

Serbian - Bulgarian Alliance for the Occupation of the Albanian Lands**History**

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Abstract

In the beginning of the second decade of the XX century, the Ottoman Empire was immersed in a quite difficult situation. The following situation incited Serbia and Bulgaria to consider on what they could gain upon backtrack of the centuries long invader from the European lands. Serbia was interested to find a common ground with Bulgaria to attain territories upon the expulsion of Turkey from Europe. Both parties were interested to fight Turkey and annex the occupied lands. In order not to be at any variance in the future, it was priority decided to separate lands on mutual agreement. Serbian and Bulgarian parties agreed to strike a common bargain, which at the core had the protection of the alliance and mutual guarantee of the territorial integrity. The article II emphasizes: “Serbia recognizes the right of Bulgaria over the territories in the east of Rodopeve and the river Strum, while Bulgaria recognizes the right of Serbia over the territories in the north and in the east of Sharr Mountains. Concerning the territories among SharrMountains, Rodop, Archipelagoes and the Oher Lake, in case both parties shall state that in those territories the special autonomy shall not be possible, having into regard the Serb population interests as well as those of Bulgarian ... shall be acted based on the following statements: Serbia is obliged to not request anything beyond the noted line on the attached map which starts from the Turkish-Bulgarian border with Maja e Golemit (in the north of KrivaPallanka) and extending generally towards south-west up to the Oher lake , by passing across the hilltop of Kitka.

On 3rd and 4th of October, the negotiation between the Serb and Bulgarian parties on the common war against Ottoman Empire and on the previous separation of their European territories started. Serbian party was represented not only by MillovanMillovanoviq but also by NikollaPashiq, who were notified on behalf of the King of the Bulgarian government, that the Serb – Bulgarian agreement shall occur and that Bulgaria shall withdraw from the idea for the autonomy of Macedonia, whilst shall recognize the right of Serbia in the part of Macedonia, in the south of SharrMountain and Skopje. According to Rizov this separation limits territorial claims of both states.

Obviously, both parties had territorial claims. These claims were laid down in such a way to please the zests of both parties. The following was foreseen: the lands in the north and west of Sharr Mountain, Vilajet of Kosovo and Sanxhak of Novi Pazar, shall be attached to Serbia, while areas in the east of Rodop and Struma River shall be taken by Bulgaria. The intermediate provinces of Macedonia “laid among Sharr Mountain and those of Rodop, Aegean Sea and Ohrid Lake, which shall possibly form an autonomous province according to common interests of Bulgarian and Serbian nations.

Nonetheless, if such an organization seems to be impossible for both parties, then this part would be separated in the following way: Bulgaria would take the province of Oher, Serbia would take another piece of land in the upper Macedonia, while the remaining part would be divided subject to an arbitrary decision of the Russian Tsar”⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ A. Puto, Pavaresia shqiptare dhe diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha 1912-1914..., f.75.

Serb and Bulgarian parties agreed unsparingly on the establishment of the Alliance between themselves. Millovanović thought that in case of taking over those parts of Macedonia, Serbia would be able to “... ensure influence in Albania and the connecting road for exit into Adriatic...”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the issue of demarcation between Serbia and Bulgaria had not come up to an end yet. Bulgarian representative, pointed out that Bulgaria shall not agree to renounce from the cities of Veles and Prilep. Upon the development of diplomatic negotiations, it was reached an agreement that Russia shall decide on border issues. Serbia was pleased by such proposal, being sure that Russia shall hold her arms.

Rizov, the Bulgarian diplomat, on the eyes of Serbian representatives, was seen as a skillful and cunning man, hence they feared his traps. Although Rizov was skillful and cunning, yet, Millovanović exceeded him in this aspect. “In order to secure the support of Bulgaria and in case of conflict with Austria – Hungary, he said to Rizov that Vienna was supporting Albania on autonomy. In that case Albania shall gain autonomy, and would take not only Old Serbia but also 1/3 of Macedonia”⁶⁷.

Millovanović from the Serbian party and Geshov from the Bulgarian party, both functioning as presidents of their governments, with great diligence they dealt with the case of pretended lands to annex them in the future. They both agreed for signing an agreement for bilateral interests. Territories which would be annexed by their side are foreseen on the agreement. The majority of Balkan territories, which were under the occupation of the Ottoman Empire, were inhabited mainly from the Albanians. While the other part with Macedonian population. As foreseen on the agreement, in order to be accepted by both parties, the border line was defined. Serbia would be allowed to take Kosovo “The old Serbia”, Skopje up to the Oher Lake, northern part of Sharr Mountains and all other Albanian areas up to Kumanova.

Having into regard the developments of the situation in Balkans and in Europe, there was a need to speed up the work to enclose the covenant between Serbia and Bulgaria. “Therefore, Milovanović with Geshov dealt with the content of the agreement, which the president of the Serbian government, with main points, formulated it in this way”:⁶⁸ “The agreement will be a common agreement of allies for defense and attack. It will be signed by the emperors and the ministers of foreign affairs. It will be signed in three exemplars, one for each contracting party, while the third for Russia, who will be asked to take into consideration, to approve, to accept the role of foreseen arbitration and to promise that will be supportive in reviving its intentions”⁶⁹

The agreement comprises: “unconditional defense of the connection and the common guarantee of territorial integrity and country independence; the alliance opposes every country, who would undertake invasions in the Balkan Peninsula, if one of the parties will have war motives; The Alliance offensively opposes Turkey according to preliminary agreement in the case

⁶⁶ *Prvi Balkanski Rat, Beograd, 1959, prva knjiga, str. 89*

⁶⁷ Istoriski Institut Jugoslovenske Derzhave, *Prvi Balkanski Rat 1912 – 1913 – operacija srpske vojske*, Prva knjiga, Beograd 1959, str. 90.

⁶⁸ Archiv v. I. I. mikroteka NI, br.1, snimci 18-21

⁶⁹ To recognize the determinant role of the Tsarist Russia.

of Kosovo deliberation (“The Old Serbia”) and of Macedonia without need of preliminary agreement, if either of the parties enters war to defend from the havoc of its own population in Turkey, when that havoc has already started to end and when Turkey could not or would not end it in its ultimatum; in any such case both parties enter the war with their entire forces and lead in the sense and the spirit of military convention which is attached to the contract; territorial successes, brought by the war are mutual, but Serbia recognizes the complete rights of Bulgaria in the Vilayet of Edren and Bulgaria, too, recognizes the Vilayet of Kosovo to Serbia in the north of Sharr mountains and the Vilayet of Shkodra; as for the Vilayet of Kosovo in the south of Sharr and the Vilayet of Bitol and of Selanik, both parties, if they cannot agree directly for setting the borders, agree to ask the Russian emperor so he as the supreme judge, whose judgment they obey unconditionally, to define what belongs to Serbia or what belongs to Bulgaria; to the other countries especially Montenegro and Greece, the agreement can be presented only according to the preliminary agreement of both contracting parties. The same things applies for their acceptance in the Alliance; every contest in the case of implementation of agreement or the military convention, is presented to Russia for judgment, if the agreement parties cannot agree directly; the contract and the military convention are valid until the 31st December 1916”.⁷⁰

Regarding the Serbian – Bulgarian agreement, Russia was immediately informed. Consequently, Millovanovic informed the Russian representative in Belgrade, Hartvig, regarding the results of the agreement. In the meantime, Hartvig informed his government. After a few days, the president of the Bulgarian government, Geshov, informed the Russian representative in Sofia, related to the negotiation with Millovanovic. Hence, correspondingly the Bulgarian and the Serbian government informed Russia on everything. They were fully convinced that they would be supported by its side for two reasons. Firstly, Russia intended to barricade the extension of the Habsburg Empire in the Balkans and to disable England from the prevention of Russia to exit the Mediterranean Sea. Secondly, with the Slavs it had blood relations and religion.

Russia initially had unsteady attitude related to the Serbian – Bulgarian agreement. It tried to exit with the military fleet into the strait of Dardanel in the Mediterranean Sea; therefore this case should be settled in diplomatic ways. But, in presenting the case of the unity of the Slavs countries of Balkans, was seen that if that unity was achieved, would be profitable for Russia as well, because the dispersion of Austrian – Hungarian in the Balkan would be stopped and, and from such an agreement Russia would ensure the domination in Balkans.

The president of the Bulgarian government, Geshov, during the conversations with the president of the Serbian government, Millovanovic, besides the Macedonian case, agrees on the other cases that were foreseen with agreement. For this matter, the Russian diplomacy was put into movement, which requested to join Turkey to the Alliance. However, for such an alliance neither of parties were interested. Geshov persistently insisted that the borderline be finally defined, where

⁷⁰ Prvi Ballkanski Rat, Beograd, prvaknjiga, str.93.

Struga would remain under Bulgaria. On the other hand, Milovanovic resisted that Struga remains under Serbia.

The Serbian – Bulgarian Alliance turned to be a marketplace of two Slavic countries, for the division of Albanian and Macedonian lands, whereas neither Albanian nor Macedonian factor were considered. After five months of discussions between Serbia and Bulgaria, on 13th March, the agreement for the Serbian – Bulgarian covenant was signed. The first paragraph of the covenant states that it is approved: “Over the friendship and alliance between the Serbian Kingdom and the Bulgarian Kingdom (the names of King Peter I and Ferdinand I are explicitly mentioned)”⁷¹ ...

The agreement is comprised of seven articles. In the first article it is expressed the solidarity for mutual assistance. Whereas the article II defines the bilateral obligations in case “of intervention of whichever great power for annexation, occupation of any Balkan territory, that are today under the Turkish government.”⁷² Based in the context of article I and II is stated the of the contracting parties shall not independently confront the Ottoman Empire, therefore are obliged to be unique, “in case of eventual intervention of whichever great power for annexation, occupation of any Balkan territory. As implied by the agreement text, it is obvious that it was compiled with such cunning prudence and cunning on the stigmata “of intervention of whichever power” not inferring particularly which the great power, hence, allegedly would be protected by “whichever power”. The following paragraph formulation implies the unity of these Slavic countries was done with the purpose to oppose Austria – Hungaria, if it would try to “to annex or to occupy any Balkan territory”. It is about the territories that were in the target of both of these countries, where the Albanian territories were targeted to annex from the side of Serbia.

Article III foresees the obligation of parties that the peace be approved with the consent of both contracting parties. The following article disables the possibilities, that one party, for the sake of their own interest, to make peace with another country, hence peace shall be agreed together and with a preliminary consent.

Article IV defines that the military convention will decide of what will be undertaken in case of war. Furthermore, the military convention would decide over the case of military organization, dislocation and mobilization of troops, as well as relations of supreme command. The military convention would be considered as an integral part of the agreement.

Article V defines that the agreement will be in effect from the signing day until 31st December 1920. But if the parties are at war in the time of the expiry of deadline, then the joint fighting shall continue until the calming of the situation. The agreement would remain in effect.

⁷¹Prvi Balkanski Rat, Beograd, prvaknjiga, str.106.

⁷²Ibid, str. 106

The following articles VI and VII, which foresaw the agreement to be written in Serbian and Bulgarian and that would be signed by the emperors and ministers of foreign affairs of the respective countries.

It is known that Serbia had expressed the fear that the Great Powers could recognize the Albanians' autonomy. According to them the autonomy could be under the protectorate of Austrian – Hungarian. If such autonomy would be accomplished, the Serbian possibilities for the invasion of Albanian territories would be shattered, which were as well foreseen in the notorious project of Ilija Garashanin.

To the agreement of Serbian – Bulgarian Alliance is attached the secret annex comprised of four articles. Article I of this annex foresees that in case of the status-quo being destroyed, the parties would agree to start the military actions together.

In this article the toponyms are consecutively written in which way the border line shall pass and separate the bufferzone, which lies between the border line of Serbia and that of Bulgaria. Along the border line, besides the toponyms, the mountain altitudes along the shoreline were written as well. In the same article are written the obligations, too, that Bulgaria would undertake. Both countries have agreed that, for the territory, which remains a bufferzone, after the expulsion of Turkey from Balkan shall decide “His majesty The Emperor Czar of Russia, who will be asked to be supreme Arbiter on this issue”.⁷³

Article III of the secret annex expresses “the agreement of both parties (Serbia and Bulgaria), that beseeches the Russian czar to take and approve the role, that have been devoted with the provisions of the agreement. In article IV as well, in the secret annex, in the center of disputable solutions, Russia has got the main role. Article V covers the preservation of the secret annex. It is about territories with a range of names, mountains, cities and villages up to the lake of Ohër, territories that were left to the Russian arbitration. The secret annex foresees the annexation of Albanian territories from the northern and western side of Sharr Mountains, including the entire Kosovo, and the eastern side from Skopje up to the lake of Ohër”.

Regarding the Serbia-Bulgaria Alliance, opinions from many historians and scholars of various fields have been given. One of them views the agreements as follows:

“...The Ottoman Empire in 1911 was at war with Italy in Africa, whereas in Albania, a rebellion broke out. This gave a bigger sign to bourgeoisie of the Balkan states to conclude the years long agreements and prepare for war... The agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria had a secret annex (annex) ... which was signed by the general headquarters of Serbia and Bulgaria. In that secret annex, among others, it was specified about what would happen to the territories when the Ottoman Army was expelled. Indeed, it was about what would happen to Macedonia.

⁷³Prvi Balkanski Rat, Beograd, prvaknjiga, str.110

Kosovo automatically would belong to Serbia and Serbia would have all the rights to enter through Albania, respectively, to enter the Otranto and to get to the Mediterranean Sea. Bulgaria would again enjoy all the rights to operate in Traki towards Istanbul. However, Macedonia remained controversial. In the first part of the secret agreement it was mentioned that after the expulsion of the Turkish Army it would be taken care of to create an autonomous province on the territory of Macedonia. If that ceases to happen, that territory shall be split between Serbia and Bulgaria and the lines from the Osogovsk mountains between Veles and Skopje on Lake Ohrid would be removed and it was said that the territory north of that line would belong to Serbia, whereas the south of the line would belong to Bulgaria. Therefore, the majority of Macedonia would belong to Bulgaria. ⁷⁴

After the "Secret Annex" follows the "Military Convention", signed on 29 April 1912 by the Serbian side: the king of Serbia Petri I and dr. M. Gj. Milovanovic, and by the Macedonian side: King Ferdinand I and Iv. Ev.Geshov. The annex is made up of XIV Articles, where the joint obligations of the Serbian and Bulgarian sides are precisely specified.

Article I talks about mutual aid and marks the number of 200 000 of Bulgarian military forces, and 150 000 of Serbia's military forces. The Convention envisages military operations and the reciprocal connections between the two armies. Even the issue of splitting the warships between the two countries was foreseen.

The Russian diplomat in Sofia, Urosov sees the Military Convention as "the dawn of the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement, which does not represent the dawn of peace. This agreement was born in the war and was born for war. The Serbian-Bulgarian alliance is defensive, but for Bulgaria it is of no value, because neither Romania, nor Turkey will attack on its own initiative. The Alliance for Serbia has an offensive character, because its enemy, Turkey, has been known for so long." ⁷⁵ Russia opposed the offensive character of the alliance, but when it saw that the plans for penetrating to the Mediterranean did not work out, he gave the consent of its creation.

The Serbian-Bulgarian Alliance was created for the purpose of invading the Albanian and Macedonian lands. Serbia had allegations of Albanian territories, while Bulgaria claimed to occupy the Macedonian territories. Upon this alliance, Albanians and Macedonians would suffer. The Serbian-Bulgarian alliance was as a preparation for a future war with the aim of national liberation, but at the same time, along with the liberation, it had prepared the occupation of Albanian and Macedonian territories.

Allegations of Serbian and Bulgarian politics over Balkan territories after the expulsion of the Turkish Army from the Balkans are known. In this aspect, Serbia and Bulgaria were rivals, even strong rivals, who, because of the racial aspirations, could enter a bloody conflict.

⁷⁴ Mihailo Apostolski, Velikobugarske pretenzije, izd. "V. Karaxhiq", Beograd, 1978, str.64

⁷⁵ *Prvi Balkanski Rat*, Beograd, 1959, prva knjiga, Beograd 1959, str.119.-cit iz: международные отношения, XIX/II, № 777.

Therefore, to avoid possible conflicts came to the logical conclusion that they previously agreed to divide the territories of Albania and Macedonia.

At a time when Serbian-Bulgarian diplomacy designed plans to occupy the Albanian lands, the latter did not yet understand the neighbors' wiles and tricks, who by their own methods urged them to fight not to liberate, in order to set up a new yoke of a new slavery.

This agreement was kept secret by Serbia and Bulgaria, which is also expressed in a report by the Austro-Hungarian legate secretary in Belgrade, who reports that "Serbian Foreign Minister and Bulgarian Ambassador to Belgrade "categorically denied", any secret covenant to be made against Turkey"⁷⁶

⁷⁶Shqipëria në dokumentet Austro-Hungareze 1912, vëllimi IV, Anan Lalaj, Eriketa Kamberi, Sonila Boçi, Tiranë, 2012, f.286, AIH, Vj, 22-22-2241. Raporti i sekretarit të legates austro-hungarezenë Beograd, Pflugl, dërguar ministrit të Jashtëm në jenë, Berchtold, 14 gusht 1912.