

Exhibition of Archival Documents

Adventure in the Balkans 1915 Pictures – Memories – Remembrance

The exhibition of archival documents titled *Adventure in the Balkans 1915* follows the story of the members of the Columbia University Expedition that, in June 1915, by the request of their professor, the world renowned scientist Mihajlo (Michael) Pupin, sailed from the USA to the distant war-torn Serbia, in a humanitarian mission for helping the Serbian people.

Mihajlo Pupin's call was answered by twenty four American students, mostly from the Columbia University, in order to take part in the Great War, but not to fight but rather to help, nurture and heal. Their decision was worth not only respect but complete admiration. Guided by the desire to help the Serbian people in their struggle with epidemics, hunger and atrocities of war, voluntarily risking their lives, they proved that the fight for humaneness ideals and justice has a higher universal meaning. Many of them, after the official end of the humanitarian expedition, decided to stay on the Balkans and continue with their humanitarian work via the Red Cross.

Among the ones that decided to stay was Douglas Meriwether Dold, a graduate student of medicine from the Columbia University. During his stay in Bosnia, where he worked as a doctor in a field hospital in Dobrun, he almost completely lost his sight. In order to receive treatment, he went back to Niš where he heard about Bulgaria's declaration of war on Serbia. After the retreat of the Serbian Army and most of the people of Niš, he remained, together with his five American friends, in the city and witnessed the Bulgarian and German Armies enter the war capital of Serbia. Together with the Bishop of Niš Dositej, he partook in the official surrender of Niš to the Bulgarian Army, asking for protection of the defenceless people, while in the following days, together with his American friends, he was often a mediator between the people of Niš and the occupying forces. Because of growing health issues, Douglas Dold by the end of November 1915 left Niš and went back to the USA. For his medical contribution during the First World War, the Yugoslav state posthumously awarded him with the Cross of Mercy.

These events Douglas Dold describes in his manuscript *Adventure in the Balkans 1915* whereby a copy of the document is stored in the Archives of Vojvodina in the *Collection of Documents by Dr. Nikola Koča Jončić about Mihajlo Pupin*. The original is kept in the Columbia University Libraries, the Rare Book and Manuscript Department as part of the archival group Michael Idvorsky Pupin Papers.

The Archives of Vojvodina, during the commemoration of the anniversary of the end of the First World War and the unification of Banat, Bačka and Baranja with the Kingdom of Serbia, decided to publish this manuscript and organize an exhibition of archival documents that were collected in an attempt to shed light on the events that preceded and that were described in the *Adventure in the Balkans* manuscript. Documents and photographs, placed on 18 exhibition boards, document the events from the first call by Mihajlo Pupin for volunteers for humanitarian work in war-torn Serbia by the end of April 1915, to the formation of the Columbia Relief Expedition, its trip to Serbia, the humanitarian work, up until the return of Douglas Dold to the USA in the second half of December 1915.

By organizing this exhibition, the Archives of Vojvodina would once again, with another one of its activities of commemorating the events of the First World War, like to give respect and show how grateful it is to the eternal generation of Serbians that outdid themselves with their many battles, sufferings but also glorious victories in their defence of freedom and the Fatherland, as well as to the American friends, noble young men that fought on the side of justice and freedom.