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## THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION IN THE LIGHT OF THE DOCUMENTS OF THE SERBIAN DIPLOMACY 1903–1914

**ABSTRACT** In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Macedonia became the focus of the political activity of the Balkan states, interested in partitioning this Turkish territory. From the Serbian perspective, Bulgaria emerged as the main rival of Serbia, its aspirations to the Macedonian territory rooted in Bulgarian national mythology. Hence the Bulgarian government's actions and activities were closely watched by Serbian diplomats. They viewed Bulgarian politics as a complex, ambiguous game. The Bulgarians simultaneously made preparations for a war with Turkey and tried to keep the appearances of friendly relations with Turkey and Bulgaria's neighbors: Serbia and Greece. Initially, Bulgaria intended to incorporate the whole of Macedonia but soon realized its own weakness and the determination of its neighbors. Thus, the Bulgarian prime minister made an offer to Serbia, proposing an alliance and participation in the partition of Macedonia of whose territory Bulgaria would get a bigger share. Serbia did not want to accept this offer but at the same time it was afraid of the hostile reaction of Austro-Hungary to its own aspirations, involving even Austro-Hungary entering into some secret alliance with Bulgaria. Consequently, Serbian politicians decided to seek a compromise. An analysis of Serbian diplomatic documents has shown that from 1911 a slow process continued of Bulgaria and Serbia coming to the conclusion that a consent concerning the future of Macedonia had to be reached but there was no agreement as how to divide up the Macedonian territory between the two sides. Arguments continued on how to define the Serbian and Bulgarian zones, the demarcation line, etc. Each side formulated its boundary conditions and there was little progress in negotiations. In the end, the prospective Serbian and Bulgarian zones were defined and also the so-called "disputed territory" whose

status would be decided through arbitration by the Tsar of Russia. However, Bulgaria and Serbia remained deeply distrustful of one another and the course of the first Balkan War in 1912 would soon demonstrate that Bulgaria, Serbia, and also Greece had each an intention to incorporate the largest possible part of Macedonian territory with no regard for any earlier treaties.

**Key-words:** Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, diplomacy, international relations, conflict

The 1903 coup in Serbia effected major political changes which understandably influenced the country's foreign policy. The treaty with Austro-Hungary concluded by King Milan in 1881 had already focused Serbia's attention on Macedonia as one of the principal areas of its potential territorial expansion. Of course, Kosovo, that is the so-called Old Serbia, remained the primary focus of Serbia's interest but from there further expansion was envisioned towards Macedonia and then the Aegean Sea and the port of Thessaloniki. The tension in Macedonia continuing from the late 19<sup>th</sup> c. concerned its neighbouring states: Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, which were still in the process of establishing their own borders. Thus, the Mürzsteg reforms imposed in 1903 were presumably to help the Christian population in Macedonia but this was not the primary political objective of the aforementioned states. Rather, they saw the reforms in the context of their own potential expansion validated by their claimed historic and ethnic rights.

While maintaining the appearance of disengagement, the governments of the neighbouring states tried to influence the situation in Macedonia. Documents produced by Serbian diplomats show their keen interest in the actions of Bulgaria and distrust of Bulgarian declarations denying any interference in the area. In the correspondence of 17 August 1903, Božko Čolak-Antić, the Serbian ambassador in Sophia, analyzes the policy statement of the Bulgarian prime minister which contained references to Macedonia. He asserts that the government's position does not reflect the actual situation in Macedonia because it does not mention the involvement of the Bulgarian government and military personnel in enticing insurgency. At the same time he notes that the insurgents and their supporters commit acts of extreme cruelty. There is no doubt – he writes – that the peacefully-minded Muslim population suffered a lot during St. Elias's insurgency. On the other hand, he insists, there is evidence that on many occasions peasants have been forced to help the partisans (*komites*).<sup>1</sup> The document clearly shows that the Serbian ambassador does not believe in the declarations of the Bulgarian authorities. This distrust will also accompany Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations in the years to come.

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<sup>1</sup> *Документи о спољној политици Краљевине Србије 1903–1914*, Vol. 1, P. 1: 29 maj/11 jun 1903 – 14/27 februar 1904, Београд 1991, pp. 314-315.

Serbian diplomats become increasingly convinced that Bulgaria is interested not in the reforms in Macedonia but in fuelling the state of permanent unrest. Sava Gruić, the Serbian ambassador in Istanbul, expresses the same opinion concerning Bulgarian intentions. His sources in the Turkish governments as well as European diplomats in Istanbul that he talked to maintained that Bulgaria's objective was to gain autonomy for Macedonia as a separate province and not the reforming of the *Vilayet* system.<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that Macedonia was not a separate territorial unit but Macedonian territory was split into several *Vilayets*. In Bulgarian plans, Macedonian territories would be integrated and given autonomy, paving the way for the future annexation of Macedonia by Bulgaria, repeating the scenario of Eastern Rumelia's unification with the Principality of Bulgaria in 1885.<sup>3</sup> Serbia, on the other hand, supported the reforms in Macedonia because Serbian attention at this time was focused on Kosovo and from this perspective Macedonia was seen as an important factor in its economic development (the port in Thessaloniki).

In a cable dated 26 September 1903, Čolak-Antić, the Serbian ambassador in Sophia, worries about the talks going on between the Sultan and Bulgarian authorities about calming down the rebelling Turkish provinces. Allegedly, there were plans to establish the Turkish-Bulgarian consultative council to deal with current issues in which the Bulgarians would have a majority. It seems to me – he writes – that the Sultan perceives the Principality of Bulgaria as the official representative of “rebelling Macedonians.” (It is worthy of note that in this documents the term “Macedonians” is used for the first time as an ethnic category contrary to the official Serbian propaganda). Such talks were officially denied because the Sultan had already declared the plan for establishing a multilateral consultative council in which all interested nationalities would be represented. It would be made up of five members representing the Turks, Serbians, Bulgarians, Vlachs, and Greeks. The Bulgarians opposed the plan arguing that the Bulgarian representative would be opposed by the remaining four members.<sup>4</sup>

An interesting document was dispatched to Serbia's Foreign Ministry from Athens on 9 February 1904. Obviously, in the aftermath of St. Elias's insurgency (1903), the future of Macedonia was a hotly debated issue. Of the many opinions voiced on the subject, the Serbian ambassador in Greece J.F. Hrستیć singles out one reflecting its emerging new ideological dimension. He is adamant about the publication by one Kazazis, professor at the University of Athens, titled *L'Hellénisme et la Macédoine*, in which the author argues that the Greeks are the only heirs to ancient Macedonia. This policy, Hrستیć insists, serves the “pragmatic Bulgarians” and the Greeks have apparently – as he puts it – “lost the compass” and turned chauvinistic: they hate the Bulgarians, they do not want us, and they are motivated by the fear of the Slavonic element.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 417.

<sup>3</sup> М. Војводић, *Србија у међународним односима крајем XIX и почетком XX века*, Београд 1988, p. 437.

<sup>4</sup> *Документи...*, Vol. 1, P. 1, pp. 504-505.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 916-917.

After several years of peace in Macedonia, the Bulgarian *komites*, disenchanted with the Young Turks' regime, renewed their fight in 1910. Having consolidated their grip on the central government, the Young Turks did not fulfil their earlier promises of reforms and granting equal status to all ethnic groups. Beginning from early 1911, the tension in and around Macedonia increased enough for the Serbian government to revise its strategy. Serbia concentrated on several political fronts connected to the Macedonian issue. One of them was the activity of Montenegro. According to the Serbian consul in Skopje M. Jovanović, Montenegro did not constitute a threat to Macedonia but its territorial aspirations reached Šar Planina, that is the area of Macedonia, and thus its actions must concern Serbia. More importantly, Bulgaria tries to use Montenegro to start a war with Turkey and is even ready to pay Montenegro for it. Bulgaria wants to maintain a state of unrest in the region and presses for resolution by force. The Serbian diplomat cables that under the auspices of the Bulgarian ambassador in Montenegro's capital Cetinje Bulgarian agents have been penetrating into northern Albania from January 1911 and encouraged Albanian resistance. The Montenegro government does not mind this action as Bulgaria and Montenegro are the only states whose interests in Macedonia are not conflicting. The Serbian consul accuses Montenegro of egoism and lack of understanding and support of Serbian aspirations in Macedonia. Jovanović regards Montenegro's appetite for territories in Old Serbia (Šar Planina) as a "siren's song" inspired by the bygone Principality of Zeta.<sup>6</sup>

The position of Russia was of key importance for Serbia's territorial aspirations in Macedonia. In January 1911 the Serbian ambassador in St. Petersburg Dimitrje Popović talked to Russian Foreign Minister Sergiey Sazonov to probe for Russia's position on the rivalry between Serbia and Bulgaria in Macedonia but he received no declaration of support. His interlocutor maintained that, contrary to Popović's accusations, the Bulgarian government was not helping the *komites* and that Jan Sandanski, an independent figure and no friend to King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, would anyway do as he pleased.<sup>7</sup> The Serbian consul in Bitola conducted a similar conversation with the Russian consul who had also been informed of the involvement of Bulgarian *komites* in Macedonia and likewise found the reaction of the Russian diplomat unsatisfactorily vague.<sup>8</sup>

A very interesting document was dispatched in March 1911 from the Bulgarian capital. The secretary of the Serbian embassyin Sophia Milan D. Milojević's note relates his conversation with Bulgarian Prime Minister Alexander Malinov regarding the situation in Macedonia. Malinov is unexpectedly candid and clear about the situation of both states. He denies that Bulgaria is supporting the *komites* re-activated in Macedonia. Had the Bulgarian government placed any hopes in the Macedonian insurgency, "we would not be sending out small *Chetas* 5 or 6 people strong but units of three-four hundred soldiers."<sup>9</sup> This statement perhaps sheds new light on the ques-

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Vol. 4, P. 3/1: 1/14 januar – 31 mart/13 april 1911, Београд 2009, pp. 174-175.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 491.

tion of the actual Bulgarian involvement in the Macedonian insurgency movement. Bulgaria's military potential would indeed make it possible to send units of 500 troops had the Bulgarian government decided to do so. Then the conversation's focus turns towards negotiation. Clearly irritated, Malinov observes that the Balkan states are being advised by everybody around to be peacefully minded. The great powers have been propagated the *status quo* in the Balkans for a long time but have never ceased to act against it. "We have to rely on ourselves" – insists Malinov. At this point, he encourages the Serbian diplomat: "You should prepare your army." The Bulgarian prime minister follows to say that Serbia has already accomplished a lot to be well prepared and that "this should be the base for our cooperation." Milojević observes that Malinov was very sincere in his praise of the Serbian army and comments that the entire conversation indicates, to some extent at least, the crisis of the hitherto dominating idea of "The Balkans for Bulgaria." This is the first conversation in which the leader of the Serbia-phobic Democratic Party begins to accept the idea of collaborating with the Serbs.<sup>10</sup>

And thus, after attempting other solutions (insurgencies, Chetnik movement, etc.), Bulgaria opts for a military solution in alliance with Serbia. Politically and strategically, the two states have no other option but to work together. Here for the first time Prime Minister Malinov so straightforwardly proposes preparations for the war and partition of Macedonia. On the other hand, Bulgaria has often albeit directly communicated that it is not supporting any compromise concerning the problem of Macedonia and the implementation of reforms could only delay or prevent reaching Bulgaria's true objective – the annexation of Macedonia. The Bulgarians have supported the idea of autonomous Macedonia to preserve its territorial integrity, weaken the Turkish influence and repeat the scenario of Eastern Rumelia.

At the same time, in a cable sent on 23 March 1911, Živojin Balugčić, the Serbian consul in Thessaloniki informs the Foreign Ministry in Belgrade that the Bulgarian element in Macedonia has entered a new phase "with its organisation." The Bulgarians try to call up former revolutionaries and new resolutions have been issued proclaiming the mobilization of people and arms but the Chetnik movement has already died out, the people live in constant fear and are not pleased with this "coxcombry" and excursions of the revolutionaries from Sophia.<sup>11</sup> This would confirm Malinov's declaration of Bulgaria's disengagement from the insurgency movement in Macedonia.

In Spring 1911, the new Bulgarian government under Ivan Geshov re-evaluates the nation's policy towards Bulgaria. In June, he calls up the Great National Assembly to change Article 17 of the Bulgarian constitution to allow King Ferdinand to conclude secret international treaties without the Assembly's mandate. The new government's position on the Macedonian issue gets more resolute but not necessarily more clear. The Bulgarian diplomacy undertakes action on various fronts. Documents dispatched from the Serbian embassy in Sophia indicate that the Bulgarians were closely following the developments in Turkey and were ready to wage war had the situation in Turkey

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 492.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 548-549.

under the Young Turks turned into chaos. In their opinion, the situation had already reached the critical phase.<sup>12</sup> In the correspondence sent by the new Serbian ambassador in Sophia Mirosław Spaljaković on 27 July 1911, he informs about the secret alliances allegedly concluded between Bulgaria on the one hand and Austro-Hungary and Bulgaria and Russia on the other. According to Georgi Fitchew, brother of the Bulgarian chief of staff, to whom Spaljaković talked, the agreement with Austro-Hungary had already been reached seven years earlier. Vienna had allegedly promised Bulgaria the north-eastern side of Vardar as well as Dedeagach, Kavala, and Seres. Moreover, Bulgaria had allegedly come to an agreement with Russia stipulating that Bulgaria would let the Russians establish their navy bases in Varna and Burgas and Russia in exchange would guarantee the incorporation of Macedonia to Bulgaria.<sup>13</sup> In the case of the alleged agreement between Bulgaria and Austro-Hungary, there was certainly an over-interpretation of the contacts between the two states getting closer in the context of King Ferdinand's efforts to be awarded the Golden Fleece by the House of Habsburg.<sup>14</sup>

Serbian diplomatic documents reflect their authors' view of Bulgaria's Macedonian policy as a complex and ambiguous game. On the one hand, the Bulgarians try to get ready for open conflict with Turkey over Macedonia and, on the other hand, to maintain the appearance of friendly relations with Turkey. At the same time, Prime Minister Geshov attempts to make Turkey responsible for any tensions arising in relations between the two states.<sup>15</sup> Geshov also denies the existence of any agreement with Austro-Hungary and even accuses Vienna of supporting the Albanians. At this time, the fear was already rising that Austro-Hungary at the expense of the Balkan states, primarily the Slavonic ones, would attempt to create Great Albania of Old Serbia, Macedonia and Epirus as a powerful anti-Slavonic force.<sup>16</sup>

A testimony to the rapprochement with Serbia over the perceived need to speed up the solving of the Macedonian problem is the conversation between Bulgarian ambassador in Rome D. Rizov and Serbian Foreign Minister Milovan Milovanović on 20–21 September 1911 recorded in a note made by Milovanović. Without any formal introduction, Rizov explains that he has been entrusted by the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry with the mission to negotiate an alliance between Bulgaria and Serbia with the problem of Macedonia as the key issue. "From the Bulgarian perspective, the matter seems very urgent indeed" – notes Milovanović. In this conversation, the Bulgarian side for the first time voices an opinion about the stipulated Serbian annexations in Macedonia acknowledging Serbia's right to incorporate the territories south of Šar Planina including Skopje. Milovanović also notes the abandonment by the Bulgarians of the hitherto cultivated dogma of Macedonia's territorial integrity and Bulgaria's exclusive claim. Rizov, on the other hand, has been given precise instructions regarding the purport-

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Vol. 4, P. 4/1: *1/14 jula – 30 septembra/13 oktobra 1911*, Београд 2009, p. 344.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 371.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 380-383.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 368.



ed borderline. He simultaneously confirms that he has already discussed the potential borderline with Prime Minister Nikola Pašić whose stand has been confirmed in proposing the future borderline moved further southwards with Veleš, Prilep, Kičevo and Poreč also incorporated into Serbia. Milovanović replies that arriving at a compromise is more important than maintaining stiff positions on the issue, especially that reaching an agreement between Bulgaria and Serbia would be a “historic and momentous breakthrough.” At the same time he suggests leaving the final decision concerning the respective spheres of influence in Macedonia to the arbitration of the Tsar of Russia. Rizov and Milovanović also exchange views on other conceptions of the borderline but in the end reach no conclusion.<sup>17</sup>

From the Bulgarian perspective, reaching an agreement with Serbia was very important but this does not imply the uniformity of the Bulgarian stand on the issue. King Ferdinand did not entirely abandon the idea of some treaty with Austro-Hungary while Prime Minister Geshov and Foreign Minister Todor Todorov regarded an alliance with Serbia as the primary objective. Talking to Spaljaković in October 1911, Todorov declares that the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance is the only option for both Serbia and Bulgaria and that “we are of the same blood and thus we have to share in the good and bad and we have to live and die together.”<sup>18</sup> Foreign Minister Milovanović’s note dated 7 October 1911 concerns not only a political agreement between the two states but a military alliance – which has always been at stake – but both sides avoid defining their alliance in such terms. It is to be an unconditional defensive alliance and an offensive alliance against Turkey with the specified objective of liberating Old Serbia, Macedonia and Thrace. A new border established between the two states would separate their respective new annexations. Bulgaria acknowledges Serbia’s claim to the Vilayet of Kosovo north of Šar Planina and the Vilayet of Skadar while Serbia acknowledges Bulgaria’s right to the Edirne Vilayet. With regard to the Vilayet of Kosovo south of Šar Planina and the Vilayets of Bitola and Thessaloniki, the sides agree to accept the arbitration of the Tsar of Russia in case if they proved unable to resolve any future disputes between themselves.<sup>19</sup>

The following phase of the negotiations took place between Serbia’s Foreign Minister Milovanović and Bulgarian Prime Minister Geshov on the train from Belgrade to Lapovo (the latter was returning from Vienna) on 11 October 1911. No details were settled concerning the alliance over Macedonia but the note left by Milovanović suggests that both parties shared the view that Austro-Hungary reaching for the Aegean Sea and the port of Thessaloniki might eventually emerge as the principal rival in the fight for Macedonian territories.<sup>20</sup> These worries were confirmed in the lengthy analysis of the situation in Macedonia following the rekindling of terrorist actions and several bomb attacks sent by the Serbian consul in Thessaloniki Ž. Balugčić on 5 December

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 886-888.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 931-932.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 940-941.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 943-944.

1911. In addition to remarks on explosions etc., he assesses that there are increasingly clear signals indicating the Austro-Hungarian backing behind the increased activity of Bulgarian *Chetas*.<sup>21</sup>

Considering Austro-Hungary's political objectives, such suspicions do not seem groundless. The destabilization of Macedonia might have served the interests of Bulgaria or Austro-Hungary or both and King Ferdinand was doubtless keen on collaborating with Vienna. Balugčić's suspicions were reinforced by the Russian ambassador, N.W. Charikov, who in conversation with the Serbian ambassador in Istanbul agreed with the latter's assessment that the terrorist attacks in Macedonia had been inspired by the "Kriegspartei" in Vienna.<sup>22</sup>

Even if such suspicions were groundless, they doubtless increased Serbia's determination to reach an agreement with Bulgaria because both states had coinciding interests and Bulgaria's military and political potential made it uniquely suitable for the role of a strong ally, an essential accessory Serbia needed to attain its political goals. Neither the weak Montenegro with its particular interests nor Greece, whose interests were even more particular, could viably be cast in this role.

There were, however, lingering doubts about the sincerity of Bulgaria's position. While the Bulgarian government denied any involvement in the actions of Bulgarian *Chetas* in Macedonia, it was still possible that the circles close to King Ferdinand might have been involved as part of the king's complex game with Vienna. The number of diversity of sources mentioning such secret collaboration with Austro-Hungary seem hardly accidental.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time the Serbian documents reveal the difference of opinion regarding the partition of Macedonia between Prime Minister Pasić and Foreign Minister Milovanović. The latter's note dated 29 December 1911 concerns the Serbian government's debate on the issue. Generally, Milovanović was ready to accept the Bulgarian proposal for Serbia to gain certain territories south of Šar Planina, including Ovče Polje as a site of enormous strategic importance.<sup>24</sup> At the same time he would consent to Bulgarian claims to Kriva Palanka and Kratovo because of their location very close to the Bulgarian border and their role as principal bases of Bulgarian activity in Macedonia. Moreover, both towns had predominantly Bulgarian tradition and likewise their population was predominantly Bulgarian.<sup>25</sup> To Prime Minister Pasić, the Bulgarian proposal was unacceptable – he demanded much more. Pasić did not understand anything – writes Milovanović – and he insisted that he could not consent to the "amputation" of the Serbian nation, to relinquish the unquestionably Serbian territories to the Bulgarians. Milovanović argued that Serbia had to accept some Bulgarian demands because it would have been unwise to wage war on two fronts – against Austro-

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Vol. 4, P. 4/2: 1/14 oktobra 1912 – 31 decembra/13 januara 1912, Београд 2009, p. 1285.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 1296.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 1328.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 1437-1438.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 1438.



-Hungary and Bulgaria. Arguing for a compromise over the partitioning of Macedonia, he pointed to the lack of alternative to the agreement with Bulgaria and insisted on the need to consider both nations' interests. Facing the Austro-Hungarian pressure, Montenegro's ambitions, Albanian sentiments and the Serbian vision of expansion to Kosovo, he was afraid that some new, dramatic crisis might start the Albanian revolution with Montenegro's involvement providing Austro-Hungary with a convenient pretext to occupy Sandžak. Without Bulgaria's backing, Serbia would not be in the position to counteract. Milovanović feared that the lack of agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria would push Bulgaria closer to Austro-Hungary, with dire consequences for Serbia. But Pasić remained unmoved. Milovanović told the prime minister that he did not want to be responsible for breaking the talks with Bulgaria since he regarded the alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria as "the foundation of our future as an independent nation."<sup>26</sup>

In February 1912, Milovanović recapitulates the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations regarding the partition of Macedonia and location of the future border. Worthy of note in this lengthy document is what he adds to his earlier comments on the issue. Firstly, as a result of multilateral talks Bulgaria has consented to renounce the provisions of the San Stefano Peace Treaty. Secondly, Bulgaria has dropped the idea of granting autonomy to Macedonia to which Serbia has been vehemently opposed, fearing it might incite the revolution (like in Eastern Rumelia) and because the new Albanian insurgency may lead to the Albanians demanding autonomy as well and consequently the territories in Macedonia with the predominantly Albanian population would be incorporated into in the newly-established Albanian Autonomy. Thirdly, in Fall 1911, the Bulgarians has consented that the Serbian claim to the Macedonian territory south of Šar Planina should be satisfied. Fourthly, yet another factor conducive to the Serbo-Bulgarian rapprochement have been the suspicions that Austro-Hungary strives to expand towards the Aegean Sea and the port of Thessaloniki through Sandžak, Kosovo and Macedonia, and this would have been be a disaster for both Bulgaria and Serbia. Nevertheless, the lengthy negotiations (lasting for almost a year) have helped to bring the positions of Serbia and Bulgaria much closer<sup>27</sup>. Serbia is also suspicious about the policy of King Ferdinand aimed to drag Austro-Hungary into the problem of Macedonia but – Milovanović writes – our distrust of the king should not deter us from concluding the treaty with Bulgaria because we neither want nor can afford to reject it.<sup>28</sup>

The Serbo-Bulgarian treaty is finally concluded on 13 March 1912 as a necessary step in preparing for war with Turkey over, among other issues, Macedonia and Thrace. By the summer, as the Albanian revolt against Turkey intensifies, so does the activity of *Chetas* in Macedonia. But, as Serbian diplomats in Bulgaria inform it has not reached its former scale and publicity. Bomb attacks usually result in broken glass and rarely in accidental human casualties, this lack of effectiveness reflecting the dwindling support of

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 1441.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 1485-1488.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 1510.

the local population, exhausted with continuous fighting, for such actions. Moreover, there have been many conflicts and divisions within local revolutionary committees.<sup>29</sup> Terrorist attacks and the activity of both Bulgarian and few Serbian *Chetas* test the agreement between the two states. Through the Serbian ambassador in Sophia, Prime Minister Geshov appeals to the government in Belgrade for mutual tolerance, stopping terrorist attacks and hostile propaganda. At this time, his principal objective is to prevent the insurgency in Macedonia. Perhaps Geshov's recurrent references to this subject reflect his real fear that the revolutionaries and *Chetas* in Macedonia are not under the control of the Bulgarian government and while the government and army are preparing for a great war with Turkey their random actions could harm the whole operation. Geshov's has several reasons for his concern. Sophia expects that by the fall the Italians will not have concluded a peace agreement following the Italian attack on Tripoli, which would keep the issue on the burner, and thus they would be interested in some collective action. Moreover, the elections to the Russian Duma have been scheduled for September 1912. Geshov has information that the situation in Russia is uncertain and Russia's support may be of key importance for the success in the war with Turkey and future peace negotiations.<sup>30</sup> Geshov is grateful to Serbia's foreign minister for his efforts to prevent incidents in Macedonia.<sup>31</sup>

Still, the Serbs are suspicious about Bulgaria's sincerity. The Serbian ambassador in Sophia Spaljaković in his correspondence dated 14 August 1912 recapitulates the Bulgarian policy over the recent period and finds it absolutely insincere. In his opinion, various revolutionary organizations as well as some forces in the government, particularly the rightist supporters of Stambolov, try to provoke the Bulgarian intervention in Macedonia as soon as possible with the intention of it leading to a war with Turkey. Despite repeated denials of the Bulgarian government of supporting the activity of *Chetas* in Macedonia, he sends many cables to Belgrade questioning the sincerity of Bulgarian declarations.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, fears resurface that Bulgaria might return to the idea of autonomy for Macedonia in case it cannot expand its own territory through war.<sup>33</sup> The Bulgarian government's denials<sup>34</sup> do not completely succeed to quell the doubts of Serbian politicians.

The First Balkan War started in 1912. Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro attacked Turkey in order to partition Turkey's territories in Europe, first of all Macedonia but also Thrace, Epirus and Albania. After quickly overwhelming the Turkish army, Serbia and Greece took over almost entire Macedonia and Bulgaria got only a small

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Vol. 5, P. 2: 15/28 jula – 4/17 oktobra 1912, Београд 1985, p. 196.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 258-260.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 403.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Correspondence of Serbianenvoy in Vienna Đ.S. Simić of 19 September 1912, p. 637. Rumours of Bulgaria's return to the idea of Macedonian autonomy were also denied by Bulgarian ambassador in Belgrade A. Toszew (document dated 22 September). Ibid., p. 655.

sliver in eastern Macedonia. A heated dispute ensued because the Bulgarians got even less than they had guaranteed in the treaty with Serbia. The Serbs, however, argued that Bulgaria had not participated in the Macedonian campaign and the liberation of Macedonia. Bulgaria had concentrated almost all its forces in eastern Thrace attacking Edirne and the Chataldzha line and pressed for Istanbul, convinced that their interests had been secured by the treaty with Serbia. They were wrong.

By mid-May 1913, it seemed that the only solution to the dispute between Serbia and Bulgaria over the partition of Macedonia would be the Russian arbitration based on the 1912 treaty but already in March the Serbian government had officially proposed its revision. Prime Minister Pasić thought it was necessary because the situation was diametrically different from that in which the bilateral agreement had been concluded. He argued that Bulgaria had declared to send an army of 100 000 against the Turkish forces in Macedonia but in the end it had dispatched only the 7<sup>th</sup> Rila Division (24 000 men). As a result, the majority of Macedonian territory in the so-called disputed zone and in the Bulgarian zone had been liberated by the Serbs who had fought bloody battles of Kumanov, Prilep, and Monastir. Moreover, Serbia had assisted Bulgaria beyond the provisions of the treaty of March 1912 by taking part in the siege of Edirne with artillery units and an army of 50 000 men. Pasić's final argument was that "Macedonian Slavs are as much Serbs as Bulgarians."<sup>35</sup>

Determined to maintain the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance, Russia showed great reserve concerning the revision of the treaty of 1912. By mid-May 1913, the Bulgarian government approached Russia asking for arbitration. Prime Minister Geshov was willing to resolve to arbitration while the opposition leader Stoian Danew was basically against it. However, also in Geshov's view, the Russian arbitration might only apply to the so-called disputed zone and not to the remainder of Macedonia.<sup>36</sup> The Bulgarian's expected assistance from the Tsar. Minister Sazonov consented on the condition of maintaining the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance. The Russians were afraid that any decision would be unsatisfactory to one side or the other harming Russia's position.

To Bulgaria's call for arbitration, Serbia reacted with an official document dated 25 May 1913 in which it repeated the demand for revising the provisions of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty and presented its arguments in a 10-page long diplomatic note analyzing the treaty's provision and the course and consequences of the war with Turkey. The arguments echoed those already presented in the Serbian government's statement issued in March.<sup>37</sup> The diplomacy, having proved futile, military action remained the only option. Paradoxically, in June 1913 a pre-emptive attack was directed against Bulgaria by Serbia and Greece and so the Second Balkan War began. It would end with the Peace of Bucharest in August 1913 confirming the partition of Macedonia essentially between Serbia and Greece – something that the Bulgarian public opinion and historiography would call the first national catastrophe.

<sup>35</sup> *Документи...*, Vol. 6, P. 1: 1/14 januar – 31 mart/13 april 1913, Београд, pp. 347-348.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, P. 2: 1/14 april – 30 jun/13 juli 1913, Београд 1981, pp. 284-285.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 331-339.

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