

ON NOTABLE BOOKS IN OUR HISTORY



A miraculous book with intriguing title, *Naranče i mrtve ribe* (Oranges and Dead Fish), in fact a title of one of the stories, one of the sections, written by Mirna Šitum, Professor and head of our Clinical Department of Dermatovenereology, was published by Naklada Slap, in their book series *Dokumenti vremena* (Time Documents) in 2004. Professor Šitum brings her memories of the war in Croatia through twenty-two stories followed by a professional section *Dermatologija u ratu* (Dermatology in War) as a professional review, however, describing and presenting people, not just diagnoses. The diagnoses and professional notes are added to better explain particular situations in the war, the injuries inflicted to both body and soul; in each story, the readers will first see the human being,

the man or woman showing their great bravery but also their mental sensitivity and weaknesses. Professor Šitum describes, without undue sentimentality, all these ordinary people she encountered during the war, who suddenly turned to mythical heroes. Compassion and closeness to these people, care for their physical health, as well as for their mental recovery are nicely elaborated in the introductory section entitled *Nedirnuta sjećanja* (Intact Memories): “Our night-and-day presence in their lives and living their lives radiated a spirit of trust and safety”¹.

Now, ten years after appearance of the book, when reading it again, just like those reading it for the first time, we are astonished realizing that, overwhelmed by the presence, we have for a while forgotten the war past, just as we use to forget the past in general. So, a hundred years have elapsed since World War I, in which many physicians from our Hospital took part, investing all their efforts to treat and save many wounded, and wrote about it in professional periodicals and books.

Unfortunately, the tradition of war writings is continuing in medical circles. Professor Šitum has described very successfully the last war, the wounded and the physicians as heroes persistently and miraculously surviving the horrible reality of war. Her records warn us that unfortunately, wars break out over and over; however, she is very convincing assuring us that “a war harder than war”, to establish trust in people and their humanity, has been won.

Tanja Sušec

Reference

1. ŠITUM M. *Naranče i mrtve ribe*. Zagreb: Naklada Slap, 2004;11. (in Croatian)