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## **Reflection of the events of the First World War in the awards systems of the Balkan states**

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The article examines the changes in the awards systems of the Balkan countries caused by the First World War. By the beginning of the war, each of the Balkan countries had its own reward system with its own history and traditions. Each included orders, medals and insignia for both military and civilian merit.

During the war years, awards performed the following main functions: a state attribute, a symbol of independence and sovereignty, which acquired special significance in situations when the enemy occupied in whole or in part the national territory, and the armed forces were forced to operate outside of it; proper insignia, encouraging and mobilizing subjects to perform various tasks, both at the front and in the rear; commemorative symbol designed to remind about the war, its main events, efforts and sacrifices.

During wartime, the appearance of already existing awards was changed accordingly the needs of the moment. Military awards were issued not on ordinary, but on special "military" ribbons, an additional accessory appeared in the form of swords attached to the insignia, etc. Finally, new awards were instituted. The rewards systems of the Balkan countries during the First World War as a whole fulfilled the role assigned to them as reward tools and state paraphernalia. In the latter capacity, orders and medals were used when awarding them to the allies. In most of the countries under consideration, there were no changes in the order groups, or they

were insignificant. This is explained by the circumstances of participation in the war of each of the country. Award systems were replenished mainly with medals and crosses close to them in status, which appeared after the war, designed to preserve the memory of it and addressed to a wide range of people. It should also be noted that awards for various kinds of humanitarian activities are widespread in the countries under consideration.

*Key words:* Balkan countries, award systems, World War I.

As known, the First World War or the Great War, as contemporaries called it, began in the Balkans. It was there, in Sarajevo, that the fatal shots were fired, which became a prelude to the conflict, and after Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, a chain reaction began, spreading the conflict to the rest of the world. All the states of the Balkans and the Balkan nations that did not have their own statehood (Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians, Albanians) were drawn into the war. Military operations with varying degrees of intensity continued in the Balkans during the whole war. According to rough estimates, more than 3 million inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula were drafted into the armed forces of the warring coalitions, of whom about 1.5 million died or became disabled, not counting civilian casualties (Shkyndin et al. 2002, vol. 1, 626, 627, 630, 631). The war has once again redrawn the political map of the region. In the place of Serbia, Montenegro, the Balkan provinces of Austria-Hungary, a new state appeared – Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia). The configuration of the borders of Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey has changed significantly. Millions of people find themselves outside their national states or became refugees, thereby giving rise to new conflicts.

The shocks and victims of the war have long been impressed in the memory of the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. They are immortalized in numerous monuments and memorials, some of which, despite new wars and fluctuations in the political situation, have survived to present day. One of the means of preserving the memory about the events of 1914–1918. became the awards, established in all countries of the region, they are discussing in our publication.

By the beginning of the war, each of the Balkan states had its own reward system with its own history and traditions. The oldest among them was Turkish, or rather Ottoman, which was established in the 18th century. The youngest is the Bulgarian one, which arised with the country's independence in 1878. Each included orders, medals and badges, both for military and civilian merits.

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In wartime, changes were made to the appearance of already existing awards in accordance with the needs of the moment. Military awards were issued on special “military” ribbons, and additional accessories in the form of swords attached to orders badges, etc. Finally, new awards were instituted. Let us consider with specific examples what changes took place in the award systems of the Balkan countries during the First World War.

The political orientation of Bulgaria during the First World War was predetermined by its defeat in the Second Balkan (Inter – Allied) War in 1913 and the loss of part of the national territory. The global conflict revived the hopes of the ruling circles and Tsar Ferdinand for their return. The military successes of the Tripartite Alliance , the failure of the Entente's Dardanelles operation, coupled with the loan received from Germany, strengthened the pro-German orientation of the ruling circles of Bulgaria. But the main thing was that the Tripartite Alliance promised to satisfy the territorial ambitions of Bulgaria immediately, and the Entente – only after the end of the war, and then only with the consent of the countries concerned.

In August 1915, Bulgaria concluded an agreement and military conventions with Germany, Austria-Hungary and an agreement with Turkey – this is how the

Central Powers arose. On October 1, Bulgaria declared war on Serbia. The campaign in Serbia and Macedonia ended with the defeat of the Serbian army, and the Anglo-French troops that arrived to help the Serbs were driven back south to the borders of Greece.

The campaign in Dobruja and Romania in 1916 ended with the defeat of the Romanian-Russian forces and the exit of the Bulgarian troops into the delta of the Danube and on the river Seret, where the Northern Front was established. Stretched out on a huge front, without reserves, poorly supplied and equipped, the Bulgarian army, at the cost of enormous efforts, held back the ever-increasing forces of the Entente for almost 3 years.

In mid-September 1918, the Entente troops launched a powerful offensive on the Southern Front. On September 17, the positions of the Bulgarian army were broken through. The ferment among the retreating units developed into an uprising against the government and the monarchy. On September 29, at the request of the Bulgarian government, an armistice was signed in Thessaloniki. Participation in the First World War was the most difficult military test in the history of Bulgaria, led to overwhelming mobilization efforts and the depletion of the country's economic resources. The fighting cost the Bulgarian people 101 thousand killed, dead, missing and 155 thousand wounded (Shkyndin et al. 2002, vol. 1, 626).

Of the 6 orders that existed in the award system of Bulgaria by 1915, three were purely military and one more could be given for both civilian and military merit. The main military award was the Order "For Bravery", established back in 1880, which had five degrees (Grand Cross, crosses of the 1st – 4th degrees) and the Distinguished badge, assigned for rewarding soldiers and non-commissioned officers, in the 4th degrees. The Order "For Bravery" looked like a Maltese cross with crossed swords passing through its center. Signs of the 4th higher degrees were covered with white enamel, the fifth – with red. The soldier's badge had the same form as the order, but without enamel.

The growth of German influence on Bulgaria in connection with the political reorientation of the monarch and the government after the Balkan wars, was reflected

in the change in the statute of the Order “For Bravery” and its appearance. Following the model of the Prussian Iron Cross, the orders of the 3rd and 4th degrees were divided into two classes, with the 1st class awards worn on a hairpin, the 2nd – on a ribbon - blue with silver stripes along the edges. Also, in imitation of the Iron Cross, in the medallion of all degrees of the order (except the Grand Cross) and the soldier's cross, from January 1916, the date of Bulgaria's entry into the First World War appeared – 1915. On the badges of the 1st class of the 3rd and 4th degrees, participation countries in the war were indicated by years, respectively: “1915–1916” and “1915–1917” on the upper and lower rays.

Other orders and medals during the war years were issued on a "military" ribbon – of the Order “For Bravery”. The Order “Of Military Merit”, in addition, acquired an additional element - a military distinction in the form of a wreath covered with green enamel – half laurel, half oak, attached to the front side of the order badge. As of January 1917, orders of all degrees were awarded to 3753 officers, military doctors, officials of the army in the field. About 300 thousand non-commissioned officers and soldiers were awarded with soldier's crosses “For Bravery” of various degrees during the war years (Petrov 2002, 70, 71 ).

No new military awards were established during the war. Only 15 years later, on December 9, 1933, a commemorative medal appeared to be presented to the surviving participants of the First World War, as well as to the relatives of the victims. The medal with a diameter of 32 mm is minted from yellow metal. Its obverse depicts the coat of arms of Bulgaria superimposed on two crossed swords and surrounded by oak and laurel branches. In the center of the reverse is the date “1915–1918” framed by a wreath of wheat ears, laurel and oak leaves, and rose flowers. The medal was worn on a red ribbon with a white-green-white stripe along the edges. Persons who did not directly participate in hostilities were awarded the medal on a ribbon with a white stripe in the middle. Relatives of the dead were given a medal with a black stripe on the ribbon. Presentation of commemorative medals continued until December 31, 1939. About 50 thousand Bulgarian citizens received

them, another 119 thousand medals were distributed to former allies, mainly Germans (Petrov 1998, 181 ).

The badge "For the salvation of the banner" should be attributed to military awards. The idea of creating this distinction was born after the end of the war. Under the terms of the armistice in Thessaloniki, a significant part of the Bulgarian forces in Macedonia laid down their arms and turned into the prisoners of war, but not a single battle flag fell into enemy hands. Officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers hid regimental shrines and, with the risk of their lives, managed to deliver them to their homeland. By order of the Minister of War dated March 30, 1922, the sign "For the salvation of the banner " was established. It had an oval shape and dimensions of 50 x 70 mm. At the bottom of the badge there is an image of the Order "For Bravery" against the background of crossed banners. At the top is a principal crown, under which is placed the inscription "1915–1918", "За спасяване знаме", below the text is a crowned lion. To the right and to the left, the sign is framed by laurel branches. The badge was fastened to clothing with a pin and worn on the right side of the chest. In 1924, 100 copies of the badge were made in Austria (Petrov 1998, 144 ). Canceled 1947.

A number of awards are associated with the activities during the war years of the Bulgarian Red Cross and other organizations that took care of the wounded, sick, refugees. On May 30, 1917, a badge of honor was established by royal decree for rewarding "for philanthropic and charitable deeds." He received the name "За насърчение към човеколюбие", which can be translated into English as "For encourage to philanthropy". The badge had 4 degrees for men and 3 degrees for women. It was a so-called. "Cannon" cross with rounded ends of the rays, made entirely of white metal or covered with white enamel (depending of the degree). Between the sides of the cross are the monograms of its founder, Tsar Ferdinand I. The obverse and reverse of the medallion are the same for all grades. The obverse represents an enameled red cross on a white background, framed by a ring of green enamel with the inscription "На човеколюбци 1916". The reverse is a crowned lion with a Saxon coat of arms on a red enamel background, surrounded by a green

enamel ring with the inscription “Българската признателност”. The sash is white with red and green stripes along both edges. The 1st degree badge for men measured 59x59 mm and was worn around the neck. A silver eight-pointed star with a diameter of 70 mm with an overhead sign was supposed to be attached to it. The award of the II degree the star was not supposed. Badges of III and IV degrees were worn on the chest and had the same dimensions – 45x45 mm. The difference between them was that the rays of the badge of the IV degree did not have enamel. The female badge of the 1st degree was similar to the male badge, but had a pin on the reverse. Badges of the II and III degrees were similar to the male badges of the III and IV degrees, respectively, but they were worn on a ribbon folded in the form of a bow.

The Red Cross medal was established by a royal decree of February 15, 1918 in two degrees – silver and bronze. Medals were awarded to persons "without distinction of gender, nationality and citizenship" for services to the Red Cross or in general in the cause of mercy. the medal had a diameter of 33 mm. In the center of the obverse is a red cross surrounded by diametrically divergent rays. Above the cross is the year of Bulgaria's entry into the First World War - 1915. This image is surrounded by the inscription: "БЪЛГАРСКО ДРУЖЕСТВО ЧЕРВЕНЪ КРЪСТ". Reverse: German shield topped with a royal crown. On it is a Bulgarian coat of arms lion bearing the Saxon coat of arms. Around the shield is a laurel wreath, below which is the inscription "За признателност". The medal was worn on a red ribbon with white and intermittent green stripes along both edges of the ribbon. In 1929, a gold degree was added to the two existing medals, distinguished by an enamel medallion with a red cross and no date on the obverse.

A number of already existing awards during the First World War changed their design. The badge of honor “Red Cross”, established back in 1886, acquired in 1915 the appearance of a straight, red-enamelled cross topped with a crown, 34 x 25 mm in size. In the center of the cross is placed a square medallion, framed by a dotted relief, depicting a crowned lion. The date on the horizontal rays of the cross is 1915. The badge is one-sided, with a pin on the reverse.

The badge of honor “Queen Eleonora” was established by Tsar Ferdinand in 1913 in connection with the charitable activities of his second wife during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. In 1915, the next issue of the sign began to look like a cross covered with red enamel, with the monogram of Tsarin Eleanor in the center, inscribed in a silver ring, along the circumference of which the inscription: “Божие е нашето дело 1915–1916” is applied. The ring has an eye through which it is connected to a red ribbon.

In addition to the awards described above, in Bulgaria, as in other mentioned countries, a large number of commemorative tokens and badges of military-patriotic themes were issued. Many of them resembled medals in their shape. Maybe that's why some Bulgarian authors, in our opinion unreasonably, refer them to awards, which they really were not. Such phaleristic monuments include commemorative tokens of the 9th Infantry Pleven Division, tokens and badges in memory of the liberation of Macedonia by the Bulgarian army, tokens with portraits of the heads of state of the Quadruple Union, badges depicting the state symbols of Bulgaria, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

The award system of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the First World War was quite modest: six orders, one of which was for women, and two medals for bravery (Imtiaz) and merit (Liakat). There was also the practice of establishing medals for specific military campaigns.

The Turks did not have a separate military order, and the Osmaniye and Medzhidie orders most often acted in this capacity (each in five degrees). Since 1915, the orders awarded for military merit had crossed swords passing through their center. The medals received on ribbons a special bar in the form of crossed sabers with a rectangular plate attached to their upper part, on which the year of Turkey's entry into the war according to the Muslim calendar – “1332” (1914) was inscribed in Arabic script.

A special (and only) military award for participation in the First World War was established in Turkey on March 1, 1915. The British called it the “Gallipoli



Star”, the Germans – the “Iron Crescent”. Its true name sounded much more prosaic: “Military medal of 1915”.

This medal was intended as an award for military prowess and did not refer to any specific military campaign. Although its very appearance is associated with the successful defense of the Dardanelles in 1915 from the Anglo-French landing. The medal occupied the lowest place among the Turkish awards of that time, but its German name indicates that among the German soldiers and officers it was considered the equivalent of the Iron Cross. Sometimes it is incorrectly called an order.

The medal is a five-pointed star with a diameter of 56 mm, with balls at the ends of the rays. In the center of the star is the tughra of Sultan Mehmed Reshad V and the date “1333”, which corresponds to 1915 according to the European calendar; they are surrounded by a horizontal crescent. There were two versions of this award: for officers and privates. The officer's badge was made of silver or silver-plated bronze and filled with red enamel. The soldier's was stamped from white metal and covered with red paint. The reverse side of the badge is smooth and has a horizontal barrette for attaching to the uniform.

The Turks wore the medal on the left side of the chest; Germans, Austrians and Bulgarians – as a rule, on the right. The medal had a ribbon 29 mm wide – red with two white stripes along the edges for those awarded for combat distinctions, and white with two red stripes for non-combatants (persons who did not directly participate in hostilities). The ribbon could be worn on an order bar or separately, passing through the second buttonhole of the uniform from the top.

There were also trapezoidal planks for wearing on a ribbon with the names of different campaigns or theaters of military operations: “Chanak-kale”, or “Chanak” (Gallipoli), “Caucasus”, “Canal”, “Sana”, “Kut-el-Amara”. Planks did not have an official status, but their wearing was widely practiced during the war years (Potrashkov 2007, 74, 75 ).

The military medal of 1915 was the only Turkish award that was presented not on behalf of the Sultan, but on the orders of Commander-in-Chief Enver Pasha.

Therefore, the Sultan's tughra was absent on the award documents. However, after the end of the war, Sultan Mahmud VI officially approved all the awards - as committed by his will.

Activities to help the wounded, sick and refugees were awarded the Red Crescent Medal. It was established in 1912 by Sultan Mehmed V Reshad to reward members of the Red Crescent Society, founded in 1868. The medal had three classes - gold, silver and bronze and was awarded to both members of the society and volunteers. The medal is round, 28.5 mm in diameter. On the obverse in the center is a round white enameled medallion with a red crescent. The inscription "Human Aid" is placed on top, two laurel branches are depicted below. The ribbon is white with a red stripe in the center. A decorative pendant with the image of the Sultan's tughra and a rectangular medallion of white enamel with the inscription "Red Crescent Society" were attached to the lower part of the ribbon. A white enameled clasp was attached to the upper part, indicating the years of service of the recipient. For those who distinguished themselves at the front, a fastener in the form of three silver oak leaves was established.

The question of entry into the First World War caused a fierce struggle in Greece. For three years, the country could not reach a compromise about taking side in the war and was split into two hostile camps – supporters of Prime Minister E. Venizelos and supporters of King Constantine, oriented respectively towards the powers of the Entente and the forces of the Triple Alliance.

Venizelos, an ardent supporter of the Entente, insisted on entering the war, linking with this the hopes for the implementation of the Megali Idea (Great Idea) – the expansion of the territory of the Hellenic kingdom to the borders of the former Byzantine Empire. King Constantine, a graduate of the Berlin Military Academy, married to the sister of Wilhelm II, closely associated with his politics, saw his task in maintaining neutrality and rendering all possible assistance to Germany, in whose military power and future victory he firmly believed. The course of military events in the Balkans and Asia Minor increased the value of Greece as an ally, so the Entente powers openly intervened in the internal political struggle in Greece, trying to turn it

in their favor. A weighty argument was made by 300 thousand Allied soldiers who were on Greek territory. In October 1916, dismissed by the king, Venizelos, with the active support of the allies, created the Provisional Government in Thessaloniki, set about organizing the army and declared war on Germany and Bulgaria. The Entente recognized this government de facto. But King Constantine continued to be the main obstacle to the complete subjugation of Greece to the interests of the Entente. Putting forward one ultimatum after another, the allies in April 1917 achieved his abdication in favor of his son Alexander. Venizelos returned to the post of prime minister, and on April 29, 1917, Greece declared war on Germany. In September 1918, the Thessaloniki army, in whose ranks 150 thousand Greeks fought, went on the offensive and defeated the German-Bulgarian forces in Macedonia. During the battles of the First World War, Greece lost 30 thousand people (Shkyndin et al. 2005, vol. 1, 627).

Three Greek awards are dedicated to the events of the war. Two of them were established by the Provisional Government of Venizelos and later approved by royal decrees. The first among them, according to the time of establishment, was the medal "For Military Merit". (October 28, 1916). It was originally called the Military Medal, but royal decrees of June 30 and October 31, 1917 officially approved it with a changed name. The medal was awarded to officers of the army and navy, personnel of the Red Cross and other organizations who distinguished themselves in the service during the war, but not necessarily in a combat situation. The medal is made of bronze in the form of a straight "Greek" cross with widening ends of the sides and crossed swords passing through its center. The Phoenix bird is depicted in the center of the cross, and the Greek inscription is placed on the sides: "I fight for the motherland." A laurel wreath is laid on top of the cross in such a way that the ends of the sides protrude somewhat outward from under it. On the back, the inscription – "Greece 1916–1917". The cross was worn on a ribbon 37 mm wide, yellow with black stripes along the edges. The medal had four degrees, depending on the rank of the recipient. Generals received a medal of the 1st degree with a gilded laurel wreath with a diameter of 15 mm on a ribbon; colonels – medal of the 2nd degree with a

silver wreath; lieutenant colonels and majors – a medal of the 3rd degree with a bronze wreath; officers with the rank of captain and below received a medal of the 4th degree – without a wreath.

On February 28, 1917, the Provisional Government established the Military Cross, which, unlike the previous award, was awarded not depending on rank, but for real merit on the battlefield. It was officially approved by royal decrees of July 30 and October 31, 1917. The cross was made of base silver. Its vertical sides were formed by an ancient sword with a wide blade pointing downwards. Horizontal - a rectangular plate in the form of a ribbon with an inscription in Greek: "With him or on him" (With a shield or on a shield), on top of which the sword was laid. This composition was enclosed in a laurel wreath. On the back of the plate is the inscription 'Greece 1916–1917'. The ribbon of the cross is black, 37 mm wide with 5 mm blue stripes along the edges.

The degrees of the award were marked on the ribbon with gold, silver and bronze laurel wreaths, respectively. Repeated awards were indicated by five-pointed stars, also attached to the ribbon.

At the suggestion of Marshal F. Foch, the Entente countries in 1919 established a common medal for all to commemorate the victory in the war. It was supposed to carry on the front side the image of the goddess of Victory, and on the back to have the inscription: "The Great War in Defense of Civilization". The design of the medals was left to the discretion of the countries themselves.

Greece issued its own Victory Medal, which was determined by royal decrees of October 6, 1920 and November 24, 1924. It was awarded to all those who served in the army or navy for at least three months in wartime.

The bronze medal with a diameter of 36 mm had on the obverse an image of the winged goddess of Victory with a laurel wreath and an olive branch of peace in her hands. On the reverse, the figure of the baby Hercules strangling snakes is placed on a pedestal, which is a tablet with a list of the victorious powers. Around, along the side of the medal there is an inscription: "The Great War for Civilization 1914–1918". The author of the medal was the French sculptor Henri Nock. The medal had a

suspension for attaching a ribbon of "double rainbow" colors, as was customary for similar medals in all Entente countries (Potrashkov 2007, 178–181).

During the first years of the war, Romania remained neutral. The territorial aspirations of the Romanians were directed towards Austria-Hungary, within which borders millions of their compatriots lived. Gradually, drawing closer to the Entente, the ruling circles of Rumania carried on a lively bargain with it, intending to get the greatest acquisitions at the lowest price and enter the war when the chances of victory became absolutely obvious. Having managed to wrest agreement from the allies to their demands, the Romanians decided that the right moment had come in the summer of 1916. The victories of the Russian Southwestern Front convinced them of this. On August 27, 1916, Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary, and the next day, Romanian troops launched an offensive into Transylvania. In the course of subsequent hostilities, the 600,000th Romanian army was defeated, and by December, almost the entire territory of Romania was occupied by troops from the countries of the Central Powers. Only Moldova and a small part of Dobruja remained under the control of the Romanian government. The royal family, government and parliament moved to Iasi, which became the capital of the country. Russia was forced to send 35 infantry and 11 cavalry divisions to help its ally and lengthen the combat front of its armies by 500 km. (Rostunov et al. 1975, vol. 2. 208). In the winter of 1916/17 thanks to the help of France, the Romanian army was reorganized and re-equipped. The soldiers, mostly former peasants, were promised land and voting rights after the end of the war. Encouraged by the promise of change, the Romanian soldiers demonstrated high morale during fierce fighting in July-August 1917, thwarting the German counteroffensive in southern Moldova. Russia's exit from the war put Romania in a hopeless situation, and on May 7, 1918, she was forced to sign peace with the powers of the Central Powers in Bucharest. The successes of the Entente on the Western Front and in the Balkans in the autumn of 1918 led to a change in the balance of power, which allowed Romania to enter the war for the second time on November 11, 1918 and eventually end up in the camp of the winners. The casualties in the battles amounted to 220 thousand people, as well as 80 thousand civilians. As a

result of the annexation of Transylvania, Bessarabia, Bukovina and some other lands, the territory of Romania after the war reached to 295 thousand square meters. km., and the population increased from 7.9 million people. up to 14.7 million people (Pop et al. 2005, 498).

Before the war in Romania there were no orders for military merit, but only medals, and then mainly for privates and non-commissioned officers. Order badges for the military had swords passing through the center. In wartime, orders “with swords” were issued on the “military” ribbon of the “Military Dignity” medal - red with narrow blue stripes along the edges. Crossed swords were added to the medal “For Bravery and Loyalty” for soldiers and non-commissioned officers, passing between the top of the medal and the ribbon pendant.

To reward officers who distinguished themselves directly in combat conditions, a new order of Michael the Brave was established, named after the ruler of Wallachia, who managed to unite for a short time at the beginning of the 17th century. under his rule most of the Romanian lands. The order was established by King Ferdinand on December 21, 1916 (according to other sources – September 26). He had three degrees: Grand Cross, Commander and Knight, with and without swords.

The badge of the order was a bronze gilded cross covered with blue enamel. The size of the 1st and 2nd degrees is 60x60 mm, the 3rd degree is 40x40 mm. Its ends were made in the form of lilies (the so-called Florentine cross). In the center of the obverse was the monogram of King Ferdinand – two Latin letters "F" turned to each other with the back side and connected in the lower part with the crown below them. In the center of the reverse, the year of foundation of the award “1916” is indicated. The sign was crowned with a royal crown with a ribbon ring. The latter was crimson with golden stripes along the edges. During the First World War, 16 awards were made with the 1st degree of the order, 12 - 2nd and 336 - 3rd, including 43 collective awards of military units (Catone et al. 1992, 15).

To reward medical personnel, employees of the Red Cross and other persons who distinguished themselves in helping the wounded, sick, refugees, prisoners of

war, the “Queen Mary Cross” was intended in three degrees, established on February 5, 1917. The highest degree was a cross measuring 49 x 49 mm, worn on the neck. In shape, it resembled a swastika turned counterclockwise, with the ends of the sides in the form of sharp corners. Cross of the 1st class made of gilded silver, covered on both sides with white enamel. On the obverse in the center of the cross is placed the gold cypher of Queen Mary, on the reverse - a cross of red enamel. Crosses of the II and III degrees were smaller – 40x40 mm, did not have enamel.

The second class cross was gilded, the third class was bronze. Their obverse was similar to a cross of the 1st degree, on the reverse was the year the award was established “1917”. Orange cross ribbon.

The Commemorative Cross of the War of 1916–1918, established on July 8, 1918, was a common award for all participants in the First World War. The bronze cross with diamond-shaped ends, 40x40 mm in size, is covered with greenish platinum. Its surface on both sides has a relief lattice structure. In the round central medallion on the obverse is the monogram of King Ferdinand, on the reverse are two dates "1916, 1918". Crosses were also issued with the dates "1916, 1919". The ribbon of the cross, 37 mm wide, consists of 4 dark blue and 3 green vertical stripes of equal width. Planks were attached to the tape indicating the place of the battles where the awardee distinguished himself. Planks with the following inscriptions are known; «1916», «1917», «1918», «1916–1918», «1918–1919», «Siberia», «Oituz», «Dunarea», «Targul-Ocma», «Turtucaia», «Marasesti», «Dobrogea», «Marasti», «Bucuresti», «Jiu», «Cerna», «Carpati», «Ardeal», «Italia», «Olt», «Porumbacu», «Tabla Butii», «Robanesti», «Namolasa», «Siret», «Ciresoaia».

Commemorative crosses of the war of 1916-1918 it was allowed in the future to wear the eldest sons of the awarded, if they were officers in active service. In such cases, a bar with the inscription was attached to the tape «Traditie».

Romania was among the countries that issued their own Victory medal. It was established by Royal Decree No. 3 390/924 on July 20, 1921. It was awarded to a wide range of persons who participated in hostilities from August 28, 1916 to March 31, 1921. The medal was made of bronze and had a diameter of 36 mm. Its obverse

depicts the goddess of Victory with a sword lowered in her right hand and an olive branch of the world in her left. On the reverse there is an inscription: “Marele razboi - Pentru - civilizatie” (“Great War for Civilization”), an image of a lictor hatchet, laurel and oak branches, surrounded by a ring of twenty-link chains. Ribbon "double rainbow". 300 thousand awards were made with this medal (Potrashkov 2007, 178-181 ).

By Royal Decree No. 850 of April 9, 1918, the Badge of the Military Disabled was established. Initially, the sign was intended for servicemen who were injured on the battlefields of the First World War. Later, the badge was extended to participants in the hostilities against Soviet Hungary and Soviet Russia in 1919-1920. The badge of a military invalid is a horizontal oval with a rough surface enclosed in a wreath of laurel (left) and oak (right) branches tied at the base with a ribbon. In the center of the sign are the dates 1916/19, separated by a slash. The badge was made of gilded bronze and attached to a rectangular bar from the ribbon of the Cross of Military Dignity.

The Sarajevo assassination had fatal consequences for Serbia. Despite the militant mood of the and army circles and public, official Belgrade condemned the assassination , trying at all costs to avoid conflict in the face of depletion of financial and human resources after the two previous Balkan wars. But in Vienna and Berlin did not want to miss a convenient opportunity to unleash a long-prepared war. On July 27, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Russia came to the defense of the latter, and in a few days the Austro-Serbian war turned into a world war. Almost until the end of 1915, Serbia stubbornly and successfully resisted the onslaught of the Triple Alliance, although the Entente countries at that time did not provide it with sufficient support. But after the entry Bulgaria into the war , the fate of Serbia was decided. The Serbian army, accompanied by a huge mass of the civilian refugees, retreated through Montenegro and Albania to the Adriatic coast, from where the allied fleet transported it to Corfu. The winter march of the army and refugees through impregnable mountain passes, surrounded by a hostile population, was subsequently called the “Serbian Calvariae”. The reorganized and rearmed Serbian



army was sent to the Thessaloniki front, where by 1918 it accounted for a quarter of all allied forces.

In the summer of 1917, negotiations were held in Corfu between the Serbian government and representatives of Croatian and Slovenian emigrant circles that were part of the so-called Yugoslav Committee. Their result was the Corfu Declaration on the conditions for the creation after the war of a unified Yugoslav state, headed by the Serbian dynasty Karageorgievich. In September 1918, the Entente forces on the Thessaloniki front launched an offensive that ended with a breakthrough in the enemy defenses. On November 1, 1918, Belgrade was liberated. On December 1, a solemn ceremony was held there proclaiming the unification and creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. (Kingdom of SCS).

The most common Serbian military awards until 1914 were the Order of the “Star of Karđorđević” with Swords, and the gold and silver medals for bravery “Milos Obilić”.

According to the order of November 22, 1914, in wartime, all awards were to be issued on the red moire ribbon of the Order of the Star of Karageorgievich with swords. In practice, this rule was not always followed. The order itself was supplemented on May 28, 1915 with two crosses, for rewarding to non-commissioned officers and soldiers, which became its lower degrees.

The crosses completely repeated the shape of the order badges with swords, but did not have enamel. The cross for non-commissioned officers was gilded with silvered rays between the sides. The soldier's cross was silver-plated with gilded rays.

On the obverse of the cross in the medallion there is a Serbian armorial shield and the motto: “For bravery”. On the reverse there is a coat of arms eagle, above it is, the name of the founder of the Order of King Peter I, below it is one of the dates: “1914–1916”, “1914–1917”, “1914–1918”. In total for the period from 1915 to 1929. 1074 Serbs and 37 foreigners were awarded with a gold soldier's cross, 1449 Serbs and 836 foreigners with a silver one (Babac 2014, 258 ).

By royal decree of May 28, 1915, the Order of the White Eagle with Swords was established as a military decoration. In fact, an accessory in the form of crossed swords was added to the Order of the White Eagle, established back in 1904, located in the upper part of the order sign between the heads of the eagle and the crown that crowned them. The order was awarded to generals and officers of the Serbian and allied armies.

On April 5, 1920, the heir to the throne Alexander Karageorgievich established a medal in memory of the retreat through Albania in the autumn of 1915. The medal is made of bronze and has dimensions of 28x32 mm. It is made in the form of a double-headed eagle with a coat of arms on the chest. The lower part of the eagle is hidden by a medallion framed by a wreath of laurel leaves. On the obverse, in the medallion, there is a profile portrait of Prince Alexander turned to the left, surrounded by the inscription: "To his combat comrades-in-arms. Alexander". On the reverse in the same medallion there is an inscription: "For loyalty to the motherland 1915". The heads and wings of the eagle are silver plated. The eagle is topped with a crown with a ring for attaching an order ribbon. The green ribbon of the medal is 36 mm wide - symbolizing hope with 5 mm black stripes along the edges – a symbol of mourning for the dead. 142148 people received the award (Babac 2014, 267 ).

On December 1, 1920, the same Alexander Karageorgievich, on behalf of his father, established the "Commemorative Medal of the War for Liberation and Unity".

The medal was awarded to all those who served in wartime: servicemen of the Serbian and Montenegrin armies, volunteers, medical personnel, members of foreign military missions, ministers, members of parliament. The medal is made of bronze in the shape of a cross, measuring 39x39 mm, with a large central medallion and short wide sides with slightly rounded ends. The end of each side is decorated with a ball in the middle. A ring for attaching the ribbon passes through the ball at the upper end of the cross. Between the sides of the cross are crossed swords. In the center of the obverse is a profile portrait of King Peter I turned to the right, enclosed in a wreath of laurel and oak leaves. On the upper side of the cross is the date "1914", on the lower side – "1918". On the reverse there is an image of the Serbian coat of arms double-

headed eagle topped with a crown. On the horizontal and lower sides of the cross are the dates, respectively: "1915", "1916", "1917". The ribbon of the medal consists of three equal stripes in the colors of the Serbian flag: red, light blue and white.

A small principality on the coast of the Adriatic (since 1910 – a kingdom), which zealously defended its freedom and achieved de facto independence already at the end of the 18th century. In the First World War, due to established historical traditions, Montenegro was on the side of Russia and Serbia. The main military award since 1841 was the medal "For Bravery". After the defeat of the Serbian troops in October-November 1915, Montenegro was forced to capitulate to the Central Powers. In January 1916, King Nicholas I escaped in Italy. Montenegrin politicians, being in exile, joined the Corfu Declaration (1917), which planned the unification of all southern Slavs in one state, headed by the Serbian dynasty Karageorgievich. After the liberation in November 1918, the Great National Assembly of Montenegro decided to unite with Serbia and overthrow the former Njegos dynasty.

Already in exile in France, King Nikola I established in January 1919 the Order "Freedom of Montenegro" as a reward for his supporters who fought for the restoration of Montenegrin statehood and monarchy until 1924. The badge of the order measured 45×40 mm and was a laurel wreath covered with green enamel and intertwined with a red-blue-white ribbon. Inside the wreath was a golden double-headed crowned eagle, on the chest of which was placed a shield of red enamel with a golden lion on it – the coat of arms of Montenegro. The ends of crossed swords protruded from under the wreath. Above the eagle's head was a white enamel ribbon with the inscription: "For the right, honor and freedom of Montenegro." the reverse of the badge is similar to the obverse, only the ribbon above the heads of the eagle is colored red-blue-white. Ribbon of the order of green color.

The award systems of the Balkan countries during the First World War, in whole, fulfilled the role assigned to them as award tools and state paraphernalia. In the latter capacity, orders and medals acted when they were awarded to allies. In most of the countries under consideration, there were no changes in the order groups, or they were insignificant. This is due to the circumstances of participation in the war of

each of them. The award systems were supplemented mainly with medals and crosses, close to them in status, after the war, designed to preserve the memory of it and addressed to a wide range of people. It should also be noted that awards for various humanitarian activities are widely distributed in the countries under consideration.

In Bulgaria, the authority and significance of the already existing awards were high, both among the military and among the civilian population. Moreover, the officially proclaimed goal of participation in the war was the unification of all the lands, inhabited by the Bulgarians, in a single state. Therefore, the establishment of new awards was not required. In addition, the existing award system proved its effectiveness during the Balkan wars of 1912–1913. The appearance of a large number of prisoners of war, refugees, displaced persons during hostilities led to the development of Red Cross awards. A relatively late appearance in Bulgarian commemorative medal of the war of 1915–1918. was due to its status as a defeated country and the difficult domestic political situation in the early post-war years.

In the Ottoman Empire during the war years, new orders were also not established. This was partly due to the general state of stagnation in the empire, and partly to the preservation of the authority of the former Sultan's awards. The only one new award, the Military Medal of 1915, came at the initiative of the ambitious Minister of War Enver Pasha and was intended to commemorate Turkey's biggest victory over the Entente. The defeat and collapse of the empire, the emergence of the Turkish Republic, based on other principles, led to the fact that the memory of the lost war was not engrave in the monuments of phaleristics.

In Greece, three awards appeared during the reviewed period. They were established by the Provisional Government of Venizelos and received official status more than a year later, after the change of the monarch on the throne. This was a reflection of the political struggle in connection with the entry into the war on the side of the Entente. Greece supported the proposal of Marshal Foch to establish a common Victory medal. This was supposed to symbolize the country's connection with the winners, from whom Greece expected to receive significant territorial gains.

In Romania, the prewar award system did not properly ensure her participation in the big war, since over the previous decades of peaceful life, her military awards were exhausted by the Virtuti military medal. That is why the Order of Michael the Brave and the Commemorative Cross for participation in the war of 1916-1919 appeared. The latter, due to the presence of numerous planks, combined the features of a commemorative award for participation in the war and a specific combat distinction. The establishment of the Victory Medal in Romania reflected its desire to emphasize its proximity to the Entente, from which the kingdom expected to support extensive territorial claims to its neighbors, hidden behind the slogan of uniting the Romanian lands.

In Serbia, the number of awards before the war was small. Therefore, along with the addition of already existing orders, to reward command personnel, military attributes, in 1915. The soldier's order of the Star of Karageorgievich was established in two classes to reward non-commissioned officers and soldiers. In Serbia, the Victory medal did not appear, because it apparently reflected the concept of a new state. In the Kingdom of SCS, the authorities did not seek to oppose those who fought in the ranks of the Entente, the former soldiers of Austria-Hungary, who continued to wear imperial awards. As a memorable event, only one was marked with a falera - the tragic retreat of the Serbian army in the autumn of 1915. through Albania. The award had a wide range of recipients: military personnel, civilians, representatives of the allied powers. It was established on the initiative of Crown Prince Alexander and was intended to strengthen the authority of the future king, primarily at the expense of veterans, as evidenced by the inscription on the reverse of the award. The same goal - to rally new and old subjects around the Karageoghievich dynasty - was pursued by another commemorative award – the cross of 1914–1918. with a portrait of King Peter I.

As for Montenegro, its fate was dramatic. First occupied by the enemy, and then betrayed by the allies, it lost her sovereignty, and with it the opportunity to have her own rewards. The Order “Freedom of Montenegro” rather reflected not the triumph of the winners, but the agony of the formerly reigning Njegosh dynasty.

For all the importance, scale and drama of the fighting in the Balkans, it remained only the periphery of the First World War. The fate of the war was decided in the other place. This is indirectly indicated by such a fact – none of the leading countries, participating in the war, established any official award dedicated to the struggle in the Balkans. The exception was France, which issued a medal for its soldiers of the Thessaloniki army, and then for many years after the end of the war. As the English saying goes, "the exception only proves the rule".

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