

THE LIBERATION OF VIDIN BY THE ROMANIAN ARMY

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Abstract: *Romania entered in the war after the bombardments executed by the artillery from Vidin against Calafat. The same fortress was the target of the last part of the campaign of the Romanian army in Bulgaria. Vidin had a great importance in the history of the Bulgarian people during the Middle Ages, and later for the Ottoman Empire, who occupied it in 1396. Later on, the region of Vidin was involved in attempts of liberation of the country (the uprisings of 1841 and 1850). The massacres which followed in the Vidin region as well as in other part of Bulgaria after the rebellion of June 1876 were the pretext taken by Russia to start the war, in which Romania took part effectively from 16/28 July 1877. After the valuable participation at the siege of Plevna, the Romanian army received the mission to operate in the north-western Bulgaria. A Western Corps commanded by general Nicolae Haralambie was constituted for this purpose (Divisions 1, 4 and Reserve, and the 1st Brigade from 2nd Division). These forces arrived on 25 December 1877/January 1878 on the line Arcear – Belogradcik. Meanwhile, the Serbian army was too marching toward Vidin, but Prince Carol I rejected the proposed cooperation. A secondary action of the offensive against Vidin was the blockade of Belogradcik. The Romanian forces arrived near Vidin began the attacks against the redoubts on 29 December 1877/10 January 1878. The encirclement was completed on 11/23 January 1878, but the commander of the city Mehmet Izzet Pasha continued the resistance. In the second part of the operation, between 12/24 and 14/26 January 1878, the Romanian positions moved to a smaller distance toward the defences of the city. In the third part of the operation which began on 15/27 January 1878 The fortress was continuously bombarded by the batteries settled around it, and by those from Calafat, until the capitulation of 11/23 February, when a convention was signed with general Gheorghe Manu. Vidin entered under Romanian administration. The retreat of the Romanian troops from*

Vidin and Belogradcik was made in several stages until the first days of April 1878, they being replaced by the Russians. The liberation of Vidin was executed only by the Romanian forces. Romania had no intention to annex Vidin or the entire region of Timok, as some rumours pretended.

Keywords: *Vidin; Belogradcik; Plevna; Carol I; Mihail Kogălniceanu; General Alexandru Cernat; Brigadier General Mihail Christodulo Cerchez; General Nicolae Haralambie; Mehmet Izzet Pasha*