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## The Central Powers and the Balkans A Study of Diplomatic Activities of Germany and Austro-Hungary in Southeast Europe (1909–1913)

**Zarys treści:** Półwysep Bałkański ze względu na swoje geograficzne położenie na styku „świata zachodniego” i „świata Orientu” od wieków odgrywał ważną rolę zarówno w europejskiej polityce, jak i ekonomii. Jego znaczenie znacznie wzrosło w połowie XIX w., kiedy europejskie mocarstwa wkroczyły w tzw. erę imperialną. Trudno zatem dziwić się, że w tym właśnie czasie ten niewielki region, leżący na „krańcach cywilizowanej Europy”, stał się polem zaciętej walki o strefy wpływów. W rywalizacji tej wzięły udział także Niemcy i Austro-Węgry. Jakkolwiek państwa te odmiennie postrzegały ostateczne cele, zarówno w Berlinie, jak i w Wiedniu zdawano sobie sprawę, że uzyskanie przewagi nad konkurentami może mieć istotny wpływ nie tylko na rozwój rodzimego przemysłu, który zyskiwałby nowe rynki zbytu dla swojej produkcji, ale także na kształtowanie ogólnoeuropejskiej polityki. Tymczasem zachodzące na Bałkanach na początku XX w. procesy i głębokie zmiany, błędnie oceniane i bagatelizowane przez dyplomację mocarstw centralnych, przesyłały o dotkliwej porażce, którą poniosły one w walce o ugruntowanie swej pozycji w Europie Południowo-Wschodniej.

**Outline of contents:** Because of its geographic location at the meeting point of the Western world and the Orient, the Balkan Peninsula for many centuries had figured largely both in the European politics and in its economy, and its importance increased in the mid-nineteenth century, when the European powers entered the so-called “imperial phase.” It is hardly surprising then that at this particular period this small region, situated at “the edge of civilized Europe,” had become the arena of fierce fighting for spheres of influence. Germany and Austro-Hungary joined this struggle, too. Even though these two states variously defined their ultimate objectives in the Balkans, it was widely acknowledged both in Berlin and in Vienna that gaining an advantage over the rivals could not only significantly influence the development of domestic industry, which would acquire new markets for its output, but it could also affect the state of European politics. Nevertheless, the new developments and deep transformations occurring in the Balkans at the outset of the twentieth century, misjudged and belittled by the diplomatic services of the Central Powers, resulted in a heavy defeat that they suffered in the endeavors to consolidate their position in Southeast Europe.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Niemcy, Austro-Węgry, mocarstwa centralne, Bałkany, Europa Południowo-Wschodnia, wojny bałkańskie 1912–1913

**Keywords:** Germany, Austro-Hungary, Central Powers, Balkans, Balkan Wars 1912–1913

The geopolitical position of the Balkans has always been the decisive factor in the vivid interest taken in the region by major players on the European scene. Its location – between the Western world and the Orient – made this part of our continent an extremely important area of key economic and strategic significance. As early as the era of antiquity, it served as a transit point in the trade routes connecting the Central, Northern, and in a sense also Western Europe, with the Near East and Central Asia, while in the Middle Ages, it was a site of confrontation between Christendom and Islam. In time the significance of the Balkan Peninsula grew even further, and by the early nineteenth century it had emerged as an arena for rivalry between the European powers, which taking advantage of internal crisis gripping the Ottoman Empire, sought to implement their own economic and political agendas.

Out of the Central Powers, as they came to be called, it was Austria that jumped the gun in the scramble for establishing spheres of influence in this part of the world. This may be explained by the fact that its dominions extended into the Balkans, and the task of protecting the heartland from a potential Turkish threat required that the country's border be continually pushed further to the south. However, already in the first half of the nineteenth century, as the position of the High Porte in Europe was eroded, economic considerations came to play a vital role, too. Although the Habsburg Monarchy could hardly rank as a major European economic power, the growing Austrian industry needed new markets for its products and safe transportation routes for exporting them. This led directly to the conception of Salonika as an obvious port for sending Austrian goods to the countries situated in the Mediterranean, and even farther, to the Near East and Central Asia. The implementation of this project in the second half of the nineteenth century proceeded on several planes. Initially, priority was given to efforts designed to effect the continual pushing of the border to the south, which were crowned by the provisions of the Berlin Treaty, granting Austro-Hungary the right to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina and the control over Sandjak of Novi Pazar. However, with the passage of time, this idea came in for more and more criticism.<sup>1</sup> For the Habsburg Monarchy, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, had plunged into a deep internal crisis, and even though in geopolitical terms it still counted as a European power, which was emphasized by its economic self-sufficiency, as a union of nationalities it gradually

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<sup>1</sup> T. von Sosnosky, *Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns seit 1866*, Stuttgart–Berlin, 1914, pp. 173–174, 177.

disintegrated.<sup>2</sup> This situation was caused primarily by the spreading of liberation ideas born in the Romantic period, which led to the emergence across Europe of movements for national independence, especially vigorous among stateless nations, including ethnic groups residing within the borders of the Habsburg Monarchy. This tendency presented a major problem, for Austro-Hungary – as O. Bickel rightly observed – was a political entity without a national soul.<sup>3</sup> Even though in cultural terms “Germanness” was the leading element, it was represented by the mere one quarter of the population, which circumstance, compounded with the constantly growing self-awareness of the other ethnic groups, could not effectively tie the remaining parts of the monarchy with Austria. Hence the international policy of the Habsburg Monarchy had to take into account the internal structure of the country. Thus, while in the last quarter of the nineteenth century it was strongly oriented toward new territorial acquisitions and achieving by Austria a dominant position in Europe, at the outset of the twentieth century Austro-Hungarian policy makers realized that every upheaval, whether positive or negative, could lead to unforeseeable domestic troubles.<sup>4</sup> In the realm of the Balkan politics, the much-touted conception of striving for Salonika was gradually abandoned,<sup>5</sup> in favor of addressing more closely the internal affairs and advancing the thesis that the status quo in the Balkans should be upheld. Yet it might do well to point out that there were also other factors at work that prevented Austria from actively pursuing the idea of extending its territory further to the south, among which of particular significance was the growing involvement of the other European powers in the processes transpiring in the Balkans. Russia had sought a more active role in the region since the early nineteenth century, and its primary objective was to seize control over the strategic straits linking the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea, which was to ensure free passage of the Russian navy and merchant fleet to the Mediterranean. Even though Russian efforts aiming at redrawing the political map of the Balkan Peninsula conflicted with the plans of the Habsburg Monarchy at the time, it was acknowledged in Vienna that any attempts to actively oppose Russia might result in a military outbreak whose consequences were hard to estimate. Therefore, it was thought best not to provoke frictions and instead focus on building spheres of influence, which were to garner the anticipated results. These decisions had also been dictated by the activities of the other powers, especially Great

<sup>2</sup> H. Bogdan, *From Warsaw to Sofia. A History of Eastern Europe*, Santa Fe, 1989, pp. 121–126, H.W. Steed, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, London, 1919, p. 225.

<sup>3</sup> O. Bickel, *Russland und die Entstehung des Balkanbundes 1912. Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des Weltkrieges Dargestellt vorwiegend auf Grund des amtlichen Aktenmaterials*, Königsberg–Berlin, 1933, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> On the “*quieta non movere*” thesis advanced by A. Gołuchowski see: H.W. Steed, *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> *Die große Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914. Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, eds. J. Lepsius, A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme, Berlin, 1922–1926 (henceforth referred to as: DGP), vol. 26, no. 8927.

Britain and France, which pursuing their own interests, as early as the mid-nineteenth century assumed protectorate over Turkey, so any ideas of depleting its assets were met with hostility on the part of both countries. It should be emphasized, however, that dividing spheres of influence was then by no means an easy task. Besides constantly competing with Russia, which implemented its policies in Turkey under the banner of opposing Pan-Germanism, Austro-Hungary since the late 1870s had had to grapple with political penetration by Italy, which at the time attempted to extend its influence over the whole Adriatic coast, falling back on the ancient conception of *mare internum*. In addition to the dispute between Vienna and Rome over Dalmatia, the rivalry was clearly visible in the Albanian inhabited lands, where both countries eagerly supported competitive missionary activities and built networks of schools, sparing no expenses to ensure their advantage.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding all this, the efforts undertaken by the Habsburg Monarchy soon after the Congress of Berlin concluded its deliberations were crowned with taking Serbia under its supervision. This led directly to the signing in 1881 of a cooperation agreement and of a defensive alliance. Thanks to this, Austro-Hungary not only became Serbia's chief economic partner, but it also gained influence over Serbian foreign policy. For Belgrade not only undertook to renounce all claims both to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandjak of Novi Pazar; it also agreed to curb the Great Serbia propaganda in the Habsburg Monarchy, to help organize transit of Austro-Hungarian troops through Serbia, and even to allow Austro-Hungary the use of its fortresses, should the Habsburg Monarchy engage in acts of war in this region of Europe. Furthermore, Serbia pledged to refrain from entering any foreign agreements without permission from Vienna.<sup>7</sup> Owing to its efficient policy, Austro-Hungary retained its supervision over Serbia until 1908.<sup>8</sup> The Habsburg Monarchy sought to broaden its sphere of influence by extending it to Bulgaria, too. These efforts, prominent at the time of the rule of Alexander Battenberg, were escalated during the so-called Bulgarian crisis, when Austro-Hungary became deeply involved in the question of the succession to the Bulgarian throne, seeking to install there a claimant supporting the Habsburg Monarchy. Exploiting the anti-Russian sentiment in the Bulgarian political circles, Austro-Hungary managed to orchestrate the election of Prince Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg to the throne in

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<sup>6</sup> The importance of Albania in the policies of Austro-Hungary may be evidenced by the statement by A. Gołuchowski, who observed in 1904: "Austro-Hungary does not intend to annex Albania; nevertheless it will stop any other country, especially Italy, from doing this"; DGP, vol. 20, no. 6401.

<sup>7</sup> Z. Stefański, "Wojna dyplomatów", *Świat Słowiański* V, 1909, vol. 1, p. 332.

<sup>8</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that in time Serbia sought to loosen its ties with Vienna. Already during the reign of Alexander Obrenovich Serbian foreign policy began to manifest strong pro-Russian tendencies. This orientation was maintained by its successor, Peter the First, and the Austro-Hungarian attempts to put economic pressure on Serbia, for instance, by instigating the so-called "pig war," largely failed because of the aid provided by Russia and the neighboring Bulgaria.

1887, but the strong Russian influence in the society greatly curtailed possibilities of Austria interfering with the internal affairs of Bulgaria.

The interest taken in the Balkan Peninsula by Berlin was decidedly less intense. This stemmed from the fact that the German territories since the Middle Ages had been fractured into numerous smaller independent state units, and the leading one among them, Prussia, was concerned primarily with consolidating its position in Central Europe and sought to gather the remaining German states around itself. This relative indifference may also be attributed to the fact that Prussia was not directly connected to the region. The situation altered radically after the unification of the German states in 1871. The rapidly developing German industry, just as the industries of other European powers, now searched for new markets and sources of raw materials. Hence Germany vigorously joined the fierce colonial division of Africa and East Asia, at the same time trying to eliminate the influence of the rivals in the countries that could be potential recipients of its products. One of such countries was Turkey, where German capital effectively competed with French, and especially with British, capital. Very actively pursued arms trade proved to be particularly profitable, and consistently implemented state policies in this area resulted in driving British weapons suppliers out of the Turkish market. In 1883 the Krupp company obtained a monopoly on supplying arms to Turkey, which led to the tightened German-Turkish cooperation in the military sector. In consequence, the reorganization of the Turkish army, planned for years, was entrusted to the German military mission headed by General Colmar von der Goltz, first in 1885, then in 1908, and the German general staff in 1882 devised the plan of restructuring the Bosphorus fortifications facing the Black Sea. Huge acceleration in the expansion of German capital was visible in other areas, too. Having rejected in 1895 the British proposal to partition the Turkish dominions, Germany took actions aiming to improve the economic situation in the Ottoman Empire. Earlier, while these were still at the preparatory stage, in 1889 the so-called German Levantine line was put into operation, and German banks were granted a concession to build a railway line from Izmir to Ankara, which in the long-term plans of the Anatolian Railway Company, created specifically for this purpose, was to form a part of a main railway line connecting Berlin to Baghdad. Both enterprises were supposed to bring Asia Minor, rich in raw materials, closer to the Second Reich, and to open for German industry new vast markets in the Near East and Central Asia.<sup>9</sup>

However, it might do well to point out that Germany, particularly during the Bismarck era, on the whole refrained from any active political involvement in

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<sup>9</sup> A. Czubiński, "Miejsce Bałkanów w polityce wschodniej imperium niemieckiego (1871–1918)", in: *Polityka bałkańska w polityce imperializmu niemieckiego w latach 1871–1945 – referaty i komunikaty z sympozjum Zakładu Historii Powszechnej i Najnowszej Instytutu Historii UAM w Poznaniu w 1980 r.*, ed. A. Czubiński, Poznań, 1982, pp. 25–40.

the dynamic transformations taking place in Southeast Europe. This self-restraint was motivated by the geopolitical situation of Germany, sandwiched between Russia and France, which prioritized securing the country's borders over engaging in disputes in the Balkans, an area of secondary importance for the German interests. Complete estrangement was not possible, however. Rapprochement between Germany and Austro-Hungary at the Berlin Congress in 1878, confirmed by an alliance treaty signed one year later, laying foundations for a new military and political block in Europe, obliged Germany to monitor more closely developments arising in the Balkans. Nevertheless, having above all else its own interests in mind, until the end of the nineteenth century it pursued foreign policy that was in effect disloyal to its ally. This is well demonstrated by the international agreements struck by Germany at that time. In summer 1887, with full knowledge on the part of Otto von Bismarck, and perhaps from his instigation, Austro-Hungary, Great Britain, and Italy signed the so-called Mediterranean Agreement whose aims included the elimination of the Russian influence from the Balkan Peninsula. The document certainly strengthened the position of the Habsburg Monarchy in the region in question, but several months prior to this, Germany entered a reinsurance treaty with Russia, evidently directed against France, which suggested that it would not support any attempts to destabilize the situation in Europe. It should be emphasized that accession of Italy to the Dual Alliance in 1882, explicitly sought for by Bismarck and leading to the formation of the Triple Alliance, from the point of view of the Viennese cabinet was not a welcome development. Even though it did silence the restitution propaganda carried out by Rome with respect to the Dalmatian issue, henceforth the Habsburg Monarchy had to take into account Italian activities in the Balkans. Such a state of affairs persisted until the early 1910s. Rapprochement between Russia and France, confirmed by an alliance treaty in 1894, and the political agreements struck by both countries with Great Britain in 1904 and 1907 – which effectively led to the emergence of a new military-political bloc contending with the Triple Alliance – compounded by the Italian efforts to loosen its ties with Berlin and Vienna, compelled Germany to explicitly support Austro-Hungarian actions on the international scene, including those directly related to the Balkan issues. This partnership was spectacularly proved by the attitude of Germany during the Bosnian crisis of 1908–1909, when Berlin not only sided with its ally but it also unambiguously declared its support, forcing Russia to accept the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Wholly unintended by Vienna, the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina triggered a chain reaction leading to the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, and the key factor was the international response to this event. It was a widely shared conviction that this act represented a serious infringement on the spirit of the Berlin treaty, and although the change to the existing state of affairs was merely formal, the annexation was met with criticism across all of Europe. The Great Powers, with the sole exception of Russia, contented themselves with the display of disapproval and the

debate on possible consequences of this new development, nevertheless, in the Balkans the Austro-Hungarian decision was received, especially by Serbia, as a hostile move, threatening an outbreak of war. Even though the situation was brought under control, the ensuing upheaval cleared the way for new political initiatives.

The infraction of the Berlin treaty by one of its guarantors demonstrated to the Balkan states that its provisions were not inviolable. Hence, hard on the heels of the Bosnian crisis, the Balkan states took steps toward the creation of a military-political bloc that would enable them to pursue their particular nationalist agendas. This was not an easy task, however. Old grudges and the long-standing struggle for influence in Macedonia hampered the possibility of reaching an agreement, yet the contenders could not help realizing that this was perhaps the only opportunity to settle permanently the Turkish issue and to deprive the High Porte of its European dominions. The Great Powers, too, saw potential benefits of the tightening cooperation between the Balkan states. From their perspective the formation of a military alliance in the Balkans could affect the configuration of power in Europe vis-à-vis the more and more overt conflict between the Central Powers and the Entente. Hence, fully conscious of the differences dividing the Balkan states, the Great Powers undertook to forge closer relations with them. Among them, the Russian diplomatic service proved especially active. First of all, Russia sought to bolster its influence in Bulgaria, which in the period prior to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina had developed strong ties with Austro-Hungary.<sup>10</sup> Russian efforts initially involved mediation in the negotiations between Bulgaria and Turkey, conducted in 1908–1909, to address Turkey's demand for compensation due to its loss of control over the former vassal. Thanks to the Russian participation the talks proved successful, advancing the position of St Petersburg on the international scene. This was followed by the attempt, undertaken by the Russian ambassador in Constantinople Nikolai Charikov, to form an alliance of the Balkan states, with Turkey at the head,<sup>11</sup> with a view to securing the interests of the Entente in this part of Europe. The efforts failed, yet they provided a good point of departure for further actions in this area.

The increased activity of Russia alarmed the Viennese cabinet,<sup>12</sup> which at all costs tried to keep Bulgaria on its side and to prevent it from joining a potential

<sup>10</sup> One effect of this cooperation was the Austro-Hungarian acceptance of the declaration of independence by Bulgaria. It should be emphasized, however, that the Habsburg diplomatic service used this occasion for its own political ends, to divert the attention of the European community from the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

<sup>11</sup> *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914. Diplomatische Aktenstücke des Österreich-Ungarischen Aussenministeriums*; eds. L. von Bittner, A.F. Pribram, H. Srbik, H. Übersberger, Wien–Leipzig, 1930 (henceforth referred to as: ÖUA), vol. 2, nos. 1823, 1839, 1890; vol. 3, no. 2951; DGP, vol. 27, no. 9744.

<sup>12</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that at first neither in Vienna nor in Berlin was it expected that the Russian efforts could lead to the creation of a Balkan union; ÖUA, vol. 1, no. 703. Guided by this conviction and content with reaching an understanding with Turkey with respect to the

anti-Austrian Serbo-Turkish bloc.<sup>13</sup> Efforts taken by the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Alois Aehrenthal to sound out the Bulgarian standpoint led him to establish that Bulgaria did not see political gains coming from rapprochement with Serbia or Turkey.<sup>14</sup> Acting on this intelligence, the Viennese cabinet, advised by the Bulgarian war minister General Danail Nikolaev<sup>15</sup> attempted to form an alliance with Bulgaria. However, the issue of a possible treaty had to be broached either to the foreign minister General Stefan Paprikov or to the king Ferdinand. The attitude of General Stefan Paprikov was decidedly anti-Austrian, while the king stalled and chose to keep the Habsburg Monarchy in suspense. The activities of Russia, endorsed by Great Britain, were received with serious misgivings in Germany.<sup>16</sup> Berlin was particularly alarmed by the speech delivered by the Russian foreign minister Alexander Izvolsky in the Russian Parliament on December 12, 1908, in which he urged rapprochement between the Balkan states and Turkey with a view to creating a league that would hinder the Austro-Hungarian and German influence in Southeast Europe. Hence, the chancellor Bernhard von Bülow put pressure on Aehrenthal to intensify the talks with Bulgaria.<sup>17</sup>

The Austrian minister was well aware of the fact that because of Ferdinand's volatile personality and his short temper, the talks must proceed slowly and with caution.<sup>18</sup> Finally, on January 3, 1908, through the Austro-Hungarian emissary in Sofia, Douglas Thurn, the king was presented with the top-secret

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annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austro-Hungary rejected the Turkish offer of a military alliance; *ibid.*, vol. 1, nos. 551, 737, 739, 762, 781, 818, 1035. This standpoint changed in summer 1909, when the diplomatic actions of N. Charikov in Constantinople intensified, causing great concern in Berlin. Hence the German emperor Wilhelm II urged the necessity for Austria to sign a military convention with Turkey, which would protect the interests of the Central Powers in the Balkans and stop Russia from creating a Balkan league under its aegis; *ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 1828; DGP, vol. 27, no. 9888; however, due to Aehrenthal's personal opposition the convention was not signed, even though Turkey in November 1909 made it known that it would be interested in a military convention uniting Austro-Hungary, Romania, and Turkey.

<sup>13</sup> The talks between Serbia and Turkey on this subject began as early as October 1908; *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*, London, 1926 (henceforth referred to as: BD), vol. 5, nos. 440, 443, 445, 462; O. Bickel, *Russland und die Entstehung des Balkanbundes 1912...*, footnote 83, p. 24. Despite the British involvement the talks ended in a fiasco, mainly because of the pressure on the part of Turkey to direct a potential alliance also against Bulgaria; BD, vol. 5, nos. 452, 455; O. Bickel, *Russland und die Entstehung des Balkanbundes 1912...*, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> ÖUA, vol. 1, no. 746.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 746.

<sup>16</sup> B. Bülow was of the opinion that the Russian plans could be thwarted by Aehrenthal taking decisive action in Turkey as well as in Romania, Greece, and Bulgaria; DGP, vol. 26, no. 9295.

<sup>17</sup> The German cabinet believed that bringing Bulgaria over to the side of the Central Powers would put Russia in a difficult situation, as in a potential military conflict it would be forced to divide its sympathies between the Slavic states in the opposed camps, and this would affect detrimentally its capacity to act; *ibid.*, vol. 26, no. 9292.

<sup>18</sup> ÖUA, vol. 1, nos. 828, 856.

proposal<sup>19</sup> of an alliance providing for military cooperation in the case of a Serbo-Austrian or Turko-Bulgarian conflict, or in the case of a joint Serbo-Turkish military operation against the Habsburg Monarchy and Bulgaria.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Thurn assured the king orally of Vienna's support of potential Bulgarian territorial claims at the expense of Serbia after the war.<sup>21</sup> As anticipated, Ferdinand showed interest in the proposal couched in such terms. Nevertheless, he suggested that the two countries should focus on a military convention which was to unite them, and that the talks on this subject should be conducted by the Prime Minister Alexandar Malinov, to deflect any suspicion that the king himself was behind the initiative.<sup>22</sup> Malinov, without directly objecting to the idea, strongly emphasized the fact that Bulgaria would never support Austro-Hungary against Serbia.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the talks came to a standstill,<sup>24</sup> and then were broken off.<sup>25</sup> This cleared the way for Russia to go ahead with its project, and despite serious obstacles, its efforts were crowned with the formation a Serbo-Bulgarian alliance in spring 1912, which after the accession of Greece and Montenegro was transformed into the Balkan League.

The talks conducted by the Balkan states in spring and summer 1912 were kept secret. The only European power privy to the struck agreements was Russia, whose diplomats participated in the meetings, but it chose to keep in the dark even its Entente Allies, providing them only with basic information. This prevented the Central Powers from responding *ad hoc*, or even from commenting on the processes taking place in the Balkans. It might do well to emphasize, however, that both Vienna and Berlin ignored the scanty details that would crop up during the first half of 1912, deciding that the idea of a Balkan bloc was unfeasible. This view

<sup>19</sup> This bore out the conception favored by Aehrenthal, whose aim was to foment trouble between Bulgaria and Russia, and neutralize Russian attempts at rapprochement with Bulgaria; DGP, vol. 26, nos. 8927, 9294; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, Berlin, 1921, vol. 2, no. 618; ÖUA, vol. 1, no. 835.

<sup>20</sup> ÖUA, vol. 1, nos. 828, 835.

<sup>21</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 146–148, 522–525.

<sup>22</sup> ÖUA, vol. 1, no. 879.

<sup>23</sup> O. Bickel, *Russland und die Entstehung des Balkanbundes 1912...*, p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> The crisis in the negotiations was caused also by the negative attitude of Aehrenthal toward pursuing a military convention with Bulgaria; ÖUA, vol. 1, nos. 923, 927, yet, the talks on this subject continued until March 1909; *ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 1103.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 960. Such a state of affairs resulted primarily from Bulgaria's acceptance of the Russian proposal of financial aid; this led to the end of the talks. ÖUA, vol. 1, no. 960; at the same time, the two parties began discussing a common action against Serbia, which caused great concern in Belgrade; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, vol. 1, no. 82; ÖUA., vol. 1, no. 995. Ferdinand, following the political course set by himself, which was meant to prevent Bulgaria from forming closer relations with either side, Russia or Austro-Hungary, continued to declare his loyalty to both. During his visit to St Petersburg in February 1909 he assured Russia of his will to sever all relations with Vienna; whereas during his unofficial visit to Vienna in June 1909, he declared quite the opposite; DGP, vol. 26, no. 9347; vol. 27, no. 9768.

was dictated by the assumption that a conflict of interests between the potential allies,<sup>26</sup> especially the competition between Bulgaria and Serbia for influence in Macedonia, nullified all chances for a sound basis for their closer cooperation. Furthermore, it was believed that a Balkan union without Turkey, as an agent capable of easing tensions between Belgrade and Sofia, was a utopian idea unworthy of notice. More attention, then, was directed to the activities of N. Charikov, but with these failing, any news about the emerging Balkan alliance was dismissed as trifling. This astounding carefree attitude characterized not only the cabinets of the Central Powers but also their representatives in the Balkan states.

The news of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance first reached the Central Powers in the early April 1912. The German minister for foreign affairs Alfred von Kinderlen-Weachter had come into possession of a fragment of the treaty,<sup>27</sup> of which he casually notified Romania,<sup>28</sup> and Austro-Hungary,<sup>29</sup> and in mid-1912 the Viennese cabinet received the information about the Greco-Bulgarian treaty.<sup>30</sup> This valuable intelligence, however, soon came to be regarded as of little significance. The German emissary in Sofia, Rudolf Mittag, was duly instructed to verify it, but he failed to establish anything. In the light of this, Vienna chose to give credit to the assurances by the Bulgarian cabinet<sup>31</sup> that the information was not reliable, and refused to believe in the existence of a union of the Balkan states, allowing at best for some loose oral agreements between them.<sup>32</sup> The attitude taken by Austro-Hungary could be to a large degree attributed to the effect of the courtesy visits the Bulgarian king had paid to Vienna and Berlin, which indicated that despite tightening its relations with Russia after 1909, Bulgaria had retained a pro-Western orientation in its international policies, and it would not take any action against Turkey, which was under the Austro-German guardianship.

Neither in the Habsburg Monarchy nor in Germany was it considered that the European dominions of the High Porte could be in danger from a Balkan bloc, whose formation in the common view was an utter impossibility, yet both cabinets

<sup>26</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 3703.

<sup>27</sup> He had probably obtained it from the Serbian emissary in Berlin Milan Bogičević, who as early as the end of March 12 had been fully informed about the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement. Bogičević did not endorse the direction the Serbian policies were taking or the Russian interference with them, of which he officially advised German statesmen; O. Bickel, *Russland und die Entstehung des Balkanbundes 1912...*, p. 136, footnote 594. On this subject also: W. Schröder, *England, Europa und der Orient*, Stuttgart, 1938, p. 80.

<sup>28</sup> W. Schröder, *England, Europa und der Orient*, p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> ÖUA, vvol. 4, nos. 3530, 3540. At the same time the news of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance reached Constantinople; ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 3571.

<sup>30</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 3549.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, nos. 3601, 3607, 3703, 3728, 3730, 3746, 3747; DGP, vol. 33, no. 12114. Such assurances came also from the Serbians; DGP, vvol. 33, no. 12107; ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 3689.

<sup>32</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 3571, 3601, 3607; This was compounded by the fact that Vienna ignored the intelligence suggesting that the Balkan states were preparing for a confrontation with Turkey; DGP, vol. 33, no. 12072.

did contemplate the possibility of unrest spreading across the Balkans sparked by potential engagement of the Balkan states with the Albanian question. The threat was particularly acutely perceived by Vienna. Austro-Hungarian policy makers, who had followed with a growing concern the revolt mounting in Albania, and spreading into the territories for a long time claimed by both Serbia and Bulgaria, feared intervention of the Balkan states in the region, eager to secure their spheres of influence.<sup>33</sup> It was decided that this eventuality should be forcefully counteracted. However, Vienna was well aware that its interference with the developments occurring in the Balkans could lead to a conflict not only with the Balkan states but also with the European powers, which had accepted the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, yet were far from giving their consent to the strengthening of the Austro-Hungarian influence in Southeast Europe. And for a military clash that could turn into an all-European war Austro-Hungary was not prepared.<sup>34</sup>

Acting on this premise, the Austrian foreign minister Leopold Berchtold sought for allies who would support his endeavors to keep the territorial *status quo* in the Balkans.<sup>35</sup> For this diplomatic mission to succeed, it was necessary not only to win over to the cause the partners from the Triple Alliance but also to persuade the Entente that the action was urgently needed. Hence, having secured German support in mid-July,<sup>36</sup> on August 13, 1908, the Viennese cabinet issued a note to the governments of the European powers, proposing a joint action in the Balkans.<sup>37</sup> With a view to dispelling any suspicions of direct interference with the affairs in the Balkans, Berchtold suggested that the European powers, seizing on the recent change of government in Turkey,<sup>38</sup> should urge the new cabinet in Constantinople to actually implement the announced reforms in Albania and Macedonia. This move, on one hand, was to instill a conviction in the governments of the Balkan states that henceforth the High Porte would look after the interests of the ethnic groups inhabiting its territory, and on the other hand, it was meant to secure peace in the Peninsula by preemptively removing grounds for intervention from the Balkan states.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Ententepolitik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 523–533, 535–537.

<sup>34</sup> DGP, vol. 33, no. 12073.

<sup>35</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Ententepolitik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 533–534.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 523–533. It must be stressed that Kinderlen was much disappointed with the fact that the Viennese cabinet was pursuing its own independent policy with respect to the region considered quite important for the German national interest.

<sup>37</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 3687, 3712, 3714; М. Семов, *Победителят проси мир: балканските войни 1912–13*, София, 1995, p. 78; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Ententepolitik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 533–534.

<sup>38</sup> DGP, vol. 33, no. 12104.

<sup>39</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Ententepolitik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 533–534, R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej. Sześć odczytów w Paryżu w 1921 r.*, Kraków, 1921, p. 71.

Representatives of the powers would meet and discuss all the necessary arrangements at a conference specially convened for this purpose.<sup>40</sup> The plan was well received by Great Britain<sup>41</sup> and France; the latter even considered granting Russia and Austro-Hungary a special mandate, authorizing them to take common action toward containing the unrest in the Balkans and keeping the *status quo*.<sup>42</sup> The interested parties managed to enlist also the support of Russia for the project,<sup>43</sup> which fully aware of the preparations of the Balkan states for war, all along kept up the appearances, and made it look as if it were as eager to maintain peace in the Balkans as the other powers. Despite the seeming convergence, it soon turned out that the concerned parties had widely disparate visions of their individual contributions, which slowed down the negotiations on the common action,<sup>44</sup> and ultimately the project was rejected.<sup>45</sup> This did not mean, however, that the idea of preventing an armed conflict in the Balkans was totally abandoned by the European powers.

The helm of the diplomatic mission was now entrusted to the French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré,<sup>46</sup> and instantly the Russian foreign minister Sergei Sazonov became its fervent advocate.<sup>47</sup> The developments in the Balkans had taken the Russian cabinet by surprise, and it knew perfectly well that neither France nor Great Britain would join a potential armed conflict in the region. Furthermore, Russian isolated attempts to put pressure on its Balkan allies might seriously impair, established with great difficulty, its influence in this part of Europe. Therefore, St. Petersburg took steps toward a peaceful resolution of the tension building in the Balkans.<sup>48</sup> Russia was particularly worried by the persisting tensions in the relations

<sup>40</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, p. 537.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 538, 553. At the same time, however, the British cabinet expressed its doubts about putting the plan into effect; BD, vol. 9, no. 715.

<sup>42</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 535, 551–552.

<sup>43</sup> DGP, vol. 33, no. 12104.

<sup>44</sup> The delay was also caused by the attitude taken by Turkey, which felt resentment toward the European powers for their lack of reaction to the Turco-Italian conflict; G. Roloff, *Die Entstehung des Balkanbundes von 1912*, Geissen, 1922, p. 18; now Turkey firmly refused to submit to their dictate, B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 546–550.

<sup>45</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 546–550, *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolskis 1911–1914*, ed. F. Stieve, Berlin, 1926, vol. 2, no. 508. The decision was to a considerable degree influenced by the negative opinions about the plan voiced by the Balkan states; BD, vol. 9, nos. 658, 659, and Turkey; DGP, vol. 33, nos. 12091, 12093, 12119; ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 3731, 3766.

<sup>46</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, 537, *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 439.

<sup>47</sup> R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, p. 72.

<sup>48</sup> M. Tanty, *Rosja wobec wojen bałkańskich 1912–13*, Warszawa, 1970, p. 68–74. Active involvement of Russia stemmed from the fear that an armed conflict in the Balkans could easily turn into an

between Turkey and Montenegro<sup>49</sup> and the growing pro-war feeling in Bulgaria.<sup>50</sup> On September 29, 1912, in a telegram addressed to Poincaré, the French ambassador in St. Petersburg Georges Louis reported that during a private conversation the Russian minister for foreign affairs S. Sazonov had presented a proposal for a common diplomatic intervention in the capital cities of the Balkan states and in Constantinople, and assured of Russia's willingness to cooperate with the other powers.<sup>51</sup> The idea was welcomed by France,<sup>52</sup> which in addition to diplomatic pressure, resorted to other means aimed to coerce Bulgaria – which according to the French cabinet, posed the greatest threat to the *status quo* in the Balkans – into submitting to the will of the European powers, by refusing it loans that could possibly be spent on purchasing necessary war materials and armaments.

At the same time Sazonov had embarked on a series of visits to the European capitals, during which he sought to enlist the support of the other powers for common action. However, the diplomatic campaign undertaken by the Russian cabinet fell short of the mark. Even though the Russian-French project elicited much interest in London and in Berlin,<sup>53</sup> both Germany and Great Britain refrained from declaring openly their will to actively join the efforts to prevent an armed conflict in the Balkans.<sup>54</sup> Hence the Russian diplomatic service decided to act on its own. On September 17, 1912,<sup>55</sup> Sazonov met the Turkish ambassador in Berlin

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all-European war, for which Russia was not prepared; *Материалы по истории франко-русских отношений за 1910–1914 гг. Сборник секретных дипломатических документов Бывш. Императорского Министерства Иностранных Дел*, ed. P. Маршан, Москва, 1922, p. 289 and passim; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 1, no. 117. The Russian cabinet also expected an imminent end of the Turco-Italian war, which might cool the bellicose mood among the Balkan nations; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 1, no. 365.

<sup>49</sup> *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 466.

<sup>50</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke...*, p. 538.

<sup>51</sup> R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, p. 72.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> On September 17, 1912, the French ambassador in Berlin Paul Cambon wrote to Poincaré: “Mr. Sazonov expressed to the German cabinet his concern over the conduct of Bulgaria and Serbia, and remarked that the Great Powers should now urgently reach an understanding about means of localizing a war, should one break out. Mr. von Kinderlen [...] in response stated that he was by all means in favor of the idea.” R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, p. 73; Great Britain, too, displayed interest in the Russian-French project; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, p. 538.

<sup>54</sup> Germany's reluctance was determined, on one hand, by the fear of losing its investments in Turkey, and on the other hand, by the refusal to support Russia against Austro-Hungary, which sought an active role in the Balkans; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 546–550, *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 508; ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 3718; all the more so because the two countries had adopted the directions of their Eastern policies during the meeting of the German chancellor T. Bethmann-Hollweg with the Austrian foreign minister L. Berchtold in the early September 1912 in Buchlau; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, p. 536.

<sup>55</sup> R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, p. 73.

and presented the plan of far-reaching reforms in Macedonian, urging the cabinet in Constantinople to implement them immediately.<sup>56</sup> The proposal provided for the introduction of changes granting to the Christian population an assurance of safety to persons and property, equality before the law, and participation in local administration in proportion to its share in the ethnic composition of a community in the Turkish European provinces.<sup>57</sup> This, however, did not exactly match the French intentions. Hence the Russian ambassador in Paris Alexander Izvolsky, presenting the initiative taken by Sazonov, received a plain answer – France would not support the Russian plan unless it was approved not only by Great Britain, on the whole keeping away from the Balkan strife, but also by Germany and Austro-Hungary.<sup>58</sup> Given the stance taken by the ally, one could hardly expect approval for the Russian plan from the other powers.

All the while Poincaré corresponded avidly with the German cabinet.<sup>59</sup> In the course of the exchange, the German foreign minister Alfred von Kinderlen, anticipating an imminent outbreak of war in the Balkans, insisted that the conflict should be localized by means of a common declaration by the European powers addressed to the Balkan states. The declaration should unequivocally state that any change to the territorial *status quo* would not be accepted by the Great Powers. He also suggested entrusting to Russia and Austro-Hungary the execution of the plan on behalf of the other powers.<sup>60</sup> France totally supported the idea,<sup>61</sup> and the French ambassador Paul Cambon advised Sazonov in London about the French-German arrangements. The Russian minister, despite his initial objections to the idea of browbeating its Balkan allies, ultimately accepted the proposal.<sup>62</sup> Poincaré informed forthwith the German cabinet about the Russian decision and urged Germany to notify Austro-Hungary of the situation<sup>63</sup> as soon as possible, in order to prevent it from making an independent move.<sup>64</sup>

On October 3, 1912, Sazonov arrived in Paris. He assured the French Prime Minister that Russia was prepared to carry out the mediating mission jointly with

<sup>56</sup> *Материалы по истории...*, p. 252; ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 3720. At the same time the Russian diplomatic service attempted to put pressure on the Balkan states, appealing to them to maintain peace and suggesting a possible intervention by Austro-Hungary and Romania, should the allies turn against Turkey, and stated that under such circumstances it could not support for them any longer, BD, vol. 9, nos. 674, 718, 732; ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 3809.

<sup>57</sup> R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, 73; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, no. 402.

<sup>58</sup> R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, pp. 73–74.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74–76.

<sup>60</sup> DGP, vol. 33, nos. 12191, 12209, 12210.

<sup>61</sup> *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, nos. 451, 483.

<sup>62</sup> R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, 75; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, nos. 456, 458.

<sup>63</sup> This specific instruction Kinderlen sent by telegraph to the German charge d'affairs in Vienna Friedrich zu Stolberg on September 30, 1912 r.; DGP, vol. 33, no. 12190.

<sup>64</sup> *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 480. It was feared in Europe that an outbreak of war between the Balkan allies and Turkey could provoke an armed intervention of Austro-Hungary; *ibid.*, pp. 537–538.

Austro-Hungary, but he expressed his doubts about its efficacy, stating that the planned action would not succeed without the Great Powers ensuring that Turkey would carry out the promised reforms in its European dominions.<sup>65</sup> The text of the new memorandum drafted by Poincaré accommodated this suggestion. In addition to the appeal to the Balkan states to maintain peace and to respect the *status quo* in the Peninsula, and the declaration by the Great Powers that they would not accept any redrawing of the boundaries regardless of the outcome of an armed conflict, it included the proviso that safeguarded the much-needed reforms in Macedonia and Eastern Thracia.<sup>66</sup> Despite the apparent agreement of the all the interested powers, the final wording of the document provoked much debate,<sup>67</sup> which caused a delay, and the note was finally sent to the Balkan states on October 8, 1912.<sup>68</sup> Two days later Turkey was presented with a note in which the European powers urged it to implement the reforms in its European dominions, as stipulated by the provisions of the Berlin treaty.<sup>69</sup> These actions, however, were much belated. For by then the Balkan states had been fully prepared for war. The Balkan allies sent to Constantinople their own note, which the High Porte chose to ignore, and on October 10, 1912, they began a military operation.

The defeats suffered by Turkey in the war against the Balkan League, and the rapid advance of the Bulgarian troops toward Constantinople, alarmed the Great Powers.<sup>70</sup> Seizure of the Turkish capital by the Bulgarian army would put into place a new political configuration around the Black Sea Straits, so important in economic and strategic terms. Given the persisting lack of stability on the political scene in Bulgaria, multiple cabinet changes, governments formed alternately by parties widely disparate in their programs and representing totally opposite views on directions in Bulgarian international policies, the Central Powers and

<sup>65</sup> R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, p. 73; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 472; DGP, vol. 33, no. 12104.

<sup>66</sup> The text of the proposal in: *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 484; T. von Sosnosky, *Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns seit 1866*, p. 278; M. Tanty, *Rosja wobec wojen bałkańskich 1912–13*, p. 73; H. Batowski, *Państwa bałkańskie 1800–1923. Zarys historii dyplomatycznej i rozwoju terytorialnego*, Kraków, 1938, p. 188.

<sup>67</sup> On October 6, 1912, Austro-Hungary demanded that some portion of the document should be rephrased; R. Poincaré, *Geneza wojny światowej*, p. 76; the new version was presented on October 7, 1912; DGP, vol. 33, no. 12240; but the Viennese cabinet by that time had lost faith in the success of the diplomatic action in the Balkans; *ibid.*, vol. 33, no. 12166.

<sup>68</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4009, 4010, 4018, 4019, 4020; H. Batowski, *Państwa...*, p. 188; T. von Sosnosky, *Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns seit 1866*, p. 279; W. Schröder, *England, Europa und der Orient*, pp. 144–145.

<sup>69</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4024, 4025 4026. The text of the document in: И.Е. Гешов, *Балканский Союз. Воспоминания документов*, Петроград, 1915, p. 40; ÖUA, vol. 4, annex to no. 4102.

<sup>70</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 3879, 4165; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 565–567; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, nos. 547, 566, 593; DGP, vol. 33, no. 12364; vol. 34, pt. 1, no. 12761; H. Batowski, *Cieśniny Tureckie 1911–1936*, Warszawa, 1936, p. 8.

the Entente had a good cause to worry about securing, let alone strengthening, their influence in the area of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.

Acting on this apprehension, the contending European military-political blocs jointly took steps toward protecting their interests in the region. Hence, as early as the end of October and the beginning of November 1912, the Great Powers dispatched squadrons of warships to the area of the Black Sea Straits and to the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>71</sup> Turkey exploited to its own ends serious misgivings caused by the turn of the events in the Balkans, and on November 3, 1912, it allowed the warships flying the colors of the signatory states of the Berlin treaty to enter the Dardanelles.<sup>72</sup> The High Porte calculated that the presence of the fleets of the Great Powers would hinder Bulgaria from advancing on Constantinople, and at the same it would safeguard the Turkish capital against a mutiny of the demoralized troops stationed nearby. Between November 5 and 9, 1912, altogether 17 warships arrived in Constantinople, representing the Great Powers, Spain, Holland, and Romania.<sup>73</sup> An international corps, 2,500 seamen strong, including 576 Germans and 161 Austrians, was formed out of the crews, headed by the French rear admiral Louis du Fournet. The corps occupied the points of strategic importance in the city, and was intended as a peacekeeping force should the Bulgarian troops storm into Constantinople.<sup>74</sup> Simultaneously, in response to Turkey's appeal, diplomatic actions were taken toward ending the war and normalizing political relations in the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>75</sup> Already on November 4, 1912, devastated by the military defeats, the Turkish cabinet had turned to the Great Powers for mediation in peace negotiations with the Balkan League.<sup>76</sup> Because the powers were hesitant over giving a straightforward answer,<sup>77</sup> on November 13, 1912, the Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha sent a cable to Sofia,<sup>78</sup> in which invoking the support of the Great Powers, he offered a truce to Bulgaria and suggested immediate peace negotiations, asking the king to promote the idea among the other allies.

<sup>71</sup> In this mission the Central Powers were represented by the Austro-Hungarian squadron including the ships of the line "Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand," "Feldmarschall Graf von Radetzky" and „Zrinyi”, the cruisers "Aspern" and "Admiral Spaun," and three counter-torpedo boats, as well as by the German division of four cruisers: "Vineta," "Herta," "Goeben" and "Breslau."

<sup>72</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 4252.

<sup>73</sup> J. Gozdawa-Gołębiewski, *Od wojny krymskiej do bałkańskiej. Działania flot wojennych na morzach i oceanach w latach 1853–1914*, Gdańsk, 1985, p. 448, footnote 1; on this subject also: М. Семов, *Победителят проси мир: балканските войни 1912–13*, pp. 117–118.

<sup>74</sup> J. Gozdawa-Gołębiewski, *Od wojny krymskiej do bałkańskiej...*, p. 118.

<sup>75</sup> W. Schröder, *England, Europa und der Orient*, pp. 158–209.

<sup>76</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4251, 4265, 4268, 2496 and passim; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 546; М. Семов, *Победителят проси мир: балканските войни 1912–13*, p. 106.

<sup>77</sup> The failure of the Great Powers to respond promptly can be attributed to the ongoing debate on the scope and conditions of a possible mediation; See: *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, pp. 531, 534, 549; DGP, vol. 33, nos. 12269, 12270, 12302, 12305, 12307, 12310; ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4167, 4200, 4216, 4221, 4241.

<sup>78</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 4421.

The talks began on November 25, 1912.<sup>79</sup> Besides Bulgarian and Turkish representatives, the meetings were attended also by Serbian, Montenegrin, and Greek delegates. After a few days of intense debate, on December 3, 1912, a protocol was signed in Chataldza,<sup>80</sup> which provided for ceasing all military operations pending the conclusion of a peace conference scheduled to take place in London under the supervision of the Great Powers. For the Balkan allies this could be a favorable circumstance. With the outbreak of the Balkan war, the Great Powers had abandoned the previously promoted idea of the inviolable *status quo* in the Balkans, stipulating, however, that the prerequisite for any contemplated partitioning of the Turkish dominions in Europe was an immediate ceasefire. Another matter beyond dispute was the political status of Constantinople, which was to remain unconditionally within the Turkish boundaries. This standpoint was demonstrated by the declarations issued by representatives of the Great Powers. As early as November 2, 1912, the Russian foreign minister Sazonov had advised Russian emissaries to the European capitals that St. Petersburg would not object to the redrawing of the boundaries in the Balkans, provided that territorial changes would be introduced without any interference from the other powers and would concern all the interested Balkan states. The partitioning of the Turkish dominions would be based on an amicable division of the acquired territories, in accordance with the conditions stipulated by the agreements between the allies.<sup>81</sup> Three days earlier, the Bulgarian emissary Nikolai Madjarov met in London the British finance minister David Lloyd George. During the conversation the English dignitary stated that the cabinet headed by Edward Grey was in favor of dividing the European provinces of Turkey. Lloyd George also assured Madjarov that France and Russia supported the idea, too.<sup>82</sup> On November 3, 1912, the Austrian foreign minister L. Berchtold delivered a speech to the same effect. Addressing the Austrian Parliament, he stated that in the light of the recent political developments, Austro-Hungary saw the necessity for a major revision of the existing boundaries of the Balkan states.<sup>83</sup>

This remarkable concurrence on the part of the Great Powers, contending for influence in the Peninsula, did not stem from their willingness to compensate the Balkan allies for their war expenses, neither was it meant to legitimize the nationalist agendas that had pushed them to take up arms against Turkey.

<sup>79</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 4622. On the proceedings: *ibid.*, vol. 4, nos. 4680, 4705, 4722; vol. 5, no. 4747; H. Rohde, *Meine Erlebnisse im Balkankrieg und kleine Skizzen aus dem türkischen Soldatenleben*, Berlin, 1913, pp. 52–57, 60–61.

<sup>80</sup> The text of the document in: J. Rubacha, A. Malinowski, A. Giza, *Historia Bułgarii 1870–1915. Materiały źródłowe z komentarzami*, vol. 1, Warszawa, 2004, pp. 109–110; E.C. Helmreich, *The diplomacy of the Balkan wars, 1912–1913*, Cambridge, 1938, p. 203.

<sup>81</sup> *Материалы по истории...*, p. 293; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 544.

<sup>82</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 565–567.

<sup>83</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 4227.

Their willingness to mediate between the conflicted parties, declared since the end of October 1912,<sup>84</sup> was dictated by their particular interests. From the perspective of the Great Powers, the situation in the Balkans had become much more complex. The prospect of Bulgaria seizing Constantinople, the taking control of Salonika by the Bulgarians or by the Greeks, the threat of Serbian intrusion on the Adriatic coast, and above all, the debilitating effect on Turkey by the continuing war – these could seriously hamper their economic and political influence in the region.<sup>85</sup> This standpoint was vividly demonstrated by the military naval expedition to Constantinople, giving the Balkan allies, and Bulgaria in particular, to understand that if necessary, the Great Powers would stop at nothing to save Turkey from an ultimate collapse.<sup>86</sup> In addition to the future of Constantinople, which in view of the divergent opinions issued by Bulgarian diplomats,<sup>87</sup> caused great concern in Europe, another burning issue was that of Serbian aspirations to gain access to the Adriatic Sea at the expense of the Albanian coastline.

The idea of carving out a passageway to the Adriatic Sea through annexation of the northern part of Albania had been contemplated as early as the end of the nineteenth century, but it was not until the time of the First Balkan War that the plan could be put into effect. Belgrade's designs, however, seriously conflicted with the interests of the Great Powers, especially those closely involved in this part of the Balkan Peninsula, Austro-Hungary and Italy,<sup>88</sup> which strongly urged the creation of an autonomous Albanian province or an independent Albanian state. Nevertheless, it was feared in Europe that the Serbian aspirations might be supported by the Balkan allies, which in an event of confrontation could incur grave consequences. Hence, representatives of the Great Powers began sounding out the attitude toward this issue held by the most important player in the Balkans – Bulgaria. Since the Albanian question was not among the Bulgarian priorities, Sofia's standpoint concurred with the intentions of the Great Powers. Earlier, during the meeting with Lloyd George the Bulgarian emissary Madjarov

<sup>84</sup> W. Schröder, *England, Europa und der Orient*, pp. 159–160; М. Семов, *Победителят проси мир: балканските войни 1912–13*, pp. 104–105.

<sup>85</sup> B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 553–554.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 553.

<sup>87</sup> In the course of the conversation on November 31, 1912, Madjarov told Lloyd George: “Constantinople and the Dardanelles are of no interest to us, but access to the Aegean coast is our priority”; М. Семов, *Победителят проси мир: балканските войни 1912–13*, p. 103; whereas a few days later the Bulgarian emissary in Vienna Salabashev during the meeting with L. Berchtold said: “Turkey must withdraw from Europe for good. Its European dominions should be partitioned among the Christian Balkan states. Constantinople should fall to Bulgaria”; *ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>88</sup> On the attitude of Italy and Austro-Hungary toward Serbian plans of obtaining access to the Adriatic Sea, many documents in B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 571–592; on this subject also: ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4170, 4206 4359, 4373 and *passim*; DGP, vol. 33, no. 12320.

declared that Albania should be granted autonomy. However, he emphasized that the rights of the Christian population must be specifically assured, and preferably, the Balkan states themselves, acting on an international mandate, should see to it that these rights were respected. At the same time, Stoyan Danev, visiting Budapest in mid-November 1912, during the conversation with L. Berchtold went to great lengths to reinforce the Austrian minister's belief that Bulgaria supported Serbian aspirations to gain access to the Adriatic Sea,<sup>89</sup> but as M. Semov rightly points out, rather than reflecting the actual standpoint of the Bulgarian cabinet, it was a sly diplomatic maneuver.<sup>90</sup> The Great Powers, in the face of a resolute opposition of the Triple Alliance to the Serbian territorial expansion at the expense of Albania, had come up with a solution enabling Serbia access to the Aegean Sea.<sup>91</sup> This idea was met with great displeasure in Bulgaria.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the more the Great Powers insisted on Serbian access to the sea in the south, the stronger the support declared by Bulgaria for Serbian aspirations to seize the northern Albania. It took

<sup>89</sup> М. Семов, *Победителят проси мир: балканските войни 1912–13*, p. 109. Danev presented this standpoint earlier during the meeting with the Austro-Hungarian emissary in Sofia Adam Tarnowski on November 7, 1912; ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4314, 4407; a similar position was taken by I. E. Geshov; *ibid.*, vol. 4, nos. 4407, 4408; and the Bulgarian emissary in St Petersburg Paprikov; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 565. Serbian claims to the Albanian coast were recognized also by Greece; ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4431, 4432, 4490.

<sup>90</sup> М. Семов, *Победителят проси мир: балканските войни 1912–13*, p. 109, ÖUA, vol. 5, no. 4929.

<sup>91</sup> ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4326, 4379; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, p. 573; М. Семов, *Победителят проси мир: балканските войни 1912–13*, p. 108. At the same time Austro-Hungary, with Germany's assistance (on this subject: E.C. Helmreich, *The diplomacy of the Balkan wars*, p. 236 and *passim*), warned Serbia that it would send a military expedition if Serbia did not give up its claims to the Albanian coast. Serbian statesmen, however, absolutely ruled out such a possibility; DGP, vol. 33, no. 12363, ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4351, 4353, 4354, 4365, 4371 and *passim.*; vol. 5, nos. 4741, 4792 and *passim.* The tension escalated, as Russia, strongly backing up Serbia (*ibid.*, vol. 4, no. 4394; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, pp. 577–578), influenced by the line taken by England and France, which in unison declared that they "would not engage in a war against the Central Powers on account of a Serbian port at the Adriatic" (B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, p. 578; ÖUA, vol. 5, nos. 4853, 4854; W. Schröder, *England, Europa und der Orient*, p. 175), ultimately withdrew its support, calling upon the Serbs to submit to the will of the Great Powers; B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, p. 579; ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 4458. Furthermore, E. Grey proposed a solution to the dispute, which involved building an extraterritorial railway line connecting the Serbian border with a port at the Adriatic, which fully controlled by Serbia, would secure Belgrade's economic interests; (B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, p. 580; ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4170, 4382). This conception was finally accepted by Austro-Hungary (B. von Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, p. 595; DGP, vol. 34, pt. 1, no. 12579), but it was not approved by Serbia.

<sup>92</sup> Г. Марков, *България в Балканския съюз срещу Османската империя 1912–1913*, София, 1989, p. 111; И.Е. Гешов, *Лична кореспонденция*, София, 1994, pp. 245–247.

the firm resolution jointly by Austro-Hungary and Italy,<sup>93</sup> stating that bound by the understanding on this issue from 1891, the two powers would not condone any territorial rearrangements in the western part of the Peninsula, for Bulgaria to drop its support for Belgrade. Besides, the Albanian question had taken now a whole new dimension. On November 28, 1912, in Vlorë (Valona) an assembly of Albanian notables headed by Ismail Qemal Bey declared Albanian independence.<sup>94</sup> A newly formed provisional government instantly issued a protest against the presence of the troops of the Balkan allies stationing on the Albanian territory, and appealed to Austro-Hungary and Italy for protection. With the two powers assuming supervision over Albania, Bulgaria, not willing to risk a conflict with the Habsburg Monarchy, stopped pursuing the issue.

It was under these circumstances that the peace conference in London on December 17, 1912, opened its first session. It was attended by delegates from Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, and Turkey, plus the deputation of ambassadors of the Great Powers, which acted independently, considering matters related to their interests and formally overseeing the course of the debate between the Balkan allies and the High Porte. The negotiations at the peace conference did not go smoothly, which was caused mostly by the attitude of Turkey. Despite the defeats in the war, it did not intend to let go of its European dominions. The Great Powers had to intervene in the course of the deliberations several times, yet despite their pressing, the two sides could not reach an agreement. In the end, the talks were broken off, and the warfare was resumed. Turkey suffered more defeats, losing the besieged fortresses in Adrianople and Janina.

For the Great Powers, far more important were the proceedings of the conference of the ambassadors, which dealt *inter alia* with the Albanian question. During the debate, much controversy was aroused by the issue of determining the borders of the future state, finally leading to the emergence of three different proposals. The Albanian delegates opted for including within the boundaries of the new state all four vilayets on whose territory in 1912 an autonomous Albania was proclaimed within the Ottoman Empire. However, even Austro-Hungary and Italy, favorable as they were to the Albanian cause, could not push these demands through. Therefore, Italy suggested that the border of the new Balkan state should be based on the then Turkish-Montenegrin border, encompassing Scutari in the north, and in a line running southward, it should include in the Albanian territory

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<sup>93</sup> On October 30, 1912 L. Berchtold stated that Austro-Hungary would thwart Serbian attempts to establish a foothold on the Adriatic and it would support the cause of Albanian independence, of which he officially notified the Serbian government on November 8, 1912. The same attitude was taken by Italy, which declared on November 4, 1912, that “the Serbian corridor to the Adriatic is incompatible with the Italian interests”; H. Batowski, *Państwa...*, p. 197; on this subject also: *Материалы по истории...*, p. 294; M. Tanty, *Rosja wobec wojen bałkańskich 1912–13*, pp. 104–106 and passim.

<sup>94</sup> *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 2, no. 595; ÖUA, vol. 4, no. 4716.

Prizran, Dibra, and Ohrid, incorporating in the south a large part of Epirus with Janina. These two proposals were countered by the third one, advanced by the Balkan allies and endorsed by Russia. Under its terms, the border of the future Albania should run from the mouth of the Mati River to the west of the Black Drin River, and leaving out Konitsa and Gjirokastra, reach the Adriatic Sea in the vicinity of the Valona Bay.<sup>95</sup> The debate on this issue was so intense that it very nearly led to a conflict between Russia and Austro-Hungary.<sup>96</sup> Ultimately, however, the conference of the ambassadors on March 22, 1913, accepted the project put forward by Austro-Hungary, providing for the creation of the Albanian state on the territory of two former vilayets, Scutari and Janina. Four months later, the Great Powers laid down the statute of Albania and recognized it as an independent duchy under the protectorate of the European powers.<sup>97</sup> Responding to the protests from Montenegro and Serbia, the powers took immediate steps toward overcoming their resistance, threatening a blockade of the Montenegrin coast. Moreover, Italy and Austro-Hungary on May 8, 1913, signed a secret agreement providing for a joint occupation of the Albanian territory, to safeguard it against a possible foreign invasion.<sup>98</sup> The show of determination on the part of the powers forced both Montenegro and Serbia to step down. On April 12, 1913, the Montenegrin and the Serbian troops withdrew from Scutari and left the Albanian territory.<sup>99</sup>

For Austro-Hungary, and to some extent also for Germany, far less important were the resolutions adopted at the second round of the London conference, which ended on May 30, 1913, with a peace treaty signed by the Balkan allies and Turkey. Under its terms the High Porte ceded to Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece, all its European dominions beyond the Enez-Midyne line. This turn of events was not advantageous to the German reason of state, because it put at risk German interests in Turkey, and made problematic the issue of utilizing properly the capital invested there; however, a new field of action opened up for the Central Powers.

The treaties struck by the Balkan states in spring and summer 1912, which in historiography have been termed “the Balkan alliance”, in fact did not lead to the creation of a unified bloc; they were merely a set of bilateral agreements. It might do well to point out that the provisos of individual documents were often vague, and sometimes even mutually contradictory. Being flawed, they could easily be interpreted in diverse ways, and this in time gave rise to differences and tensions within the Balkan League. Quite telling in this respect is the dispute between

<sup>95</sup> On this subject many documents in: DGP, vol. 34, pt. 1.

<sup>96</sup> M. Tanty, *Rosja wobec wojen bałkańskich 1912–13*, pp. 128–131.

<sup>97</sup> H. Batowski, *Państwa...*, pp. 198–202; E.C. Helmreich, *The diplomacy of the Balkan wars*, p. 296; on this subject many documents in: DGP, vol. 34, pt. 2.

<sup>98</sup> *Dokumente aus russischen Geheimarchiven soweit sie bis zum 1. Juli 1918 eingegangen sind*, ed. Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, 1919, pp. 38–41.

<sup>99</sup> *Материалы по истории...*, p. 363.

Bulgaria and Serbia, in which as stipulated by the treaty signed by the two states, the role of an arbiter was to be assumed by Russia. The Russian diplomatic service strove to keep the Balkan bloc tightly knit; however, as time went by, its support for the Serbian claims was more and more evident, and it mounted pressure on Bulgaria to accept them. It was impossible for Bulgaria to recognize these claims, for it entailed giving up the nationalist agenda with which Bulgaria had gone to war against Turkey. Hence, Russia soon came to be resented in Sofia, and the opposition circles became more and more outspoken, openly urging rapprochement with the Central Powers. The latter could seize upon this change as an opportunity to snatch Bulgaria from Russia's sphere of influence and to turn it into an important part of their military-political bloc, not only keeping them up to date on developments in the Balkans, but above all, strengthening their position in the area of the Black Sea Straits. Neither Austro-Hungary nor Germany had leverage over Serbia; however, a chance of enlisting Bulgaria as a new ally presented itself with a new conflict arising in the Balkans – the dispute between Bulgaria and Romania over the southern Dobrudzha, in which the Central Powers could act as mediators.

Ever since the outbreak of war against Turkey, relations between Bucharest and Sofia had been severely strained. Romania had announced that in an event of changes to the political map of the Balkans, it would require territorial compensation for the alleged shift in the power dynamic in the region. Because Romania did not share the border with Turkey, it focused its claims on Bulgaria, from which it demanded a cession of southern Dobrudzha. Even though at the beginning the Bulgarian cabinet did not fully assess the threat posed by Romania, it still sought to conciliate the northern neighbor. The steps taken as early as the end of 1912 failed, yet the rising tension between Bulgaria and the other Balkan allies made the cabinet in Sofia realize that it could not afford to antagonize Romania.<sup>100</sup> Hence, in January 1913 Stoyan Danev promptly began consulting Romanian delegates in London<sup>101</sup> on the project drafted in Bucharest providing for the acquisition by Romania of a strip of Bulgarian territory extending from Tutrakan, a town on the Danube, to Balchik in southern Dobrudzha, and for the assurance of full rights and autonomy for the Kucovlachs in Macedonia.<sup>102</sup> While the Bulgarian side was

<sup>100</sup> А. Тошев, *Балканските войни*, vol. 2, София, 1931, p. 132

<sup>101</sup> The Romanian delegation attended the peace conference in London even though it was not involved in the conflict between the Balkan League and Turkey. It had received a special invitation from the European powers, and had been granted the right to participate in deliberations that concerned matters of particular interests for Romania; DGP, vol. 34, pt. 1, no. 12564. It should be emphasized, however, that Romania as early as the end of October 1912 very clearly gave it to understand that its participation in the peace conference was necessary; ÖUA, vol. 4, nos. 4173, 4211. This standpoint was eventually endorsed by Germany and Austro-Hungary; *ibid.*, vol. 4, nos. 4211, 4212.

<sup>102</sup> ÖUA, vol. 5, nos. 5257, 5262; Г. Марков, *България в Балканския съюз срещу Османската империя 1912–1913*, pp. 184–185; И. Е. Гешов, *Лична...*, pp. 250–252, 253–254.

ready to concede the second demand, it ruled out the possibility of yielding a large portion of its land.<sup>103</sup> The steadfast position of Bulgaria could not be softened even by the threats issued by Nicolae Mişu, representing the Romanian cabinet in the negotiations, who warned that his country would not stop short of taking military actions<sup>104</sup> and seizing the disputed area by force. As a result, the talks came to a standstill,<sup>105</sup> for which the Romanians resolutely blamed the Bulgarian side.<sup>106</sup> In the end, the two countries contented themselves with signing a protocol in London on January 29, 1913, which was to provide a basis for further discussions.<sup>107</sup> The negotiations resumed in early February in Sofia proved futile, too,<sup>108</sup> and a wide discrepancy between the claims pressed by Romania and the concessions declared by Bulgaria clearly portended that no agreement could be reached.

Fiasco of the Bulgarian-Romanian negotiations in London sent a wave of alarm through Europe.<sup>109</sup> Given the war waged by the Balkan allies with Turkey, a new military conflict in the Peninsula would be a highly undesirable development. Moreover, the dispute between Romania and Bulgaria was of immediate significance for the Great Powers, because the conflicted sides figured largely in the plans envisaged by the two contending political blocs. This explains mediating efforts undertaken especially by the most concerned ones, Austro-Hungary and Russia.<sup>110</sup> They carried out their mission with much circumspection, so as “to retain, or win over, the loyalty of the one, and not to alienate the other,” as H. Batowski aptly put it.<sup>111</sup> The actions failed to bring about desired effects, hence, both powers finally backed the proposal put forward in mid-February 1913 by the Italian delegate Antonio di San Giuliano, suggesting that the issue should be submitted to mediation carried by all the European powers.<sup>112</sup> In Sofia the idea was received with much suspicion, and the Bulgarian government

<sup>103</sup> ÖUA, vol. 5, nos. 5262, 5428, 5557.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, nos. 5334, 5334, 5437 5451, 5565, 5590 and passim; DGP, vol. 34, pt. 1, no. 12782.

<sup>105</sup> ÖUA, vol. 5, nos. 5310, 5311, 5452, 5474 and passim.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, nos. 5050, 5310, 5311.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, nos. 5589, 5592, 5621, 5671.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, nos. 5669, 5713, 5718 and passim; DGP, vol. 34, pt. 1, no. 12778; M. Tanty, *Rosja wobec wojen bałkańskich 1912–13*, p. 162.

<sup>109</sup> DGP, vol. 34, pt. 1, nos. 12870, 12871.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., vol. 34, nos. 12874, 12906, 12912, 12927; ÖUA, vol. 5, nos. 5308, 5309, 5310, 5311, 5326, 5349, 5616 and passim; *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel...*, vol. 3, no. 707.

<sup>111</sup> H. Batowski, *Państwa...*, p. 205. This attitude is evidenced by the Austro-Hungarian conceptions that had Bulgaria cede its territory to Romania in return for backing its claims to Salonika or for compensation of its loss in the south at the expense of Serbia; DGP, vol. 34, pt. 2, no. 13042; ÖUA, vol. 5, nos. 5585, 5586, 5895, 5618, 6023, 6025, 6034, 6076 and passim; and the assurance by the Russian cabinet that in the Bulgarian-Romanian conflict Russia endorsed the position of Bulgaria; ÖUA, vol. 5, no. 6026. On the subject of Russia's attitude to the Bulgarian-Romanian dispute: M. Tanty, *Rosja wobec wojen bałkańskich 1912–13*, p. 167–170 and passim; on the efforts by Austro-Hungary; E.C. Helmreich, *The diplomacy...*, p. 374.

<sup>112</sup> ÖUA, vol. 5, nos. 5799, 5832.

stalled,<sup>113</sup> but in the end, on February 24, 1913, it agreed to the proposed arbitration.<sup>114</sup> The conference began its deliberations in St Petersburg on March 31, 1913,<sup>115</sup> but the atmosphere in which the talks were conducted was highly charged. Hence, despite the months-long discussions no compromise was achieved, and on May 9, 1913, the two sides merely signed a final protocol.<sup>116</sup> Under its terms Bulgaria undertook to cede to Romania the fortress Silistra with the three-kilometer wide stretch of land around it, to demolish the remaining fortifications on its territory, and to assure full rights to the Kucovlach in Macedonia, while Romania was obliged to pay compensation to all persons leaving their homesteads in the acquired area. The settlement enforced by the European powers satisfied neither of the two sides, which created the risk that they would strive to change its terms. In this strife it was Romania that gained an advantage over the opponent, for in the period of the Second Balkan War it successfully pursued its territorial claims. Moreover, the actions taken by Austro-Hungary toward strengthening its influence in Bulgaria, despite Germany's support, failed. This, however, did not deter the Central Powers from undertaking similar efforts in the next future.

Seizing on the change of government in Bulgaria and on the arrival in power of parties displaying a pro-Western orientation, such attempts were made during the Bucharest Congress in summer 1913. However, the support of the Central Powers did little to strengthen the position of Bulgaria, and consequently it failed to execute its will in such issues as the division of Macedonia or determining the national belonging of the Aegean port Kavala. Nevertheless, the influence of the Central Powers in Bulgaria grew stronger, which indirectly led to Bulgaria entering the First World War as their ally.

Recapitulating the diplomatic activities of Austro-Hungary and Germany in the Balkans on the eve of the First Balkan War, it should be stated that they were essentially a continuation of the policies pursued in the earlier period. They involved primarily the gradual expansion of their spheres of influence in this trouble spot of Europe, coupled with the concomitant elimination of the presence of the other powers, especially Russia. Yet, the taken actions, for which no expenses and efforts were spared, failed to bring spectacular effects. Even though the Central Powers succeeded in snatching Bulgaria from Russian supervision and in thwarting Serbian intrusion on the Adriatic coast, their partners, Turkey and Bulgaria, were enfeebled by the Balkan war, and their political, economic, and military capacity suffered

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, nos. 5916, 5921.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, no. 5932.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, no. 6396; А. Кузманова, "Румънските териториални претенции за Южна Добруджа и Букурещкият договор", in: *Букурещкия договор и съдбата на Южна Добруджа. Сборник с изследвания*, Добрич, 1994, p. 15.

<sup>116</sup> The text of document in: J. Rubacha, A. Malinowski, A. Giza, *Historia Bułgarii...*, vol. 1, pp. 118–119.

a decline. Also, it is worthwhile emphasizing that independent Albania, which had come into being owing to the Austro-Hungarian diplomatic mission, soon fell under the influence of Italy.

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