

Past imperfect continuous: remembering Serbia's 1915 retreat one hundred years later

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Remembering Serbia's 1915 Retreat One Hundred Years Later

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I was six years old when I first heard of *the Retreat*. Aleksa Petrović, a Salonika veteran, was a friend of the family. He wore medals and had studied in France after the First World War — the most ardent Francophile I remember meeting outside my own family.

My paternal grandmother's father Vlajko Velikić was a reservist, married with three children when the war started. He was lucky to return after the war — I have his name tag. My maternal grandfather's father, Miloš Nikić, left his wife Jelena and their four children behind when he was mobilised in 1914, also as a reservist. My grandfather, Ljubiša Nikić, lost his father at the age of 10, when Miloš died in Albania.

Some came back and some did not. I would have liked to dedicate this work to them all.

However, if there is anything I have understood in this research is that past can make fools of us all, if we let it. The future matters so much more than the past.

Marini i Lari, mojim ćerkama.

To Marina and Lara, my daughters.

A.T.