УДК 341.382.071.2(498.10)"1913"

The Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1913: a Historical and Legal Analysis

Biljana POPOVSKA
Ivanka DODOVSKA

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Faculty of Law "Iustinianus Primus"
Skopje, Macedonia

> *Only a powerful rebellion by our side can save us from the insatiable claws. Therefore we need forces, and ours are broken, minced, which means that if we want to take care of the future of our fatherland we should put them together, gather them up into one general powerful force, a force of the people. That should be the aspiration of every Macedonian, wherever he may be.* "Loza", 1892.

The Bucharest Peace Treaty was signed on August 10, 1913 in the capital of Romania by delegates from Romania, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia and Bulgaria. The Treaty was a result of Bulgaria's defeat in the Second Balkan War, during which Bulgaria was at war with its former allies from the previous Balkan War. The main cause for the First Balkan War was the anarchy that had grown even deeper within the dead Ottoman Empire, which after the Young Turk Revolution could not manage to implement the reforms and catch up with the new industrial-capitalist and democratic-liberal era.

Such conditions, and especially the Balkans' territorial pretensions regarding the territory of Macedonia within the borders of the Empire, assured the Balkan states that their goals can be achieved only by joint efforts and practical actions on the field. For this reason also the creation of the Balkan League by Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece was supported

by Imperial Russia, whose intentions were focused on preventing further penetration of Austria-Hungary and Germany into the Balkans.[1]

The first step of the Russian intervention in this direction was aimed towards providing a guarantee by Bulgaria that it will step out of the San Stefano's concept and at the same time it will recognize certain territorial rights to Serbia over some parts of geographical Macedonia.

Regarding the positions in the Balkans, the Bulgarian Government on the one hand feared the possibility of total annihilation of the Bulgarian population from Thrace and Macedonia by the Empire, while the Serbian politics on the other hand called for the creation of one general inter-Balkan union, through which it saw a opportunity to protect its Balkan interests. The Montenegrin politics was motivated to support the Serbian idea because of the possibility of territorial expansion towards Skadar and the territory of Albania in the southeast, while the interest of Greece was purely material, i.e. it was inspired by the need to expand the Greek territory towards the fertile Pelagonian plain, which was very important for the marine and otherwise barren Greek territory.

At the centre of these events the Macedonian question remained ignored. The Macedonian geographical territory within the borders of the Ottoman Empire became the centre of attention because of its geostrategic position, which in the eve of the Big War and in the plans of the imperial powers in Europe and the rest of the world became important for the big European powers, as well as for the Balkan countries.

With regards to the ethnic composition of Macedonia within the borders of the Ottoman Empire it should be noted that even during the Mürzsteg's reform program, of September 21, 1903, the Empire was obliged to change the borders of the administrative units in Macedonia with an obligation for ethnic grouping. With this step the great powers suppressed the Macedonian question because they increased the Balkans' territorial as-

[1] ...The interests of the Great Powers on the Balkan Peninsula overlapped, motivated by the extraordinary strategic positioning of the terrain in a global scale. Imperial Russia and Great Britain in particular were leading the way in the contest for winning the territories which passed through China, the north border regions of India, Afghanistan, Persia and the Ottoman Empire... Barbara Jelavic, History of the Balkan (Twentieth century), tome II, NIK LIST, Skopje, 1999, page 3.

pirations for reorganizing the Ottoman Empire's assets on the Balkans and for reorganizing their own spheres of interest.[2]

As was mentioned before, the Balkan bourgeois countries based their arguments for the aspirations towards the rest of the Ottoman territory in the Balkans on three basic principles: the historical background, the ethnic composition of the population, and the necessity to keep the balance between the powers. The third argument also contained the idea of compensation: in the case that the territory of one country is enlarged, then the territory of its neighbours should be enlarged for the same amount as well.

Aside from the territorial aspirations of Greece and Bulgaria, Serbia also expressed its territorial appetites regarding the territory of Macedonia. Especially after the Berlin Congress, when its intention for expanding through Bosnia and Herzegovina was stopped because of Austro-Hungarian annexation, Serbia turned its attention to the Ottoman territory, primarily towards the part known as Old Serbia and the Vardar valley.[3]

For those reasons, at the end of the first decade of the XX century the Governments of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria initiated an intense diplomatic activity, with strong logistical support from Russia, in order to form new military unions with the final aim: their own expansion towards the parts of European Turkey. Determined by the principle of "nati-

---

[2] See: Article 3 from the Mürzsteg Reform Program, M. Stojkovic, Balkanski ugovorni odnosi 1876 - 1996, I tom, (1876 - 1918), Beograd, 1998, p. 240 - 241.

[3] (AM) M 1923 (6) ...*The unsolved internal situation of Serbia, immediately following the Berlin Congress, did not allow it to proceed with its new projects in Macedonia. The Ex-Prime Minister of Serbia, Milovanovitch, wrote the following significant confession in the magazine "Delo" (XVII, p.300): "Up until 1889 Serbia had never thought of Macedonia". After 1889, Serbia began sending electioneers and teachers to Macedonia. Simultaneously the Serbians began a literary propaganda in Europe and America to prove that the Macedonian Slavs were Serbs. Their chief arguments were as follows: (a) That when the Turks conquered Macedonia they took it from the Serbs who were its owners; (b) That the language of the Macedonian Slavs was Serbian; (c) That the Slavs in Macedonia called themselves Bulgarians, but that they adopted this name in order to protect themselves from Turkish persecutions, as after the uprising of Karageorgevich in 1813 the Turks wanted and endeavoured to exterminate the Serbian race which they described as a fighting and dangerous one; (d) That the Bulgarian Exarchate and Propaganda in Macedonia induced the Slav population to form their different organizations and so gave the impression that the Macedonian Slavs were Bulgarian...*

nal" unification they justified the expulsion of the Empire from the Balkans in the name of "their immediate and historical task".[4]

On March 29, 1912 the union between Bulgaria and Greece was formed.[5] During the summer of 1912 the agreement between Serbia and Greece was also signed. Its main articles agreed the mutual actions of the allies in the case of a future Austro-Hungarian attack against Serbia. As a finale of the series of Balkan unions the one between Bulgaria and Montenegro was signed in October 1912, and it was later joined by Serbia.[6] With this the system of Balkan unions was completed and the countries moved on to waiting for the right favourable moment to step into action. [7]

Aside from the Great Powers' efforts to undertake energetic diplomatic and political steps in order to force the Empire to improve the condition of the population on its Balkan territory, in the autumn of 1912 the member countries of the Balkan League handed the Ottoman Empire a collective note for implementation of reforms on its Balkan territory. After the Empire refused the ultimatum, Montenegro was the first to declare war to the Empire on October 8, 1912.[8] On October 18 of the same year the remaining Balkan League member countries joined the war.

The Balkan League armies quickly broke the military power of the Ottoman Empire. This alarmed the Great Powers to immediately step in and solve the Balkan conflict in a diplomatic way. That implied deciding the faith of Constantinople and of the Straits, and then deciding the future of the Balkan territories taken by the Balkan countries, as well as Serbia's exit to the sea.[9]

---

[4] Gorgi Abadziev, The Balkan Wars and Macedonia, Skopje, 1958, p. 12.

[5] See more in the Carnegie Commission's Balkan Report, Former Balkan wars 1912–1913, Kultura, Skopje, 2000. p. 74 sqq.

[6] Ibid. p. 508. (cit.) „...The Bulgarian-Montenegrin union obligated the allied countries to start an enmity against the Turks – Montenegro with a deadline until the 20th September, and Bulgaria with a deadline of one month after Montenegro steps into action. The text of the Serbo-Montenegrin agreement was never published, but the articles seemed similar to those in the Bulgarian-Montenegrin pact. Montenegro probably achieved an agreement with Greece too, but it seems that it was not defensive, and was of verbal nature."

[7] Hans Lotar Stepan, The Macedonian knot, Az-Buki, Skopje, 2005. p. 57.

[8] Josepf von Hammer, ... p. 524.

[9] Aleksandar Hristov, Jovan Donev, ... p. 176.

Truce talks began on December 3, 1912, and on December 16, 1912 a conference in London commenced with a goal to finalize the definite achievement of a peaceful solution for the Balkan Peninsula.

On May 30, 1913 under great pressure from the Great Powers the Peace Treaty between the Balkan League and the Ottoman Empire was signed. However, this did not mark the end of the hegemonic tendencies of the Balkan states. The knot regarding the dividing of the winnings among the Balkan allies was tightened even more. The part of the territory which after the primary Serbo-Bulgarian agreement was supposed to belong to Serbia was now part of the new Albanian state. Because of this, the Serbs asked for a bigger part of Macedonia as compensation. On the other side, the ruling over Salonika was contestable between the Bulgarians and the Greeks. This situation confronted the strategic interests of the Great Powers as well. Imperial Russia tried to keep the system of the Balkan unions in place, while Austria-Hungary tried to break it with an attempt for rapprochement between Bulgaria and Romania. Fearing Bulgarian annexation in Macedonia, on June 1, 1913 Serbia and Greece signed an ally pact. Montenegro also joined the pact and an attempt was made to include Turkey as well.

Because of the culmination in Bulgaria's public opinion and the open support from all strata for a military intervention the Second Balkan War started on June 29, 1913 with Bulgarian armies attacking Serbian and Greek positions in Macedonia. Although the Bulgarian attempt to scare off its former Balkan allies also had a limited Russian background this conflict grew into a big mutual war.[10]

The Second Balkan War, also known as "Inter-Allied War", was fully developing on the territory of Macedonia.[11] Romania and Turkey also joined Serbia, Greece and Montenegro in this war against Bulgaria, and attacked the country as well. Surrounded by all sides Bulgaria suffered a severe

---

[10] (AM) M 232 No. 632 – Guerre serbo-greco-bulgare.

[11] ...The Macedonian battlefield in the Second Balkan War contained the territory of Thessalonica, alongthe river Vardar to Skopje, on north-east through Kumanovo until Big Top of the old Turco-Serbian frontier, and at south-east to Kustendil, Carevo Selo, Pehcevo, Strumica, on east of Dojran to Seres and Kavala... Petar Stojanov, Macedonia at the time of the Balkan wars and World War I (1912-1918), Skopje, 1969. p. 32.

defeat, and on July 1, 1913 it asked for a truce. So, on August 10, 1913 the Balkan countries signed the Bucharest Peace Treaty.[12]

The Bucharest Peace Treaty presented the epilogue of the two Balkan Wars from the 1912/1913 period, by which the dividing of the territory of Macedonia among its Balkan neighbours Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia, was executed.[13] The successful great-state and nationalistic campaign of the Balkan countries resulted in erasing Macedonia from the Balkan map.

Regarding the contents of the Bucharest Peace Treaty, structurally it consists of ten articles, and next to the title "Bucharest Treaty for Peace" it also contains the names of the signatory states. As mentioned before, the Peace Treaty was signed on July 28 (August 10), 1913 by Romania, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bulgaria.

Article 1 of the Treaty expressed the intention of the signatory countries to establish peace and friendship among the sovereigns of the Balkan countries, their successors and their subjects.

Article 2 of the Treaty regulated the frontier between the Bulgarian Empire and the Kingdom of Romania. This Article corrects the old frontier between Bulgaria and Romania, according to Protocol No.5 of July 22 (August 4), 1913, of the Bucharest Conference, and in Paragraph 2 of the same Article the frontier is defined as starting from the river Danube, upwards from Tutrakan, along the river bed, and reaching the Black Sea south of Edirne. Paragraph 3 of the same Article also determines the frontier line which was indicated on the 1/100,000 and 1/200,000 maps of the Romani-

[12] The truce with Turkey was signed on September 24, 1913, in Constantinople. With the Bucharest Treaty of August 10, 1913, the Inter-Allied or, as it is more known, the Second Balkan War ended. This war represented one of the most tragic episodes in the life of the Balkan nations. With it the Balkan League and the policy of alliance among the Christian nations on the Balkans was broken. According to this agreement, Bulgaria lost Thrace, and South Dobrudza was given to Romania. Almost the entire ethnic Macedonia was divided between Serbia and Greece, with an exception of the region around Petrich, Strumica, Gorna Dzumaja and Razlog, which was given to Bulgaria. With this Treaty, Bulgaria gained a short exit to the Aegean Sea, as the region of North Thrace, between the rivers Marica and Mesta, remained under its rule. Bulgaria could not agree with these solutions, because of the feeling of injustice, and looked for a new war conflict for its final resolution.

[13] Biljana Popovska, State-legal history of Macedonia – sources, Skopje, 2005. p. 343.

an General Staff and according to the description attached to the Article. Paragraph 4 clearly defines that within at maximum two years Bulgaria should dismantle the equipment in the existing fortifications and it will not build new ones in Ruse, Shumen, in the intervening country and in a zone of twenty kilometres around Balchik. Paragraph 5 appoints the creation of a mixed commission consisting of an equal number of representatives of the two High Contracting Parties, whose task was within fifteen days from the signing of the Treaty to undertake the process of delimiting the new frontier in accordance with the previous stipulations. This commission was to oversee the dividing of the lands and the budgets, which up to that point may have belonged in common to the counties, the municipalities or the villages. In case of a disagreements regarding the frontier line or the measures that were supposed to be taken, the two High Contracting Parties agreed to request a third party friendly Government to appoint an arbitrator, whose decision regarding the issue of the argument they would consider final.

Article 3 of the Treaty determined the frontier between the Bulgarian Empire and the Kingdom of Serbia, according to Protocol No.9 of July 25 (August 7), 1913, of the Bucharest Conference, as following: the frontier line begins at the old frontier, from the summit of Patarica, then follows the old Turco-Bulgarian frontier and the dividing line of the waters between the rivers Vardar and Struma, with the exclusion of the upper flow of the river Strumica, which remained Serbian territory. The frontier ends at the mountain Belasica, where it connects with the Greco-Bulgarian frontier. A more detailed description of that frontier and the 1/200,000 map of the Austrian General Staff, on which it is indicated, were annexed to the Article. Paragraph 3 of this Article appointed the creation of a mixed commission, consisting of representatives of both parties, which had the obligation within a period of 15 days from the signing of the Peace Treaty to delimit the line of the new frontier, in accordance with the previous regulations. The commission was to oversee the dividing of the lands and the budgets, which up to that point may have belonged in common to the counties, the municipalities and the villages. In case of disagreements regarding the frontier line or the measures that were supposed to be taken, the two High Contracting Parties agreed to request a third party friendly Government to appoint an arbitrator, whose decision regarding the issue of the argument they would consider to be final.

Article 4 refers to the questions relating to the old Serbo-Bulgarian frontier, which were be settled according to the reached agreements between the two contracting parties.

Article 5 determines the frontier between the Kingdom of Greece and the Bulgarian Empire, according to the agreement by the respective military delegates attached to Protocol No.9 of July 25 (August 7), 1913, of the Bucharest Conference, where the frontier line is defined as follows: the frontier line starts from the new Serbo-Bulgarian frontier on the summit of the mountain Belasica and it ends at the point where the river Mesta flows into the Aegean sea. Paragraph 3 of this Article determines the frontier line between the two endpoints, which will follow the one indicated on the 1/200,000 map of the Austrian General Staff. Paragraph 4 of the Treaty appoints the creation of a mixed commission, consisting of representatives from the two parties, which will have the obligation within a period of 15 days from the signing of the Peace Treaty to delimit the new frontier line in accordance with the previous stipulations. The commission was to oversee the dividing of the lands and the budgets, which by that point may have belonged in common to the counties, the municipalities or the villages. In case of a disagreements regarding the frontier line or the measures that were supposed to be taken, the two High Contracting Parties agreed to request a third party friendly Government to appoint an arbitrator, whose decision regarding the points of disagreement they would consider final. Paragraph 6 clearly states that Bulgaria renounces all claims to the island of Crete.

Article 6 of the Treaty states that the Main Headquarters of the Balkan armies should immediately be informed about the signing of the Peace Treaty. The Bulgarian Government was obligated to reduce its army to a peace footing one day after the notification. Paragraph 2 of the Article determines that if any garrison troops are situated in the zone occupied by the army of one of the signatory countries of the Treaty, they will be sent to another station on the old Bulgarian territory, from where they may not return to their regular garrison until after the evacuation of the aforementioned occupied zone.

Article 7 in detail treats the evacuation of the Bulgarian territory, old and new, which was to begin right after the demobilization of the Bulgarian army was completed and was supposed to end within a period of 15 days. Paragraph 2 defines the zone of demarcation for the active Romanian army along the following line: Svishtov – Lovech – Turski Izvor – Glozene –

Zlatica – Mirkovo – Araba Konak – Orhane – Mezdra – Vraca – Berkovica – Lom – Danube.

Article 8 of the Treaty determines the law of requisitions of the various armies during the occupation of the Bulgarian territories. Paragraph 2 of this Article states that these armies will have free use of the railway lines for transportation of troops and provisions of any kind, without any compensation to the local authority. Regarding the sick and the wounded it was determined that they will be under the protection of the aforementioned armies.

Article 9 refers to the time during which the exchange of all prisoners of war will take place. In Paragraph 2 the Governments of the High Contracting Parties were obligated to appoint special commissioners to receive the prisoners of war. Paragraph 3 determines that all prisoners of war will be delivered to the commissioner of the Government they belonged to, or a competent and authorized representative, at a location that will be determined by the interested parties. Paragraph 4 of this Article states that the Governments will present to each other a financial account of the direct expenses incurred through the care for the prisoners of war.

Article 10 determines the ratification of the Peace Treaty by the signatory countries within 15 days. After this Article the signatures of the authorized representatives follow.

***

Immediately after the signing, on August 11, 1913, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Bulgaria asked for a revision of the Treaty regarding the numerous anomalies, understatements, and illogical points in the dividing of the territories and in the reaching of the decisions. On August 14, Russia renounced its intentions for a revision of the Treaty, leaving only Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria with such a demand, which was sharply opposed by France. The Bucharest Peace Treaty represents a unique international agreement which was not signed by all of the big powers and which in a great amount was against their interests. The agreement itself has ten articles including twelve protocols with a large amount of data relating to the annexations. The Treaty of Bucharest is only two pages long but the complete document including the protocols contains 86 pages. At the conclusion of the Bucharest agreement more bilateral agreements followed. For example, an

agreement between Greece and Turkey was signed by which the two states agreed to exchange and resettle populations. The Macedonian and the Muslim Macedonian populations from Aegean Macedonia were to be moved to Asia Minor while the Greek Majir population from Asia Minor was to be transferred to Aegean Macedonia. These bilateral agreements have references to talks for the respect of national minorities and the preservation of properties. There are agreements that protect the rights of people to reclaim their properties. With proper papers people had the right to reclaim their property, be it from the Church, the Mosque or from whoever was in their possession at the time.

The Treaty is a conclusion to a number of preceding bilateral agreements among the Balkan states and a conclusion not only to the Balkan Wars but also to the many and continuous armed conflicts that were flaring up in Macedonia. However, the great powers did not take into consideration the demands of the Macedonian people, who from more associations, especially from Russia and Switzerland, intervened to save the its identity, and the unity and integrity of the Macedonian territory. The results of this Treaty contributed to the manoeuvring of the positions of the Balkan states in the eve of the Great War, by which they built their own interest for aligning with the side that would give them the best position, so they could please their national ambitions. That is why at the start of the Great War in 1914 Bulgaria, as well as Turkey, took the side of the opponents to the Entente.

Bibliography:

Barbara Jelavic, History of the Balkans (Twentieth century), tome II, NIK LIST, Skopje, 1999.

M. Stojkovic, Balkanski ugovorni odnosi 1876 - 1996, I tom, (1876 - 1918), Beograd, 1998.

Gorgi Abadziev, The Balkan Wars and Macedonia, Skopje, 1958.

Report of Carnegie's Balkan commission, Former Balkan wars 1912 -1913, Kultura, Skopje, 2000.

Hans Lotar Stepan, The Macedonian knot, Az-Buki, Skopje, 2005.

Petar Stojanov, Macedonia at the time of the Balkan Wars and World War I (1912–1918), Skopje, 1969.

Biljana Popovska, State-legal history of Macedonia – sources, Skopje, 2005.

Христов Александар, Донев Јован, Македонија во меѓународните договори *1875 - 1919*, Архив на Македонија, Матица Македонска, Скопје, 1994.

Донев Јован, Некои меѓународни политичко-правни аспекти на односот на големите сили кон Македонија за време на Првата балканска војна, Архив на Македонија, Скопје, 1988.

(AM) M 232 No. 632 – Guerre serbo-greco-bulgare.

(AM) M 1923 (6).