassy in Cetine in exchange for the expenses done for the warprisoners, the first party being 28.943 kron and the second party 1.057 as a down payment<sup>35</sup>. Thus, right after the payment, the transport of the warprisons in Montenegro was carried out successfully.

## The Ottoman Prisoners of War in Serbia

Serbia, having been on the victorious side against the Ottoman State, accomplished snatching a significant land away from the Ottoman State. Upon peace, now it was the time to repatriate the Ottoman prisoners of war. The

<sup>32</sup> BOA, BEO, 4182/313589 Tarih: (Hicrî 06/B/1331).

<sup>33</sup> BOA, BEO, 4183/313718 Tarih: (Hicrî 12/B/1331).

<sup>34</sup> BOA, BEO, 4184/313784 Tarih: (Hicrî 16/B/1331).

<sup>35</sup> BOA, BEO, 4187/313962 Tarih: (Hicrî 21/B/1331).

repatriation of the Ottoman prisoners of war in Serbia to the Turkish land had to be done in accordance with the bilateral agreement between the two states. According to a calendar operating in accordance with the agreement, the consignment of the warprisoners taken by Serbia during the war to hand in the Ottoman State had to be initiated and the reimbursement was transferred to the Serbian government at the end of May 1913<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, the mandatory sum of money was paid in order to free the warprisoners from misery, to transport to Thessaloniki and to transfer from there to Anatolia<sup>37</sup>. The evacuation of the Ottoman warprisoners here had double aspects. First was the Serbian aspect, second was the Greek aspect. Since the Ottoman State had no border contact with Serbia, she had to communicate with both the Serbian and the Greek government to transport her warprisoners into her own territory. For the transport of the warprisoners to Thessaloniki, the help of the German embassy was asked for and through German consuls, the transport was realized. The warprisoners were to be transferred from here to Istanbul by specially appointed boats<sup>38</sup>. During that time, since the solely and the most vital ally of the Ottoman State was Germany, she trusted the German consuls and believed that they would protect the rights of the warprisoners. The Ottoman warprisoners among whom were some officials and their families as well had been transported to Thessaloniki as quickly as possible and their fundamental needs were met on the basis of a significant reason behind it. The condition of the comers was far worse than it was imagined. German consul to Thessaloniki informed that the majority of the prisoners arriving from Serbia had no money and clothing and were in a heart-breaking condition. *Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti (Red Crescent Society)*, which was responsible for the transport of the officials' and officers' families, refrained from the transport of the arriving warprisoners to Istanbul despite the fact that they had necessary equipment. Thereupon, the former governor Nazım Pasha generated a committee to initiate an aid campaign. In order to provide food and clothing which were the vital needs, an aid commission made up of gendarmarie professor Monsieur Folon Bey and the translator of the German consulate monsieur Sovaril was formed<sup>39</sup>.

This committee, which took on the responsibility of the prisoner soldiers' transport and the inhabitation, began to work under the title of *Selanik İslam İlane Komisyonu (Thessaloniki Islamic Aid Commission)*. Within a short time, the committee raised 250 liras, 50 of which was by the special payment allocated to the officers and it was donated by Nazım Pasha. The rest of the money, 200 liras, was from Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti (*Red Crescent Society*) transferred on the name of Monsieur Sovaril. Even the German consul to Thessaloniki put his heart and soul in initiation of the transport soon, the treatment of the sick and dressing the wounds. Upon the approval of *Red Crescent Society*, 154 soldiers to the capital, 109 soldiers

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<sup>36</sup> BOA, MV, 177/67, Tarih: (Hicrî 17/C/1331).

<sup>37</sup> BOA, BEO, 4185/313805, Tarih: (Hicrî 16/B/1331).

<sup>38</sup> BOA, BEO, 4185/313832, Tarih: (Hicrî 17/B/1331); BOA, BEO, 4188/314058, Tarih: (Hicrî 25/B/1331).

<sup>39</sup> BOA, BEO, 4184/313749, Tarih: (Hicrî 14/B/1331).

to Izmir and about 13 to Verhane had to be dispatched by the knowledge of the committee up that time. Thereby, a sum of money that was enough only to dispatch 130 soldiers left behind. The Ottoman government had to wire a remarkable amount of money to this committee pretty urgently. The majority was penniless, unclad and *was in a state of being oppressed*. Athens consul guaranteed the *Thessaloniki Red Crescent Society* to cater for the foodstuff for the soldiers to admit the city and to hospitalize the sick ones. Additionally, on a letterhead document by the *Ottoman Red Crescent Society* Headquarter, upon call for the international aid campaign by the *Red Crescent Society* to the muslim prisoners of war in Thessaloniki and around and according to the knowledge adopted from the envoy Frodali'n Efendi resident in Thessaloniki, the Society, declared that the condition of the Ottoman warprisoners coming from *Shkodër (Iskodra)* to *Bitola (Manastır)* in 14-15 days and Rihane or within a time arriving in Thessaloniki on foot was heartbreaking and touchy. Even though the necessary aid had been given through board of the Ottoman Red Crescent Hospital in Thessaloniki, due to the continuation of poverty and the inbound flocks of warprisoners, it was indicated that the *Red Crescent Society* remained incapable in aid and asked for backup<sup>40</sup>.

The victory of the Serbian troops against the Ottoman troops made itself visible in Manastır. Approximately 50 thousand soldiers were said to have been captivated. While the captivation of the 50 thousand soldiers consisting of 3 pashas as well as an astounding achievement for Serbia, for the Ottoman soldiers, it meant disappointment and depression<sup>41</sup>. The newspapers projected the fall of Bitola, 100 miles north to Thessaloniki and connected to it by a railroad, as *great Serb victory* and touched on the captivated Turkish prisoners of war<sup>42</sup>. Having been on a highly significant position for the Ottoman troops, the fall of Bitola ruined the whole plan.

At the end of the war as a matter of agreement, in August 1913 *Bahr-i Ahmer Vapuru* (the Red Sea Boat) was assigned for the evacuation of the Ottoman captives in Serbia and was sailed to Thessaloniki. Meanwhile, in order not to encounter any difficulties, the German embassy and the Serb government were requested to put delicacy on the matter and were desired that everything necessary be done. Upon the German embassy's report that the Serb government decided to release the Ottoman prisoners of war in Serbia, *Bahr-i Ahmer Boat* embarked on its journey to stop by Preveze. In order not to cause any trouble and face any difficulties, there had been some attempts upon the Serb government both through the German embassy in Istanbul and through the private envoys of Serbia in Istanbul<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> BOA, BEO, 4184/313749, Tarih: (Hicri 14/B /1331).

<sup>41</sup> *The Cairns Post*, "The Balkan War Another Great Servian Victory at Monastır 50.000 Turkish Prisoners" *The Cairns Post*, 20 Nov 1912, pp. 5. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39920744>>.

<sup>42</sup> *The Northern Star* "The Balkan War" *The Northern Star*, Lismore, 20 Nov 1912, pp. 5. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72458620>>.

<sup>43</sup> BOA, BEO, 4207/315506, Tarih: (Hicri 21/N /1331).

On the other hand, for the transport and the food of the Ottoman prisoners dispatched to Thessaloniki, 1000 liras were required from Ottoman capital. The money paid by the *Islam Cemaati* (Islamic Community) for boat fare of the prisoners transported from Thessaloniki to *Istanbul* and to *Izmir* would also be paid out of this money<sup>44</sup>. What's more, the subsidy cannot be underestimated when thought of in currency of the time. The amount of money spent by the *Islam Cemaati* was used to send the immigrants from *Serres (Serez)*, weaks and the war prisoners who were from Rumelia but coming from Yemen and Serbia back home. Additionally, the sum of money, twenty thousand four hundred and sixty kuruş (20460), expended for the boat fare of the Weaks and the war prisoners dispatched to Istanbul and Izmir was required by the Mufti Efendi. By the way, the effort that he spent on the matter of the needs and food of the needy and the immigrants from Siroz and neighborhood to Thessaloniki owing to the Bulgar torture is to be appreciated.

Later, despite the 1000 liras donated beforehand was unique to the "Rumelia immigrants and needies", it was allowed that 20400 something *kurush* spent by the Islamic Community as the boat money for the the prisoners of war shipped to Istanbul and Izmir be paid out of this money as well<sup>45</sup>. On the other hand, in accordance with the act of members of parliament, 1000 liras that was asked was sent to the head of the commission in cheque by telegraph<sup>46</sup>.

### The Ottoman Prisoners of War in Greece.

According to Aram Andonyan, Greece captivated *25 thousand* soldiers and *1 thousand* army officers, which make 26 thousand Ottoman army members. In a speech given by one of these army officers to *Journal* correspondent, he admitted that among the motives of the defeat did units comprise uneducated volunteers, soldiers died of hunger due to food shortage, and the power of *mountain cannons* comparatively weaker to the power of the Greeks<sup>47</sup>.

Another warfield where the Greeks were victorious over the Ottoman troops was Jannena. Upon the fall of Jannena, 33 thousand Ottoman soldiers were taken prisoners by the Greeks. Of these prisoners, 800 were army officers while 6000 were wounded and sick soldiers<sup>48</sup>. When the Greeks began to be triumphant over the Ottoman Powers on the hills of Jannena, one midnight Esad Pasha, on

<sup>44</sup> BOA, BEO, 4202/315087, Tarih: (Hicri 29/Ş /1331).

<sup>45</sup> BOA, BEO, 4203/315202, Tarih: (Hicri 03/N /1331).

<sup>46</sup> BOA, BEO, 4215/316056, Tarih: (Hicri 19/L /1331).

<sup>47</sup> Aram Andonyan, *Balkan Savaşı*, Aras Yay, Çev: Zaven Biberyan, İstanbul 2002, pp. 400.

<sup>48</sup> Andonyan, *ibid*, pp. 421; Hall, *ibid.*, pp.84.

<sup>47</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, "The Balkan War Janina Surrendered to Greeks, 36,000 Turks Prisoners " *The Morning Bulletin*, 8 Mar 1913, Rockhampton, pp.7. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article 53292200>>.

a message to Greek Prince, told that they could no more resist; thereby, wanted to give in. Having embraced the offering, Greece, soon enough captivated the 35 thousand Ottoman soldiers, who already laid down the guns. By the time Jannena was handed in, 25.785 soldiers were staying in Ottoman Military hospitals in Jannena and in the hospitals affiliated to the army corps. Of these soldiers, 11.033 were discharged as a result of recovery while 8.055 died in hospitals. However, the rest of the sick Ottoman soldiers, 6.697, were among the prisoners captivated by the Greeks<sup>49</sup>. In total, it meant roughly 80 thousand prisoners<sup>50</sup>, which was a huge number. The subsistence of such a large group of warprisoners was a huge amount of money per se. Before taking hold of Jannena, when taken into consideration that the cost of 50 thousand prisoners was 5 million franc, now it was getting a little bit more complicated. It seemed no possible for Greece to come through such a huge load in such a war time<sup>51</sup>. As early as March 1913, the total number of the captured Turkish prisoners in *Epirus* was approximately 100 thousand. While the Turkish soldiers were pulling away after handing *Ioannina (Jannena)* in, they left a vast number of captured prisoner Turks behind<sup>52</sup>.

Omer Seyfettin was one of the prisoners of war that captured with other 20 Ottoman soldiers by the Greece, on January 20, 1913 *Jannena*. He had transferred to *Patras* in the first day of February. After doctor control, he was sent to Margirit Prison. "Oh my God! What an awfall place.." said Omer Seyfettin in his diaries. At that prison there were more then 200 prisoners of war consisted of *bashibozuks*, *soldiers* and *commenders*. He witnessed the lughing Greek soldiers and making fun while a death body of the Turkish prisoners carried out on a piece of wood. Then he had transferred from *Patras* to *Athen* on February 16. He stayed in a dungen which is 2 meter length. Because of the noisy Greek guards, he could not even sleep. After 40 days in this place, he had transferred to *Nafliion*. He and other 12 prisoners, held in hospital and the first day of July, Greeks set him free. But till 11 December 1913, he was held in *Nafliion*<sup>53</sup>.

When the date was 17 July 1913, Greece concentrated the Ottoman prisoners in hand in *Korfu*. The prisoners of war jailed in a castle in *Korfu* were no different from the prisoners of war in *Bulgaria*. It could be clearly figured out from the mutual corespondences that they suffered from hunger, thirst, and the majority of them were suffering from sickness. The *Egyptian Red Crescent Society*, which had a relief service in the territory, observed the conditions of the Ottoman prisoners in *Korfu*. By submitting a report on the transport of the sick and on-the-hook prisoners as a priority from

<sup>49</sup> Oya Dağlar Macar, *Balkan Savaşlarında Salgın Hastalıklar ve Sağlık Hizmetleri*, Libra Kitap, İstanbul 2010, s. 185.

<sup>50</sup> *The Cairns Post*, "The Balkan War Question of Turkish Prisoners" *The Cairns Post*, 29 Aug 1913, pp. 5. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39943784>>.

<sup>51</sup> Andonyan, *age*, pp. 421.

<sup>52</sup> *The Morning Bulletin* "The Balkan War: 100,000 Turkish Prisoners " *The Morning Bulletin*, 10 Mar 1913, Rockhampton, pp.7. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article53293381>>.

<sup>53</sup> Ömer Seyfettin, *ibid*, pp. 165-177.

there to Istanbul, it laid emphasis on getting in touch with the Greek government for that. When the Ottoman State made a request about the Ottoman prisoners, who were reported to have been prisoned in Korfu castle where there was not enough beverage, through German embassy, in the end the Greek government reported the German embassy in Athens that she may release the Ottoman warprisoners. However, she added that the German ambassador was not likely to undertake such a mission. As to the inhumane treatment imposed upon the Ottoman prisoners, that they were harshly treated by the Greek officers incessantly ascertained as a consequence of investigation, and it was conveyed to the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs<sup>54</sup>. In order to evacuate the prisoners there, *Mahmut Şevket Paşa Vapuru (Mahmut Şevket Paşa Boat)* was directed to the island<sup>55</sup>. However, in November 1913 Galip Kemal Bey resident in Athens in his letter on the transport of the sick and weak prisoners in Greece defended that a fully medically equipped boat was a must to Greek harbour<sup>56</sup>, and upon the letter, by a veer-away, *Zonguldak Vapuru (Zonguldak Boat)* was assigned to fetch the sick Ottoman prisoners after overhauling the deficiencies instead of *Mahmut Şevket Paşa Vapuru (Mahmut Sevket Pasha Boat)*<sup>57</sup>.

Among the war prisoners taken by Greece were such important names<sup>58</sup> as Mehmet Esat Bulkat, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Hasan Tahsin Pasha, Vehib Pasha and etc. Of these, Mehmet Esat Bulkat, (Mehmet Esad Pasha) (birth: 18 October 1862 - death: 2 November 1942)<sup>59</sup>, who was an Albanian born and raised in Jassy, was in the lead command of Ottoman troops in Jassy. Later, when he was freed from captivity, he were to assume and fulfill key roles in the battle of Dardanelles during WWI. He was appointed to the position of lead commander of the Ottoman Troops in Jassy, to defend Epirus. Although he performed outstandingly in defending Jassy against vicious attacks of the Greek army, he had to surrender in the aftermath of the Battle of Bizani. Esat Pasha was held captive as a prisoner of war by the Greeks until December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1913. When he was released and returned, he was immediately sent to the lead position of his troops in Galipoli<sup>60</sup>. Ali Fuat Pasha (Cebesoy), who was captivated as a prisoner by the Greeks during the Balkan War and was one of the highly crucial figures for the new Turkish State to be established, was wounded seriously during the Bizani defence on 12 October 1912; nevertheless, he kept his position and continued to war. Soon after the defeat, on March 6 1913, he was hospitalized in Kifissia, a town

<sup>54</sup> BOA, BEO, 4197/314701, Tarih: (Hicrî 12/Ş /1331); BOA, BEO, 4214/316016, Tarih: (Hicrî 18/L/1331); BOA, BEO, 4220/316500, Tarih: (Hicrî 08/Za/1331).

<sup>55</sup> BOA, BEO, 4229/317158, Tarih: (Hicrî 08/Z /1331).

<sup>56</sup> BOA, BEO, 4227/316994, Tarih: (Hicrî 01/Z /1331).

<sup>57</sup> BOA, BEO, 4229/317158, Tarih: (Hicrî 08/Z /1331)

<sup>58</sup> *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Balkan Wars Prisoners of War Held by Greece", <<http://en.wikipedia.org/>> Date of Access: 01 August 2012.

<sup>59</sup> In 1920, Esad Pasha served as Navy Minister in the short-lived cabinet of Hulusi Salih Pasha. In 1934, he adopted the surname "Bülkat". He died in Istanbul in 1952. A selection of his memories was published in 1975 under the title *Esat Paşa'nın Çanakkale Anıları (Esat Pasha's Çanakkale Memoirs)*. <http://www.canakkale.gen.tr/eng/portraits/p9.html> > e.t. 9.10.2012.

<sup>60</sup> Erickson, 2007, p. 52.

affiliated to Athens<sup>61</sup>. Among the soldiers taken as prisoners by the Greeks was *Hasan Tahsin Pasha* (1845–1918). He was a prominent figure who fought in the running battles for the Ottoman State in Yemen and the Balkan Wars. He was appointed as the governor of *Ionia* after the retirement. Hasan Tahsin Pasha was appointed as the head of VIII Provisional Corps in Thessaloniki, for he knew Greek very well and knew the land by heart where he spent his childhood and the land where he served when he was young. When the Balkan War broke out, he, with his unit, fought against *Crown Prince Constantin*. As a result of combat in *Sarantaporo* and *Yenidje*, he could no more resist against the Greek army. When he heard that a back-up from the Bulgars would arrive, Hasan Tahsin gave in with his 26 thousand soldiers in order to keep his troop alive. After a negotiation of a few days, on November 8 1912 a surrender protocol was signed. After the years of captivity in Greece, he went to France and then to Switzerland and in 1918 he died in Lausanne. His grave had been in Lausanne by the time his body was buried in the Albanian cemetery in Thessaloniki in 1937. In 2006, his body was moved to the Military Cemetery of the Balkan Wars in *Gefyra*<sup>62</sup>.

Vehib Pasha was the brother of Esad Pasha, the commander of the Yanya troops. On February 20 1913, he was captured as prisoner of war when Crown Prince Constantine grabbed the control of Yanya. After the captivity, he became a colonel at 22<sup>nd</sup> Infatry Division and was appointed to the Hejaz in Arabia. Vehib Pasha died in 1940 in Istanbul and is buried in Karacaahmet cemetery.

The repatriation of the Turkish prisoners to the Ottoman State, who were moved to Greece during the war, was getting achieved slowly. While the families lucky enough to reunite with their relatives were so radiant with joy, the condition of families waiting distressfully to meet their relatives was such dramatic. It was noticed that Ahmed, having been one of the prisoners to the Greeks, from Adana was missing among the prisoners transported to homelands. The worried mother asked for his repatriation from Greece. After the investigation, some information about Ahmed, son of the departed Veli Suleyman, was obtained through the Athens embassy about his homeland, what regiment and battalion he was a member of and the territory where he was captured. At first the name of the venue where he had to spend his captive days could not discerned, later since he wrote letters to ground coffee seller Armenians in *Amiliya*, it was deduced that he stayed there. Upon a petition submitted to Adana province signed by *Adanalı Ahmet'in annesi Ayşe (Ayşe, Mother of Ahmed from Adana)*, a drama ensued after the investigation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a consequence of a quest, it was determined that he deserted his troop during the war and went to Amiliya in Greece and dwelled in there. However, despite the fact that the local authorities notified him that he would be assisted back to his homeland, he turned this down<sup>63</sup>, which was a strong distress for a mother to stand.

<sup>61</sup> Ayfer Özçelik, *Ali Fuad Cebesoy*, Akçağ Yayınları, Ankara 1993, pp. 1- 8.

<sup>62</sup> One of his sons is Kenan Messare (1889–1965). He was a Greek citizen and accepted as one of the a notable painter. Especially his scenes from the Balkan Wars, are very famous.

<sup>63</sup> BOA, DH.SYS, 112-28/101, Tarih: 13/Za/1332 (Hicri)

## The Ottoman Prisoners of War in Bulgaria and the report of the Pharmacist Mehmed Alaaddin

By the fall of Kırkkilise (Kırklareli), Bulgaria had a kind of feast. Even though the Ottoman State strived to declare her subjects that the retrieval of the Ottoman troops bound hand and foot was "a pseudo retrieval", the Ottoman people soon realized that Kırklareli(Kırkkilise) had fallen. It was registered that while around 1500 Ottoman soldiers were killed, Ottoman soldiers a number between 2000-3000 were captured as prisoners<sup>64</sup>. The Bulgar government publicised that, toward the end of August 1913, there existed almost 40 thousand Ottoman prisoners of war. In addition to this, 80.000 Ottoman prisoners were in Greece<sup>65</sup>. In March, they captivated the Turkish commander to Edirne, Sukru Pasha, along with his 38 thousand troops, 57 German and 18 Romanian government officials<sup>66</sup>.

The state of the Ottoman prisoners in Bulgaria was far worse. Bulgaria made the Ottoman prisoners that she captured work in the construction of the secondary lines reaching out to the primary railroads. Furthermore, according to a news on *The Northern Star*, the Turkish prisoners were also made to work in the construction of ammunition and cattle freight cars, but they received only *one franc* in return of their workforce<sup>67</sup>. Published in Sofia and alleged that they were confiscated on Greek soldiers in Razlog, in some letters it wrote such harsh statements as "we will massacre""we will burn down all the Bulgar villages"<sup>68</sup>. It was more like a flashing that the union of the Balkan states against the Ottoman State was not likely to live long. On the other hand, starking news was travelling from old Zagra in Bulgaria about the Ottoman prisoners. On August 5 1913, the news telling that approximately 4 thousand Ottoman prisoners detained in Old Zagra had been executed by shooting put the cat among the pigeons. An immediate query was initiated on whether the news was true. According to the information transmitted, three of the prisoners were able to pull through safe and sound. These three soldiers were able to make their way to Edirne by feeding on barleycorn and wheatear for almost ten days<sup>69</sup>.

The intelligence provided by the Ottoman subject who was able to break away and made his way to Edirne safe and sound on how approximately 3000 thousand Ottoman soldier were massacred brutally in Old Zagra by the Bulgarians

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<sup>64</sup> Andonyan, *ibid*, pp. 466. Hall, *ibid*, pp. 27.

<sup>65</sup> The Cairns Post, "The Balkan War Question of Turkish Prisoners" The Cairns Post, 29 Aug 1913, pp. 5. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39943784>>.

<sup>66</sup> The Capricornian, "The Balkan War The Fall Of Adrianople The Closing Scenes 38,000 Turks Prisoners" The Capricornian, 5 Apr 1913, Rockhampton, pp. 12. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article71992717>>.

<sup>67</sup> The Northern Star, "The Balkan War, Prisoners at Work" The Northern Star, 14 Nov 1912, Lismore, pp. 5. Web. 30 May 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72458043>>.

<sup>68</sup> *The Cairns Post*, *ibid*, pp. 5.

<sup>69</sup> BOA, BEO 4203/315197, Tarih: (Hicrî 21/N/1331); BOA, BEO, 4207/315493, Tarih: (Hicrî 02/N/1331).

was transmitted to the German embassy as it was. Right after the incident, upon news having been published on the newspapers, when the subjects read the news, they got tense. In some provinces, upon the appeals by people to the local governments in order to find out about their captivated relatives, the German embassy was requested to initiate a quest on the matter and, at the end of the quest, names of the murdered Ottoman soldiers under the bulgar atrocity or the name of their battalion were asked to be passed. Even though the book on which the names of the murdered Ottoman soldiers was possessed, the number of the massaccered was not explicitly investigated<sup>70</sup>.

On 25 September 1913, another narrator who narrated the heartbreaking condition of the Ottoman prisoners was one of the pharmacists of the Eleventh Division Medical Company, *Mehmed Alaaddin Efendi*. On his letter, he pointed out that the Ottoman prisoners were in doom and gloom; therefore, he emphasised that an instant attempt had to be made at the Bulgar government.

He himself was present at the venue where the Ottoman soldiers experienced misery within the border of Bulgaria, and he recounted what he had observed exactly as it was: "I consider and presume that I will fullfil my mission by recounting the misery they will experience comprehensively"<sup>71</sup>.

Within the heavy quietness of Edrine, Mehmet Alaaddin was appointed to Old Zagra as a corpsman and from April 2 1913 to September 2 1913 lived in Old Zagra for exactly six months. The captain telling that he had been the vitness of the unfortunate happenings was one of the people who saw in person the misery of the Ottoman prisoners. The Ottoman soldiers were employed in quite dirty jobs<sup>72</sup>.

The Bulgar soldiers sat thousands of Ottoman soldiers, whom they took from Haskoy and around for the fear that they might escape, in the courtyard of a beer factory on the *Kazanlak (Kızanlık)* road of *Stara Zagora (Eski Zağra)*. Later, 1200, maybe more, Ottoman soldiers were massaccered by cross fire at fifty and a hundered meters distance upon a command. In his own words, after the incident where "*the brave of a country were sacrificed*", he stated that about 700- 800 slightly and seriously wounded were left behind<sup>73</sup>.

The following statements were written down in order to draw attention on hunger, thirst and sanity problem of the Ottoman prisoners: "If we consider that the number of the wounded by bayonet and such is very few, the wounded at hand is a thousand plus something. The sick are unable to sleep on a bed, have no clothing against rain and cold and are hungry, and we have thousands of the sick due to sleeping in mud. The sick are unable to sleep on a bed, have no clothing against rain and cold and are hungry, and we have thousands of the sick due to sleeping in mud. Therefore, since Edinerne's lapse into silence, the number of the

<sup>70</sup> BOA, BEO, 4203/315197, Tarih: (Hicrî 02/N /1331); BOA, BEO, 4207/315493, Tarih: (Hicrî 21/N/1331)

<sup>71</sup> BOA(Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi), BEO (Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası), 4216/316159, Tarih: (Hicrî 23/L /1331)

<sup>72</sup> BOA, BEO, 4216/316159, Tarih: (Hicrî 23/L /1331).

<sup>73</sup> BOA, BEO, 4216/316159, Tarih: (Hicrî 23/L /1331).

dead reached some thousand Ottoman prisoners within a few months, being forty- fifty-thirty certain on a daily basis”.

The medicine shortage for the prisoners was at its peak. Mehmet Alaaddin and the other corpsmen applied nearly a thousand times, but were able to find a little medical stuff. However, these were too insufficient. Thereupon, the medical treatment practised through medicine raised as a consequence of aid by the Ottoman officers among themselves and by the Islamic Communion was not a real treatment, either. Besides, their foodstuff was inadequate and the difficulties and catastrophe of the sick prisoners who did not have clothes or even a rubber on them were impossible to narrate. When the Ottoman soldiers siezed Edirne and its environs, the Bulgar soldiers possessed by fear, with the Ottoman prisoners they captured, fled to the other points of the Balkans<sup>74</sup>. Bulgars who dispatched the Ottoman prisoners at hand to three regions picked up *Pleven (Plevne)*, *Sevlievo (Servi)*, and *Ruse (Ruşuk)* for the flow. According to the report, even though there were quite a few wounded in Old Zagra, enough number of doctors and pharmacists were set aside for them. The rest of the medical staff were split up for these three regions. Obviously, the medical staff had to carry out a hard job. Except for all sorts of insult and misery, it was the condition of the dead Ottoman soldiers arriving from *Ruse*, which wore them away. Mehmet Alaaddin escorting the Ottoman prisoners driven to *Ruse*, he was able to admit with the commander of the *Lakire* district to the camp where the Ottoman prisoners were enclaved after ten days.

After having examined and checked all the Ottoman prisoners one after another, Mehmed Alaaddin publicised the severity of the matter in following words: “the unfortunates, they were barefoot with no rubber on them, even more than half of them had nothing as clothing. We had 3000 something sick whose majority suffered from dysentery and *dibare*. Since no treatment is provided for ten days and there is no medicine, of 5600 plus something Ottoman prisoners, 4000 will die of lack of medicine”.

As a consequence of their appeal to the commander, no medicine was provided for *dibare* and dysentery, however, for other illnesses they were able to get merely three thousand medicine items. This ignorance led Mehmed Alaaddin to strike some idea that they longed for the Ottoman soldiers to perish of sicknesses so that they would not be able to go back home. Cholera was existent in the city where the prisoners kept. Among the Ottoman prisoners, dysentery and cronic were visible, yet it was a handicap for their treatment since there was no medicine. This engendered some thousand prisoners to drop like flies within a single day. Whenever they appealed to the commandery over and over, they were replied that there existed no medicine at the hospitals, but it was likely to bring somewhere else. As days lapsed, no promises were realized, and the Ottoman soldiers caught by the ruthless disease were dying one after another<sup>75</sup>. The occurrence which affected Mehmed Alaaddin emotionally and made him delighted in the midst of

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<sup>74</sup> BOA, BEO, 4216/316159, Tarih: (Hicri 23/L /1331).

<sup>75</sup> BOA, BEO (Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası), 4216/316159, Tarih: (Hicri 23/L /1331).

all those challenges was the aid campaigning of the Muslims along with the Ottoman prisoners and the medicine discharged from Romania. He reflects it as follows: "but along with all other Ottoman prisoners, we thanked for a point. And it was the existence of some groups of medicine which also existed in the pharmacies here and could only be reached through a thousand of indebtedness and plea and favoritism. Despite the disease could not be wholly obviated by means of these medicines, it was pleasing that it could be treated."

He touches upon the fact that this relieved the sufferers even to some extent and emphasises that if the present problem endures, this may ruin the Ottoman prisoners; thus, he asked for the discharge of these prisoners as soon as possible. On behalf of the Ottoman prisoners in Ruse, he asked for all the necessary steps to be taken for that, required that the crucial medicine be dismissed by means of the Foreign States' consuls based in Ruse, and required that the prisoner Ottomans be rested<sup>76</sup>. *Lieutenant General Shukru Pasha* in *Sofia* was responsible for the repatriation and dispatch of the prisoners. The telegram he sent laid the toughness of the situation bare. Pasha complained about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' acting too slow and promulgated that since the mutual information flow was not realized, the consignment of the prisoners was deferred up to that time. *Varna and Burgas* Harbours were so convenient for the shipment; thus, the boats had to be sailed to those harbours by the Ottoman State<sup>77</sup>. By the way, on October 19 1913, to reimburse the consignment expenses of the prisoners and the immigrants in *Turn-Severi*, approximately 1000 franc had to be paid<sup>78</sup>.

Exchange of prisoners continued after the Balkan War II. Greece felt the need to move to the Black Sea past the straits, to take their captives back in Bulgaria, which ended the war in total defeat. As a matter of fact, *M/V Armiyon* applied the Ottoman Empire for and subsequently obtained a pass through the straits<sup>79</sup>.

The maltreatment directed by Bulgarians against Greek locals and Ottoman captives in time of their retreat was apparently in violation of the laws of war. This had reflections in the wire messages sent by the Edirne Corpse Command to the Ministry of War. Even this ill-treatment is based upon verbal statement of an Ottoman captive who fled from Zagra. According to this man, when Bulgarians were constrained to retreat from Edirne, they started to fusillade Ottoman captives. This allegation was really a bitter pill to swallow<sup>80</sup>. So an immediate inquiry and investigation stage was initialized. In reference to Cevdet Küçük, the Balkan Wars was a landmark in Ottoman history and, in Edirne on its own, more than 225.000 Muslims died of hunger during the captivity under the Bulgar army<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> BOA, BEO, 4216/316159, Tarih: (Hicri 23/L /1331).

<sup>77</sup> BOA, BEO, 4220/316498, Tarih: (Hicri 07/Za/1331).

<sup>78</sup> BOA, BEO, 4223/316711, Tarih: (Hicri 18/Za/1331).

<sup>79</sup> BOA, BEO, 4201/315005, Tarih: (Hicri 25/Ş /1331).

<sup>80</sup> BOA, BEO, 4202/315076, Tarih: (Hicri 27/Ş /1331).

<sup>81</sup> Cevdet Küçük, *ibid*, pp. 25.

## Struggle against Infectious Diseases, Containment Facilities

Once after the return of captives was resolved, a period of struggle emerged, against the diseases brought about by them<sup>82</sup>. In most cases under the conditions of war, captives were returning with one among many of the most fearsome infectious and lethal diseases of the period, such as cholera, due to such problems like squalidness, starvation, malnutrition and lack of hygiene and cleanliness. Ottoman prisoners of war taken by Bulgaria should be transferred from Varna and Burgas Harbours to Dersaadet. After that, during the demobilization of these soldiers from Gelibolu and Tekfurdagi to their homelands, all the necessary measures would be taken against the patients with epidemic and the local government would be informed as soon as possible<sup>83</sup>.

And this in turn, was bringing about epidemics, as a novel and stand-alone issue to deal with. Especially the Ottoman soldiers who were held captive by Bulgarians were found with cholera, after their release. There was a need for taking appropriate measures to effectively deal with them. Since, in the absence of appropriate measures, the epidemic was to spread plausibly causing hundreds of deaths. Therefore stringent measures and precautions were taken and quarantine areas were set up, even with recommendations being duly filed towards conduct of physical examinations of Ottoman soldiers before their final discharge and should any health anomalies detected, activation of measures in response, to the extent necessary to contain the situation<sup>84</sup>.

Accordingly, Ottoman war captives from Greece who were identified with infectious diseases like cholera were placed in containment facilities arranged in Tuzla District of Istanbul. In the meantime, news arriving to the effect that sick Ottoman soldiers were sent back to their homes all in misery and without even shoes on their feet suddenly stirred up the trouble. However the Interior Ministry issued a responsive statement of the fact that these persons might have been those who fled away from containment facilities or otherwise, this could never ever have happened, advocating that, on the contrary, the soldiers kept in containment facilities were in truth in top shape and released to the country all mentally sound and physically intact<sup>85</sup>.

Meanwhile, International Red Cross Commission passed some resolutions in the International Red Cross Conference, organized in Washington in the year of 1912. In this assembly dated to the year 1912, an advisory resolution was passed, recommending the constitution of one affiliated commission to each of the Red Crosses and Red Crescents to look after the prisoners of war. Constitution of the International Red Cross Prisoner Commission, having been constituted in Belgrade as soon as the war broke out, was the first step taken in line with the

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<sup>82</sup> BOA, BEO, 4212/315843, Tarih: (Hicri 09/L/1331).

<sup>83</sup> BOA, DH.HMŞ, 22/51, Tarih: (Hicri 14/Za/1331).

<sup>84</sup> BOA, DH.HMŞ, 22/51, Tarih: (Hicri 14/Za/1331).

<sup>85</sup> BOA, MV, 180/1, Tarih: (Hicri 08/L /1331);BOA, DH.İD, 176/35, Tarih: (Hicri 26/S /1332).

aforementioned advisory resolution. This was followed by the prisoner committee, having been constituted by the Red Crescent, and composed of the members of the central commission. This prisoner commission of the Red Crescent was entered into service on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1912. The commission was performing its activities in association with Red Crescent. The Red Crescent prisoner commission, upon getting into contact with the prisoner commission of the Red Cross, having been operating in Belgrade, initiated attempts to obtain the list of the Turkish prisoners of war. On the other hand, it was exchanging the list of the foreign prisoners of war it had obtained from the Ministry of Health with the Red Cross Prisoner Commission. While it was apparent that the Red Crescent was acting fast, and delivering the lists without delay, Bulgarians' default in delivering the lists of Turkish prisoners at their hands to the Commission even on the last day of the war stirred up disputes. However, the Serbian Red Crescent was among those, which acted earlier. It became one of those, which had exchanged their lists of Turkish prisoners earlier. According to this list, Serbs had been holding 10,500 sick and wounded Turkish prisoners as hostage. Although not being complete, the list, which Greece had sent, was told to include 725 military officers. When the list was to get completed later, the same figure was to be found as 60 thousand. The last list received was from Bulgaria. 70,360 prisoners were seen from their list. Monte-Negro included 92 military officers within the prisoner list. Families of the soldiers, who had been taken as hostages in the Balkan Wars, could have been informed about them only from the Commission's prisoner list being published on the newspapers<sup>86</sup>.

Red Crescent Prisoner Commission remained functional until November 1913 after the signing of the peace treaty. In October, a commission chaired by Süleyman Numan Pasha was sent to Rusçuk, to observe the conditions of the Turkish prisoners in the region, and to help them if possible. In the report delivered by the Pasha to the Red Crescent, Turkish prisoners' deplorable conditions of sickness and neglect were described in details. A group of the commission passed to Selvi and Vidine, and started the transport of the recovered Turkish prisoners to İstanbul. Having worked ceaselessly, the commission's success in salvaging the "*evlad-ı vatan*" (fellow countrymen) imprisoned in Ruse and Vidine was regarded in the letter of appreciation sent by Sofia Ambassador, Fethi Bey to the Red Crescent<sup>87</sup>.

The Red Crescent set off medical missions in order to open, some of which had to be mobile, 150 hospitals in Luleburgaz, 200 in Edirne and Thessaloniki, 140 in Skopje, 8 hospitals in *Alasonia*, *Jannena*, *Bitola* and *Shkoder* with 100 bed capacity. On the other hand, the Red Cross was not a spectator, but the headquarter opened up a branch in Belgrade aiming to help prisoners of war. She appointed the Swiss ambassador to Belgrade as the head of the branch.

<sup>86</sup> Mesut Çapa, "Balkan Savaşında Kızılay (Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer) Cemiyeti", *OTAM* (Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi), S.1, 1990, Ankara 1990, *ibid*, pp. 102.

<sup>87</sup> Mesut Çapa, *ibid*, pp. 102.

Another problem concerning Ottoman war prisoners emerged on their arrival. Among the war prisoners released from Bulgaria and Serbia, included were commanders and high ranking officers. Payment of salaries to these victims was then brought to the agenda of discussions, with a view to alleviate, if not eliminate, their various troubles and emergencies and the discussions on whether or not payment of their salaries as members of military throughout the years in which they were held captive seemed to dominate the national agenda<sup>88</sup>. The Red Crescent helped these families as well. It rented 10 mansions for the lonely and needy families of the military officers. The families were accommodated in those residences and their needs were met<sup>89</sup>.

Some prisoners were dispatched wounded. The Montenegrins cut the noses, ears and the lips of the Turkish prisoners they had captivated immemorially. It was an old custom for the Montenegrins. Edith Durham was baffled, on the days when Esad Pasha considered to hand *Shkoder* in, upon what he heard from a primary school teacher in Podgorica telling him that "*soon you will see the noses come in. We shall not leave many a turk with a nose*" and he replied that if they practised such sort of a thing, they would lose the sympathy of Europe. Thereon, the Montenegrin teacher burst with anger "*it is our old national custom. How can a soldier prove his heroism to his commander if he does not bring in noses? Of course we shall cut noses, we always have*"<sup>90</sup> and his response indicated how difficult to be a prisoner of war in the Balkans, particularly an Ottoman prisoner. Despite the invaluable effort of Prince Nikola and the ban he imposed on that tradition, such a widespread concept led the existing problem to an unbelievably tragic extent.

According to Richar Hall, during the Balkan Wars the battling factions did not prefer to capture prisoners from the other side, but rather preferred to kill. He asserts that they killed the wounded soldiers they came across. Based his view on *Carnegie Report*, Hall stresses that the ethnic nationalism in the Balkans escalated the intensity of such attitudes<sup>91</sup>. Hall says also "*Nevertheless, the suffering of prisoners of war and targeting of civilians by military units initiated an age of inhumanity in Europe that spanned the entire century. The soldiers of the Balkan and Ottoman armies often behaved brutally toward their adversaries*"<sup>92</sup>. When the Bulgar troops admitted Thessaloniki, the wounded Ottoman soldiers were "*cleaned up*" around the slogan commanding not to capture the wounded Ottoman soldiers by an order by General Dimitriev: "*if the wounded and the prisoners impede the movement, take the strict precautions to clean up the barriers*". The similar statements by Tsar Ferdinand and King Peter was perceived by the troops differently<sup>93</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> BOA, BEO, 4233/317424, Tarih: (Hicri 23/Z /1331).

<sup>89</sup> Çapa, *ibid.* pp. 104.

<sup>90</sup> Mary Edith Durham, *The struggle for Scutari (Turk, Slav, and Albanian)* 1863-1944, E. Arnold, London 1914, pp. 185.

<sup>91</sup> Hall, *ibid.* pp. 136.

<sup>92</sup> Hall, *ibid.* pp. 136.

<sup>93</sup> Kutlu, *ibid.* pp. 404.

Conversely, Justin McCarthy declares the Balkan Wars as the victory of nationalism current, and notes that thousands were left entirely homeless and 632 thousand Muslims were killed during the Balkan Wars, which constituted the 27 percent of the Balkan Muslims. Similarly, the Balkan Christians were left with a notable injury<sup>94</sup>.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that war not only hits the loser but also the winner. There is always a loser at the end of a war. Resulting in war casualties counted in thousands, with thousands of souls surviving but with permanent disabilities and/or rendered homeless and even more dying of hunger or plague in the forthcoming times, the Balkan War created a horrendous trauma not only among the people of Balkans, but also among the Ottoman community, as well. The trauma experienced by every soldier not only affected them, but also their families and friends in their homesteads located thousands of miles away.

At this extent, the irrecoverable losses and unspeakable misery faced by Ottoman captives both at the camps they were retained and after their returning back to their homelands have vital lessons for us to learn, as members of humanity. There may be times when wars may seem necessary; however, if one asks about a time when they are not, it would definitely be the times when Balkan wars were fought.

This is really an important issue. I believe much complexer and further research should be conducted on this matter. I want to note that especially the Ottoman archives have a lot to offer in terms of clarification of this issue. I am also of the belief that worldwide studies hitherto made on the matter as part of history of Balkans would fall insufficient in many aspects when compared to the riches offered by the Ottoman archives in this regard.

## Referances

### a. Documents From Archives

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## OTTOMAN PRISONERS OF WAR AND THEIR REPATRIATION CHALLENGE IN BALKAN WARS

*Summary:* In conclusion, we can say that war not only hits the loser but also the winner. There is always a loser at the end of a war. Resulting in war casualties counted in thousands, with thousands of souls surviving but with permanent disabilities and/or rendered homeless and even more dying of hunger or plague in the forthcoming times, the Balkan War created a horrendous trauma not only among the people of Balkans, but also among the Ottoman community, as well. The trauma experienced by every soldier not only affected them, but also their families and friends in their homesteads located thousands of miles away. At this extent, the irrecoverable losses and unspeakable misery faced by Ottoman captives both at the camps they were retained and after their returning back to their homelands have vital lessons for us to learn, as members of humanity. There may be times when wars may seem necessary; however, if one asks about a time when they are not, it would definitely be the times when Balkan wars were fought.

This is really an important issue. I believe much complexer and further research should be conducted on this matter. I want to note that especially the Ottoman archives have a lot to offer in terms of clarification of this issue. I am also of the belief that worldwide studies hitherto made on the matter as part of history of Balkans would fall insufficient in many aspects when compared to the riches offered by the Ottoman archives in this regard.

*Key words:* Prisoners of war, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria, Ottomans, Balkan Wars, Repatriation