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THE GREAT WAR IN 1915

Edited by

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Heeresgeschichtliches Museum/Militärhistorisches Institut

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Aleksey TIMOFEEV

RUSSIAN STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL GOALS IN THE BALKANS IN 1915

ABSTRACT: On the basis of archival materials, memoirs and the corresponding historiography the author considers the dynamics of the development of Russian strategic and tactical interests in the Balkans in 1915 and raises a question of the reasons for the Russian foreign policy defeat in the Balkans in the years of World War I.

KEYWORDS: WWI, Russian Empire, Balkans, logistics, transport network, rail links, military cargo transfer, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Montenegro.

With the passing of the first months of WWI, the Russian Empire crystallized several points of its interest in the Balkans. The main strategic goal legalized after the Ottoman Empire assault on the Russian Black Sea shores was "the return of the Orthodox Cross on the church of St. Sophia", which was a cover-up for the control of the Passes¹. It had been an "idée fixe" of the Russian Empire² such as Gibraltar had been for

¹ According to the recollections of the participants in the events, the plans of the Russian troops in the Straits were so designed that in 1915 it was decided that the recovery of the Cross on the St. Sophia Cathedral would be headed by the Duke Konstantin Romanov personally. The Director of the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople F. I. Uspensky was to participate in the landing, because "from his service in Constantinople he knew where and under which mosques Turks kept the church libraries, so as to place the guards at them immediately and not lose the most valuable materials". НБС, Ф. 699, к. 1, с. 11. С.Н. Смирнов, Воспоминания о Великом князе Константине Константиновиче. Доклад, читанный в Корпусе его и имени в Белой Церкви, 3. Ноября 1940.

² Константинополь и проливы по секретным документам бывшего министерства иностранных дел, Москва 1925; Н. С. Киняпина. Балканы и проливы во внешней политике России в конце XIX века (1878-1898), Москва, 1994; В. И. Шеремет, Босфор: Россия и Турция в эпоху первой мировой войны: По материалам русской военной разведки, Москва, 1995; О. Р. Айрапетов, На Восточном направлении. Судьба Босфорской экспедиции в правление императора Николая II: Последняя война императорской России, Москва, 2002, pp. 158-261; В. Б. Каширин, „Несостоявшаяся экспедиция русских вооруженных сил на Балканы осенью 1915 года“, Новая и новейшая история, 6, Москва, 2004; Ю. Лунева, Босфор и Дарданеллы. Тайные провокации накануне Первой мировой войны (1908-1914), Москва, 2010.

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