

REZIME EDICIJE
na engleskom, ruskom i francuskom jeziku

MEDICAL SERVICE DURING THE YUGOSLAV PEOPLE'S LIBERATION WAR 1941 - 1945

This edition consists of four books containing about 2,000 pages illustrated with 150 photos from the war period, also a number of sketches, drawings and tables. It was written by 21 authors of whom the majority participated in the People's Liberation War as members of Medical Service staffs in combat units of the People's Liberation movement.

The authors' works present a global historical document on the development of the Medical Service during the war. The edition also contributes a great deal to the fulfilment of a large gap in otherwise rich publishing activities covering the People's Liberation War and the revolution in Yugoslavia.

The emphasis was put on the description of formation, development, work and results of the Medical Service in combat units of the national liberation movement. The Medical Service was being developed together with and within the frames of partisan forces of the national liberation movement, following up and reflecting all periods and phases of its operations, its falls and rises as well as general characteristics of the movement as a whole and its specific development in different regions of Yugoslavia. It was started in first guerrilla units from no sources at all, lacking in medical personnel, especially doctors, with any special knowledge or experience in organisation of the medical service in war and in treatment of war injuries. By the end of the war, however, there existed a rather strong and well organised Medical Service, relatively well equipped, experienced and capable to perform all its tasks in the last months of war, including all preventive measures to protect health of the Yugoslav Army numbering about 800,000 soldiers; more than 100,000 wounded and sick were treated. The aim of the edition was to present this quantitative and qualitative development more substantially. During the war the Medical Service was organised in four armies, 18 corps, 62 divisions, 367 brigades, 711 partisan detachments, and Navy and Air Force units.

The Medical Service developed in very difficult conditions of occupation of the country, in fighting the superior enemy who did not want to recognize the status of soldiers to members of the Yugoslav People's Army, international conventions, and humanitarian principles on wounded and sick. Such behaviour of the enemy caused severe sufferings of both the wounded and medical personnel. In addition to the description of organisation of the Medical Service, of its professional work and the results obtained, the edition therefore contains also description of sufferings by the wounded and the medical personnel due to the lack of food, medical equipment, medicaments and materials as well of individual and mass killing of wounded perpetrated by enemy soldiers.

During the war the medical personnel stayed permanently with the wounded under the most severe conditions, participating in their difficulties and sufferings, also being killed with them. Total self-sacrificing and a high degree of professional ethic of the medical personnel in caring and even fighting for their wounded and sick regardless of the Army they belonged to are only a part of humanitarian principles which the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was developing and interweaving into the People's Liberation Movement. This unselfish and generous care for the wounded which was largely materialised through the Medical Service and its personnel also contributed to a high political and combat morale of the participants of the national liberation movement.

The edition contains the names of a large number of both Yugoslav and foreign doctors who in various ways participated and contributed to the development and successes of the Medical Service.

Writing of this history was strictly based on the historical documents and other materials of the Medical Service from the war period, with using also some other documents where it was necessary. Because of voluminousness of material and for a methodologically better presentations of events, the edition consists of four books. They differ thematically but as a whole they present a unity of the historical course and process of formation, development and work of the Medical Service of the People's Liberation War.

The first book is titled »The Medical Service at the Supreme Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments and in its directly subordinated units«. The introduction for the whole edition was written by the Academician Gojko Nikoliš, MD, Colonel General, who was the Surgeon General of the Medical Service from the beginning to the end of the war. For a better understanding of everything which was happening and written about the Medical Service, two introductory topics are presented. The first topic deals with the military-political aspect of the People's Liberation Movement, with an emphasis on the events which had significant impact on the development of the Medical Service. The second topic deals with health conditions in general in Yugoslavia before the beginning of World War II. By presenting the number and quality of the then existing medical personnel, hospitals and other facilities, one can get the idea of what the Medical Service developed from during the People's Liberation War, while by presenting the hygienic and epidemiological situation of the people on the eve of the war, it will be easier to understand the problems which were encountered by the Medical Service in the war, especially in epidemics of infectious diseases.

The description of the Medical Service of the Supreme Headquarters and subordinated units starts with the first problems with 1,500 wounded in Serbia in autumn of 1941, and with the killing of 126 immobile wounded at Zlatibor by the enemy. At the beginning of 1942, with formation of the first proletarian brigades, and thereafter also of divisions and corps, the Medical Service was organised in the regular units of the People's Liberation Army. There is also a description of the First Congress of the Partisan Doctors, held in Bosanski Petrovac in September 1942, and the first official »Statute of the Medical service« regulating position, organisation and tasks of the Medical Service from the company to division and corps levels. Further on are described two most difficult periods of the Medical Service in the battles at Neretva and Sutjeska. When the enemy started the offensive against the main forces of the People's Liberation Army in January 1943 there began evacuation of 4,500 wounded and sick (including 700 suffering from typhus fever). The overall length of directions used in this evacuation was 500 kilometres long. While the operative units fought "the battle for the wounded" in the vicinity of the Neretva river, the Medical Service fought against an epidemic of typhus fever which took the lives of more than a thousand partisans of the People's Liberation Army. In May and June 1943 the enemy succeeded in encircling a group of over 2,000 wounded and sick and mercilessly treated them. In the battle of Sutjeska 1,3000 wounded, 22 doctors, 8 medical students, 286 nurses and 27 male nurses were killed.

Important events in the history of the Medical Service were also the first contacts and cooperation with the armies of the Allies, the enemy airborne attack at Drvar on 25 May 1944, the battle for liberation of Belgrade in October 1944 and the work of the Medical Department of the Supreme Headquarters at the reorganisation of the Medical Service for waging the war in new conditions. After the formation of strong operative armies at the beginning of 1945 the Medical Service which was adapted mainly to partisan warfare should have been reorganised and prepared for large military forces and battles of frontal character. Strong medical units and facilities were formed both in divisions and operative armies, capable to treat a large number of wounded and sufficiently mobile to accompany their units. The first book deals with the description of one of the greatest endeavours of the Medical Service during the war - the evacuation of 27,000 wounded and sick by ships and allied aircraft to Italy for medical treatment. In a separate chapter was described the medical support of operations of four operative armies in the last months of war in 1945. In the period of offensive operations for definite liberation of Yugoslavia the Medical Service of the four armies treated over 72,000 wounded and sick.

The second and the third books describe the Medical Service in individual regions of Yugoslavia. Each of these regions had its specificity in development and work of the Medical Service, reflecting the specific development and course of combat operations therein. Larger attention was paid to the Medical Service in partisan detachments, to formation and work of various types of territorial partisan hospitals and medical support of combat operations of military units which were under the command of main headquarters of these regions. During the war were formed 573 partisan territorial hospitals and in May 1945 the Yugoslav Army had hospitals with 62,828 beds. The second book describes the events in territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Macedonia while the third book deals with Slovenia, Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo and Metohia.

The fourth and largest book represents a sui generis summary of experiences obtained in the most important activities of the Medical Service. The key chapters are »Evacuation and Medical Treatment«, »Preventive Medical Protection«, and »Medical Supplies«. Problems and great complexity of protection of the wounded in war environment were separately considered, particularly in relation to cruel measures of the occupiers and their quislings against the wounded and medical personal of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army. One of the permanent problems of the Medical service was the training of medical personnel. Because of that a special chapter deals with courses and schools organised under the most difficult war conditions where medical personnel was educated and trained. The Medical Service published about 336 various publications (books, journals, manuals, newspapers) in war, on which a separate account is being written. The fourth book contains several important appendices which are of a special value to this addition. The first appendix contains a list of 5,483 doctors, pharmacists, students of medicine and pharmacy, members of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army. The second one lists the names and basic data of 555 doctors, pharmacists, students of medicine and pharmacy who lost their lives in units of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army. The third one contains a list of 3,719 nurses who were killed, of whom 1,950 were between 13 and 20 years old. The pitals in the period from 1941 to 1945 and the summarised chronological presentation of events which exerted significant influence on the development of the Medical Service during the entire period of the war.

At the end of each book can be found bibliographical data of the used literature, sources of information, index of personal names, geographical features and military units.