

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MACEDONIAN AND RUSSIAN FACTORS REGARDING THE ISSUE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF MACEDONIAN STATE IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN AND THE BALKAN WARS

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1. Introduction to the positions

In the period between the Congress of Berlin and the Balkan Wars, the positions of the Macedonian and Russian factors concerning the establishment of the Macedonian state were diametrically opposed.

After the Eastern Crisis, the Macedonian factor did their utmost efforts and sacrifices to establish Macedonian state. The beginning of this struggle coincides with the Razlog and Kresna Uprisings.¹ State formation has been the main goal of the Macedonian liberation process ever since. This view continued to be true of the Eastern crisis, the Ilinden Uprising and the People's Liberation War and even of today's generation after the collapse of the former SFRY.²

Contrary to the aspirations of the Macedonian factor, the Russian factor planned and insisted that Macedonia and its people be included into national liberation movements and dominances of another nation (or nations).³ These efforts by the Russian factor emerged toward the end of the 18th century and lasted until the united Macedonian body was torn apart and Macedonia was divided among Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece in 1913.

Even though the policy of tsarist Russia in the crucial 1912-1913 was a result of the broader established policy of the great European powers, its position toward the Macedonian issue in the period between the Eastern Crisis to the Balkan Wars left a deep mark and predetermined the fate of Macedonia and the Macedonian people.⁴

¹ K. P. Stojanov, *Trideset godini nazad – istoricheski zapiski po Prvoto makedonsko vostanie prez 1876 god. /Thirty Years Ago – Historical Records after the First Macedonian Uprising in 1876/* Kjustendil 1903 /; Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod za samostojnost i za nacionalna država /Documents about the Struggle for Independence and National state by the Macedonian People /, Skopje 1981 Vol. I, pp. 242, 245–261., Skopje, 1981.

² The Constitution of the Macedonian Uprising Committee from 1878; Formal decision of the National Assembly of Macedonia and the Manifesto of the Provisional Government of Macedonia from 1880/1881; the Kruševo Manifesto; the ASNOM decisions in: *Documents about the Struggle...* Vol. I, pp 245-261, 265-269, 397-399; Vol. II, pp 590-602.

³ Vlado Popovski, *Rusija, Balkanot i Makedonija – Makedonskoto prašanje vo dokumentite na Kominternata, /Russia, the Balkans and Macedonia – The Macedonian Issue in the Documents of the Comintern/* Vol.I, Book 1, pp XXVII–CIV, Skopje, 1999.

⁴ *Dokumenti za borbata... /Documents about the Struggle.../* Vol. I, pp 230–231, 241; *Makedonija vo megjunarodnite dogovori /Macedonia in the International Treaties/*, Arhiv na Makedonija, Skopje 1994, pp 137–143.

2. The Macedonian and Russian factors and the issue of Macedonian state before the Ilinden Uprising

In the period before the Ilinden Uprising (1903), the Macedonian factor appeared on the political scene in the 1860s, in the struggles of Serbia to liberate Serbian towns of the Ottoman presence, when a political and combat base for the ensuing events during the Eastern Crisis was formed. It was then that an agreement was reached for a general Balkan uprising against the Ottomans, with the slogan "The Balkan to the Balkan people". The Macedonians entered with a widespread conspiracy network and a great number of military units that had crossed the Rubicon of insurrection and transformed themselves into revolutionary units, such as those led by Iljo Maleševski, Stefo Nikolov, the priest Bufski, Stojan Karastoilov and many others. In that period, Dimitar Pop-Georgiev Berovski agreed with Mićo Ljubibratić for an uprising in Macedonia at the same time with Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵ Stojan Vezenkov went on a mission to the Albanian beys [governors] for a joint fight for the liberation of Macedonia and Albania against the Ottomans.⁶ This general Balkan conspiracy was planned together with the Serbian Prime Minister Ilija Garašanin, who envisioned a dominant role for Serbia and Greater Serbian tendencies over the Balkan countries under the Ottoman rule.

However, this conspiracy helped by the Russian part did not have any effects. Prince Mihailo Obrenović turned his back to the Russian policy and to the Balkan revolutionary subjects, connecting with Austria-Hungary, that promised him to liberate Bosnian towns from Ottoman garrisons and rule. Prince Mihailo Obrenović paid for it with his own life when he was assassinated in 1868.⁷ These circumstances led to the development of numerous secret revolutionary groups and committees in the towns and villages of Macedonia, such as the general movement for restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric with the sole purpose of obtaining a status of Macedonian millet.⁸ When this did not give any results either because of the Ottoman policy or the Russian interventions, the first generation of Macedonian revolutionaries decided to resolve the Macedonian issue with an uprising (Dimitar Berovski).⁹

During the two years of the Razlog and Kresna uprisings, the Macedonian factor explicitly established the Macedonian statehood program, which is evident in the symbols, the political goals and the legal documents of the uprisings. In this period, the Macedonian factor liberated several parts of Macedonia where it established

⁵ Vasa Čubrilović, *Bosanski ustanak /Bosnian uprising/*, Beograd 1931, p 38.

⁶ Aleksandar Matkovski, *Otporot vo Makedonija /Resistance in Macedonia/*, Skopje 1983, Vol. 4, pp 807–810.

⁷ See: *Istorija srpskog naroda /History of the Serbian People/*, Belgrade 1994, Vol. 1, p. 301.

⁸ Petko Račov Slavejkov, *Pisma do Egzarhot Josif vo vrska so narodno-crkovnoto dvizhenje vo Makedonija – Vekove /Letters to Exarch Josif regarding the people's religious movement in Macedonia/*, 1989, No.1; Risto Pop Lazarov, *Osloboditelnite vooruženi borbi na makedonskiot narod vo period 1850-1878 /Macedonian people's armed struggles for liberation/*, Skopje 1978, pp 247–253; Blaže Ristovski, *Unijatstvo vo Makedonija /Uniatism in Macedonia/ – Razgledi*, 1960, No. 9 and 10.

⁹ Dimitar Pop Georgiev-Berovski's journal in his grandson Dimitar Berovski's book: *Dimit'r Pop Georgiev Berovski, Život i delo /Life and Work/*, Sofia 1986, pp 202–205.

revolutionary government and adopted general acts, regulating the structure of the revolutionary territory and the whole of Macedonia, anticipating its total liberation.¹⁰ In that sense, the domestic Macedonian factor clearly defined the direction of its struggle, highlighting the interests of Macedonia and envisioning it as a separate political unit in the Balkans, thus confronting itself to the Russian (and European) interests concerning Macedonia.

Neither Macedonian interests nor Macedonian subjects were taken into consideration by the Russian policy in Macedonia as part of the Balkans. It was only after the Kresna Uprising that Russia realized Macedonia's aspirations to create its own state. During the Kresna Uprising and after it, even though it became aware of these aspirations, Russia disregarded the interest of Macedonia to create its own state.

In its Balkan policy, Russia first included Macedonia in its project of Greater Greece¹¹, then, before 1870, in the project of Greater Serbia – from the Danube to the Mesta¹², and after 1870, in the Greater (San Stefano) Bulgaria.¹³ In the end, disappointed by the ingratitude of the governments of these little states, and faced with the opposition of the other European powers; realizing how unreal those projects had been, Russia took radically different approach toward partitioning Macedonia in favor of the Balkan states, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, under its political control and according to its state interests.

In that respect, before the emergence of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, Russia had taken several dramatic and uncompromising steps to undermine any chances of the Macedonian factor to establish its own state, policy and church.

Firstly, it persuaded the Sultan not to allow Macedonians any possibilities or procedures for church emancipation from the Patriarchate and the Exarchate, for restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric, or for Vatican Union in the events of 1872-1874.¹⁴

Secondly, Russia threatened the Macedonian factor for the Kresna Uprising, which European diplomats misinterpreted as Russian provocation in relation to the Berlin Treaty. Pressured by the emperor himself, Russian occupying forces in Bulgaria had prepared military

¹⁰ Ivan Katardžiev, *Kresnenskoto vostanie – Borba do pobeda /Kresna Uprising – Struggle to Victory/*, Skopje 1983, Book 4, pp 35–53; Manol Pandevski, *Kresnenskoto vostanie vo Makedonija 1878-1879 /Kresna Uprising in Macedonia 1878-1879/*, MANU, Skopje 1982, pp 27–59; Slavko Dimevski, Ivan Katardžiev, Stevan Gaber i dr., *Pravilata-Ustavot na makedonskiot vostanički komitet vo Kresnenskoto vostanie / Regulations – Constitution of the Macedonian Uprising Committee in the Kresna Uprising/*, ISPPi, Skopje 1980, pp 39–63, 137–147, 202–232; Slavko Dimevski i dr., *Makedonskata liga i ustavot za državno ureduvanje na Makedonija 1880 /Macedonian League and the Constitution of the Macedonian Governmental Structure 1880/*, Mislja, Skopje 1985 (particularly Part II – Documents, pp 237–267).

¹¹ *Vek Ekaterini II, Rossia i Balkani /The Century of Ekaterina II, Russia and the Balkans/*, Moscow 1998.

¹² *Istorija XIX veka pod redakciei profesorov Lavissa i Rambo /History of XIX Century*, ed. by professors Laviss and Rambo/, Moscow 1938, Vol. 3; *Zapiski grafa N. P. Ignateva /Count N. P. Ignatev's Notes/*, *Istoricheskij vestnik*, January 1914, CXXXV–CXXXVI.

¹³ Vladimir Dedijer, *Interesne sfere /Spheres of Interest/*, Belgrade 1980.

¹⁴ Slavko Dimevski, *Istorija na Makedonskata pravoslavna crkva /History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church/*, Skopje 1989, pp 398–413.

repression of the uprising, which did not happen only because the Ottoman Army firmly refused it.¹⁵ After that Russia (and Europe) generously helped the Ottomans to repress the Macedonian uprising of 1878-1879 and to neutralize Macedonia in accordance with the propositions of the Berlin Treaty and the standards of the Ottoman authorities.

Thirdly, in 1886, based on Nelidov's suggestion and with the emperor's approval, Russia started to elaborate a plan for union of the Balkan states, implying partition of Macedonia, Old Serbia and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar.¹⁶ Since then, Russia established control over the political processes in the Balkans and particularly in Macedonia.

After the emergence of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, Russia became very sensitive to the situation in Macedonia and has unscrupulously prevented any unwanted developments and introduced changes that would have never happened spontaneously. Such is the example of appointing Firmilian for Serbian archbishop in Skopje, which created an opportunity for registration of Serbian millet in Macedonia and Serbian aspirations for parts of Macedonia.¹⁷

These measures assisted Russia to strengthen its course to fulfill the plan to partition Macedonia as a way to solve the Balkan issue, through the approval of the Balkan states for Russian control of that partition.¹⁸

This course, by all means, had to be secured against unpredicted and unwanted developments. Such case, not so much unpredicted as unwanted, was the development of the Macedonian liberation movement embodied in the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (TMORO, VMORO, and VMRO).

That movement, caused by the difficult living conditions of the Macedonian population and the threat for Macedonia to be partitioned and divided among the Balkan states, raised the slogan for Macedonian political autonomy (Macedonian state), that would eliminate the grounds for wars among Balkan peoples and prevent the destruction of Macedonia and its people.¹⁹

¹⁵ French documents about the history of the Macedonian people, Archives of Macedonia, Skopje 1969, pp 45, 89.

¹⁶ In the margins of Nelidov's extensive note in which he gave the aforementioned suggestion, Emperor Aleksandar III wrote „Совершенно одобряю“ /"I completely agree"/ – N. S. Kinyapina, *Balkan i prolivi vo vneshnei politike Rosii v konce XIX veka /Balkan and the Straits in the Russian Foreign Policy Towards the End of XIX Century* (1878-1898), Moscow 1994, pp 78–80.

¹⁷ Archives of the Russian Empire Foreign Policy /AVPRI/. F. 151. Op. 482. D. 2629. L. 262–263. Ibid. D. 3603. L. 91–93. Slavko Dimevski, *Istorija na Makedonskata pravoslavna crkva /History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church/*, Skopje 1989, p 598.

¹⁸ See P. Kapnist's letters from March 11/23 1897, together with his analytical notes and positions, used by Foreign Minister Nikolaj Muravyov to prepare himself before his talks with Goluhovsky (Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary), along with recommendations about the contents of the treaty that was to be signed by Russia and Austria-Hungary in 1897, which determined the future of Macedonia (AVPRI). "Secret Archives", Op. 467, D. 156/161; Simon Drakul, *Makedonija megju avtonomijata i deležot /Macedonia between Autonomy and Partitioning/*, "Prosveta", Kumanovo 1995, Vol. I, pp 201-221.

¹⁹ Article 1 of TMORO Constitution, adopted at the Congress in Salonika in 1896; Documents about the struggle... Vol. 1, p 331 ("The aim of the Secret Macedonian-

The Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, which established itself as a general and sovereign representative of the Macedonian population and whose aim was to create a separate Macedonian state, became a dangerous opponent and hateful subject to the Russian factor. From then on, the official Russian policy has become extremely inconsiderate in relation to the Macedonian factor. The Macedonian factor has faced its most dramatic moments and periods, making massive sacrifices and, ultimately, losing the battle for its goals and the interests of Macedonia and its people.

3. The Macedonian and the Russian factors and the issue of Macedonian state in the Ilinden and Post-Ilinden periods

The first clash between the Macedonian and the Russian factors after the Berlin Agreement occurred in 1896, following the actions in Macedonia performed by the members of the Macedonian Supreme Committee and the scandals that revealed that the whole province had been covered by a network of secret committees, which had been preparing the population for revolution and for political autonomy of Macedonia.²⁰ Although Russia had been following closely the situation in Macedonia, it was still surprised by the actions of the Macedonian committees. Under these circumstances, Russia expeditiously began to harmonize the affairs in its diplomacy by hardening its policy toward the Balkan and Macedonia.

As a reaction to the actions of the Macedonian committees, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Muravyov, issued an order to his diplomatic representatives in Bulgaria and Serbia, to cease any cooperation with those committees and to continue the cooperation with the Ottoman government and the governments of the Balkan countries only.²¹

In accordance with its policy to divide Macedonia among the Balkan states through their union, and in unison with the European forces, but under its control, in 1896 Russia restored diplomatic relations with Bulgaria²² and started preparing it for negotiations, with the consent of the other Balkan states. The very next year, 1897, under Russian influence, Serbia and Bulgaria sat to decide their attitude towards their mutual interests in the Ottoman Empire. The agreement²³ reached on that occasion was based on their knowledge that Russia would stand behind their agreed interest for expansion of Bulgaria and Serbia. The respective agreement from February 1897 defined for the first time the mutual (Bulgarian and Serbian) interest

Odrin Revolutionary Organization is to unite all the dissatisfied elements in Macedonia and in the region of Odrin, regardless of their nationality and through revolution to win full political autonomy for these two regions"). See also Articles 1 and 2 of the VMORO Constitution, adopted at the General Conference in 1905, *ibid*, p 487 (Article 1 is identical with Article 1 of the 1896 Constitution; Article 2: "The Organization is against tendencies for partitioning and occupying of these regions by any other country").

²⁰ *Istorija na makedonskiot narod /History of the Macedonian People/*, INI, Skopje 2003, Vol. 3, pp 174–178.

²¹ Simon Drakul, *Macedonia Between Autonomy...*, Vol. 1, pp 259–260.

²² N. S. Kinyapina, *Balkani.../The Balkans.../*, pp 118–121.

²³ *Makedonija vo megjunarodnite dogovori /Macedonia in International Treaties/*, Arhiv na Makedonija, Skopje 1994, pp 137–138.

in the Ottoman state. They agreed to act together, promising not to undertake any unilateral actions, while any unilateral political or military action would not change the status quo on the Balkans. The two countries agreed not to obstruct each other (as they used to), but to cooperate in their common national, educational and religious issues on the territory of the Ottoman state.

Two months after the Bulgarian-Serbian Agreement, in May 1897, Russia made efforts to obtain international legitimacy for its plan and for the Bulgarian-Serbian Agreement. In that respect, in May, it made a secret agreement with Austria-Hungary that clearly specified creation of only one more state on the Balkans, Albania, while the other parts, including Macedonia, were to be divided among the existing Balkan states²⁴.

That policy toward Macedonia (its division in favor of the three Balkan states, not disturbing their mutual balance, and in time framework acceptable for Russia), put the latter in a position to watch for developments in the region. Russia expeditiously discovered the existence of yet another elaborate network of revolutionary committees, influenced by neither Bulgarian committees nor the government or the count of Bulgaria.²⁵ That internal Macedonian revolutionary organization, which named itself Secret Macedonian-Odrin Revolutionary Organization (TMORO), became a thorn in the flesh of the Russian factor as far as its Balkan policy was concerned and whose essence was ultimate division of Macedonia among neighboring Balkan states.²⁶ This nervousness and hatred toward the internal Macedonian organization quickly reached extreme proportions. In the very next 1898, following the developments in Crete and the international involvement in the Crete issue, and provoked by the anticipated possible uprising in Macedonia, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, count Muravyov, clearly and relentlessly stated the Russian intentions toward the Macedonian revolutionaries and their internal organization. In a confidential letter to the Russian diplomatic envoy to Sofia, Bakhmetev, from December 3 1898, he wrote: "...If, however, Macedonian revolutionary activists manage to begin an uprising, their movement should not hope for any help or compassion from Russia. On the contrary, the royal government will be forced to allow Turkish authorities total freedom for repressive actions in order to annihilate any revolutionary ideas of the Macedonians and to justly punish the main initiators of the uprising."²⁷

However, since years there was no uprising in Macedonia in 1898 and in the next four years, following the above mentioned

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp 137–143.

²⁵ See: Sprostranov E. *Dnevnik /Journal/*, Sofia 1994, p 205.

²⁶ That policy by the Russian high diplomatic echelon was most persistently favored by Count Kapnist. Of course, it was also shared by the emperor himself. – AVPRI. "Secret Archives", Op. 467. D. 156/161.

²⁷ See Count Muravyov's secret letter to Bakhmetev in Sofia from December 3, 1898, – Simon Drakul, *Macedonia Between Autonomy*, Vol. 1, pp. 259–261. Later, during the Ilinden Uprising, Russia presented and supported this very authorization to the Ottoman authorities, which provoked great pogroms amidst the Macedonian population – *Macedonia and the Region of Odrin (1893-1903)*. Memoirs of the Internal Organization, 1904, s.l.

agreements between Serbia and Bulgaria and between Russia and Austro-Hungary, Russia turned towards establishing legal basis for the Serbian interests and aspirations in Macedonia. In order to put into operation the policy of division of Macedonia among the three Balkan states, and in favor of Serbia, Russia pressured the Sultan to appoint Firmilian for Serbian Metropolitan Bishop in Skopje and made an effort to redefine the Macedonian borders by annexing Old (*Stara*) Serbia and Novi Pazar to the district (or *sanjak*) of Skopje, explaining it on the grounds of historical rights and arguments.²⁸

This Russian policy caused considerable resentment in the relationships both with the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization and with the Bulgarian government that was accustomed to claim exclusive rights to the territory of Macedonia in comparison with Serbia.²⁹ However, Russia remained inflexible in that respect. The Russian diplomatic envoy to Sofia, Bakhmetev, under his minister, Count Lambsdorff's order, pointed out to the Bulgarians that the decision reached by Russia in relation to Firmilian was irrevocable and final.³⁰ In 1902, the Foreign Minister, Count Lambsdorff, during his visit to Belgrade and Sofia, following the dramatic events and suspicions between the two countries caused by the Gorna Dzumaja Uprising, took a firm stand behind the "Firmilian concept", implicating to both sides that Macedonia would be partitioned; not given to any of them, but at any rate, not supported to gain autonomy.

In that respect, the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO), besides Russia, proved to be the main opponent to the Balkan states as well. Therefore they slowly coordinated their attitude towards it. Gradually, the three Balkan states started acting toward disintegration and destruction of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization in many ways (by infiltrating, treason, assassinations, cooperation with Ottoman authorities, corruption and winning over MRO members and leaders for their own causes in Macedonia; by campaigning and fighting against it, and by spreading propaganda in Macedonia).

Archives show that Russia stood behind all these actions in the Balkan states. Russia was determined, on the one hand, to win over the Balkan states to cooperate in the plan and procedures it devised together with Austria-Hungary, and on the other, to neutralize the effects of the Macedonian national movement and eliminate the

²⁸ AVPRI. F. 151. Op. 482. D. 2629. L. 198–201. In the same document (L. 201), the Russian representative to Belgrade, Charikov, pointing out that the appointing of Firmilian in Skopje already implied Serbs in Macedonia, also states a paradox: there is not a single Serbian in Old Serbia, but only Bulgarians and Greeks, because the Sultan had not appointed a Serbian Metropolitan Bishop there, so that there were only Bulgarian and Greek Metropolitan Bishops. Serbian nationality was formalized by the Sultan in August 1903. – AVPRI. F. 151. Op. 482. D. 1011. L. 335.

²⁹ "The issue of recognition of Firmilian as Serbian Metropolitan Bishop in Skopje can not be dealt with separately. It is permanently tied to the issue of the future faith of considerable part of Macedonia and this circumstance explains the level of fervor (bitterness) by the Serbs and Bulgarians in their fierce struggle for the Skopje Bishopric", says Zonovjev in his secret telegram of April 13/26, 1901 to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – AVPRI. F. 151. Op. 482. D. 3603. L. 91–93.

³⁰ Secret telegram by His Excellence Count Lambsdorff to D.S. S. Bakhmetev in Sofia, Sankt Petersburg, May 16, 1902 – AVPRI. F. 151. Op. 482. D. 2629. L. 262–263.

Macedonian factor, particularly the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, from the political processes to solve the Macedonian issue.³¹

Winning over small Balkan states and getting their agreement to divide up Macedonia among themselves, with Russia as a supreme arbitrator was not so easy. Principally, they agreed on the division of the European Ottoman territory. However, they all clashed over Macedonia. The three of them (Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece) had been overanxious about their opposing interests in Macedonia and had been leading a fierce struggle to force each other out from the territory. Their religious, educational, political and military propagandas were virtually hostile and therefore the process of their rapprochement was slow and delicate. The two strongest propagandas, Bulgarian and Greek, did not let the two countries agree until the summer of 1912, although there had been two attempts in that direction even before 1900. The taboo issue of “partitioning Macedonia” tempted both countries; each of them wanted to have the whole cake, or at least the bigger piece.

Having the weakest propaganda, Serbia preferred to negotiate with Bulgaria from the very beginning. But even they couldn’t reach any significant agreement until 1904, because Bulgaria did not accept negotiations with Serbia for division of Macedonia. However, due to several major developments that dramatically changed the situation, they met in 1904 and, in the shadow of Russia, reached an important agreement about Macedonia.³² After the defeat of the Ilinden Uprising and in the context of the Murzsteg Reforms, Serbia and Bulgaria were informed about Russia’s plan and modalities concerning the partition of Macedonia. In their secret agreement of March 1904 they consented to support the Murtzteg course, whose main point (in Article 3) defined interest zones and regions each of them would get in future. In spite of Russia’s plan, these reforms included the vilayet of Odrin because of Bulgarian interests. Serbia and Bulgaria accepted the Russian plan to support status quo on the Ottoman borders until further conditions for partition were met and reserved the right to divide Macedonia among them, protecting it with joint military forces and actions. Having officially recognized Russian arbitration, Serbia and Bulgaria officially denominated Macedonia into “The Three Vilayets”³³, mentioning each of them separately, thus taking part into the Russian campaign to neutralize and dispute any Macedonian attribute and Macedonian political character of the liberation movement in Macedonia, led by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization.³⁴

³¹ AVPRI. F. 151. Op. 482. D. 2629. L. 216–217, 198–201; D. 1014. L. 17; D. 1008. L. 33, 146; D. 1011. L. 144; D. 1008. L. 84–85; D. 1013. L. 485, 486, 487.

³² *Macedonia in International Treaties...*, p 151.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ In 1904, in a treaty with the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria agreed to prevent any hostile activities against the Ottoman Empire by Macedonian committees and subversive activities by Macedonian revolutionaries. In this treaty, Macedonia was denominated according to Lambsdorff and Kapnist’s plan. In 1902, after the Dzumaya Uprising, Bulgaria started arresting Macedonian revolutionaries, for which Ferdinand was recognized by the Russian emperor – AVPRI,

The secret agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria of March 30 1904 marked the final success of the Russian policy on the Balkans. Its definition was finalized by the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance between Bulgaria and Serbia of February 29 – March 13 1912, also known as the Balkan Alliance, later joined by Greece and Montenegro.

Among others, there were the great changes in the situation that led to Russia's diplomatic success: 1) The pro-Austrian dynasty and government of Serbia were overthrown in the coup d'état in 1903 and pro-Russian dynasty and government were installed³⁵; 2) The defeat of the Ilinden Uprising and the hard strike on the Revolutionary Organization created conditions for almost free growth of foreign chetnik propaganda; 3) The strong and imposing Serbian chetnik propaganda took control over compact parts of the region and rivaled the Bulgarian chetnik movement and influence in Macedonia.

Since 1904, the struggle against the Macedonian factor and against the Internal Macedonian revolutionary Organization, was a result of an orchestrated interest and engagement of the Balkan states and the engagement and blessing of Russia. There is a record that, from 1904 to 1907, 270 members of the Revolutionary Organization were killed, partly in chetnik campaigns in the Balkan states, partly by the Ottoman government, through cooperation with institutions of the Balkan states in Macedonia, or in individual actions.

Those were the circumstances in which, in order to accomplish its Balkan policy, Russia followed the developments in Macedonia and the fluctuation of the strength and influence of the Macedonian factor (the Revolutionary Organization). Facing its first major actions and growth after 1896, Russia encountered this organization again in 1902 and 1903. In this new encounter with the Macedonian factor, Russia was not only firm regarding the Macedonian movement and Macedonian interests, but was determined to deal harshly with all the possible lines of development of the Macedonian issue as a separate Balkan issue.

Surprised by the ability of the Organization to take insurgent actions and irritated by the persistence of the Macedonian factor to follow its way, Russia indelicately and directly threatened the revolutionary Organization to eliminate it both inside Macedonia and in Bulgaria. After the Dzumaya Uprising of 1902, in December of the same year, the Russian diplomatic envoy to Bulgaria, Iury Bakhmetev, demanded from Sarafov withdrawal and deference of Macedonian committees to the Russian policy.³⁶

Realizing that the developments had been moving toward impending and widespread uprising in Macedonia, planned for the spring of 1903, and being aware that the strength and persistence of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization had surpassed all expectations, Russia seriously considered defining its diplomatic

³⁵ Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića /Aleksandar Obrenovic's Government/*, Belgrade 1931, reprint 1990, pp 291-377.

³⁶ Krste Bitovski, *Kontinuitetot na makedonskite nacionalno-osloboditelni borbi vo XIX i početokot na XX vek /Continuity of the Macedonian National Liberation Struggles in 19th and the Beginning of 20th Century/*, Skopje, 1998, p 311.

involvement and measures in order to protect the Russian plan for resolving the Balkan and Macedonian issues.

In that sense, after several diplomatic consultations, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Lambsdorff, personally and higher diplomatic officials devised a program how to eliminate the Macedonian factor from the processes concerning the fate of Macedonia.

Throughout 1902, it was difficult for the Ottoman Empire to maintain status quo, which had been the goal of Russia and Austria-Hungary as well as of all European powers. It was particularly the events in north-western Macedonia, regarding the Albanian insurgencies and demands and the Dzumaya Uprising with the demands by the Macedonian committees that upset the higher ranks of the Russian diplomacy. Through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Lambsdorff, and the highest ranking in the civil list, Kapnist, Zonovye and Nelidov, experts in the Balkan issue, as well as with the Russian representatives in Belgrade and Sofia, Charikov and Bakhmetev, Russia established a platform and scheme for its diplomatic actions concerning the Macedonian issue. In that direction, on October 28 1902, Count Lambsdorff addressed Count Kapnist³⁷, ambassador to Vienna, with the position that Russia is ready “to exchange opinions about subsequent steps in relation to the Macedonian issues, on the basis of the 1897 agreement.” On the basis of those principles (to create only Albania from Skadar to Janina, while the remaining parts of the Ottoman state, including Macedonia, to be divided among the surrounding Balkan states), on 17/30 November 1902, Count Kapnist sent a secret telegram No. 71 to improve the affairs in Macedonia. The Russian diplomatic envoy to Belgrade, Charikov,³⁸ added several annotations and together they promoted a platform about the position of the Russian diplomacy regarding the Macedonian issue towards the end of 1902 and the following 1903.

The secret telegram from the end of 1902 instructed the following:³⁹

1. To clearly define the borders of the province of Macedonia – pointing out that it could include neither the vilayets close to the straits nor Albania;
2. Not to disrupt its current division into vilayets and not to form a single province of Macedonia of the separate vilayets, since there was no such denomination in the agreements;⁴⁰
3. Not to allow the name (term) Macedonia, but to use instead the name “The Three Vilayets” and their listing (Salonika, Bitola and Skopje);
4. Besides avoiding the term Macedonia, to stop using the term Provincial Governor, that tended to be used by some states (for example, England) in

³⁷ AVPRI. F. 151. Op 482. D. 2629. L. 21–23

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* L. 198–201.

relation to the forthcoming reforms and to use the term Inspector General instead.

5. Not to insist on establishing a Central Council for the three vilayets, since such term and institution would imply formation of a political unit that had not been planned;
6. To carry out a reform in the names of the vilayets, by including Serb-Millet, the name that Polikarp from the Eparchy of Veles had been using with the authorities since 1900. (Polikarp was working together with Firmilian on that plan. The latter was the head of the Serb-Millet in Macedonia);
7. The official language in the vilayets, besides Turkish, was that of the majority of the Orthodox population in the respective vilayet – according to the Millet system;

The fact that this program was part of the main platform of the Russian diplomacy applied in the following years is documented as follows. On February 7 1903, Count Lambsdorff sent a secret telegram to Duke Urusov in Paris⁴¹ in which he instructed him to inform the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Delcassé that there had been an agreement with Goluhovsky (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria-Hungary) not to use the term Macedonia any more, as it implied a political unit, but instead to use the term “The Three Turkish Vilayets”, and instead of Macedonians to use the term “Orthodox population of the Three Turkish Vilayets”, since, according to Lambsdorff, there were no Macedonians as a separate nationality.⁴²

After the instructions to denominate both Macedonia and Macedonians and to prevent the processes of identification of Macedonia and Macedonian nation, that was obviously at its strongest at the very beginning of the 20th century, Russian diplomacy exerted great pressure on the sultan to legalize the respective denominations with his own decree. The sultan, who found personal (imperial) interests in the Russian plan, issued a decree (forwarded to vilayet authorities in Macedonia on April 7 1903) that categorically forbade using the term (name) Macedonia in petitions and announcements related to the imperial affairs of Rumelia (which included Macedonia).⁴³ This edict by the sultan, received by vilayet authorities in two days, was the first document that closed the denomination circle of Macedonia and Macedonians in the historical process of their national self-identification.

After the three European powers and Turkey had coordinated their policies concerning Macedonia and Macedonians, the Russian diplomacy defined its attitude toward the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization as well. In that direction, on June 18/July

⁴¹ *Ibid.* D. 1008, L. 84–85.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ “This Supreme Edict by His Highness the Sultan announces: From now on, in petitions and announcements related to the work of imperial vilayets in Rumelia, it is strictly forbidden to use the term (name) Macedonia, that has thus far been mentioned as a local name” – Stojanovski Aleksandar, *Makedonija pod turskata vlast /Macedonia Under Turkish Rule/*, Skopje 2006, pp 317–318.

1 1903, having information about impending Macedonian uprising, following the Salonika and other assassinations throughout Macedonia, the influential Kapnist, in his letter to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, suggested the following drastic measures:⁴⁴

1. A way out of the vicious circle was final breaking and destruction of the revolutionary Organization in the three vilayets;
2. It is most dangerous to mention Article 23 of the Berlin Agreement. That would undermine the Empire and give grounds to the Revolutionary Organization to think a concession is being made to its demands and wishes.

Then Kapnist stated the following delicate estimates:

1. Since destruction (of the type he suggested) had been going on up till now, he estimated that the revolutionary movement would hold on for two to three more months; and
2. Despite the aforementioned fact, the persistence and strength of the Revolutionary Organization had undoubtedly surpassed all expectations.⁴⁵

The cited documents witness the fact that Russia, while keeping the course of the 1897 treaty with Austria-Hungary about partitioning Macedonia in favor of the three Balkan states, did not show any leniency for the Macedonian liberation movement⁴⁶ and had sympathy neither for the already proven Macedonian interests and subjects nor for the opinions and suggestions of some of its lower ranking diplomats who had not been aware of the positions at the top, including the position of the Emperor, and suggested autonomy for Macedonia.

Russia kept the same course, consequently and harshly, even during the dramatic years of 1911, 1912 and 1913. The great shocks that started with the uprisings in Albania and the insurgencies of the Albanians in the north-western parts of Macedonia did not go unnoticed by the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization that started cooperating with the Albanian movement (Ivany Bey met representatives of the Macedonian Organization in June 1911, in Skopje).⁴⁷ On October 18/31 1911, the Organization sent form letters to the consuls, asking for autonomy of Macedonia under immediate European monitoring.⁴⁸

These events urged the Balkan states (especially Serbia and Bulgaria) to intensify talks and agree on future actions and war acquisitions.⁴⁹ Russia as well as other European powers, rushed to

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* D. 1013. L. 485–487.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* D. 2629. L. 34–36, 189–190 (particularly L. 190); D. 1008. L. 33; D. 564. L. 30; D. 1475. L. 324; D. 2633. L. 1.

⁴⁶ Russian diplomats on the future of European possessions of the Ottoman Empire// Oxford Slavonic papers, 1993, Vol. XXVI.

⁴⁷ AVPRI. F. 151. Op. 482. D. 2697. L. 43, 53.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* LL. 43, 53, 143; D. 3594. L. 19–20.

⁴⁹ V. P. Potemkin, *Istorija diplomatije (1872–1919)*, /History of Diplomacy/ Belgrade 1949, pp 189–206.

carry out the plan determined in the Russian-Austria-Hungarian Treaty of 1897.

Russia was particularly upset because its plans in the region could have been jeopardized by the emergence of the Albanian liberation movement and reemergence of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, even with prospects of their cooperation. Therefore, it pressurized Serbia and Bulgaria and in March 1912, with powerful Russian orchestration, they concluded the well-known Treaty of Friendship and Alliance.⁵⁰

In the winds of the Balkan Wars, Russia held on relentlessly and consistently to its plan to divide Macedonia and neutralize the Macedonian factor. In that sense, top officials of the Russian policy curiously opposed numerous alternative suggestions and analyses by most of its own diplomats in the region who suggested autonomy for Macedonia due to their own understanding of the Macedonian issue or to prevent the war.⁵¹ To diplomats, such as the eminent Izvolsky, who in December 1912 suggested autonomy for Macedonia as an alternative to the division that was going on at the London Ambassador Conference, the Emperor himself snapped with the words: „Недопустимая вещь“ /Out of the question/.⁵²

4. Instead of conclusion: Why Russia (and Europe) took that position concerning the Macedonian issue

Russia: Uncompromisingly following the designated route, Russia, actually pursued its own state interests. Having learnt the lesson from its previous experience with Serbia (1868-69) and Bulgaria (1883-86), it finally respected several main interests and facts. *Firstly*, it started from the fact that Macedonia had been pervaded by the interests and aspirations by both the institutions and propagandas of the three Balkan states, with obvious consequences, so that no one could deter them from their military engagement towards realization of those interests and aspirations.⁵³ Moreover, Russia had its own interest in the partitioning of Macedonia: to prevent the small Balkan states from causing any uncontrolled turn of events on the Balkans, except according to Russia's previous plan. *Secondly*, establishing a separate Macedonian state would not be possible without an extended presence of European forces in it in order to defend and strengthen this contingent state.⁵⁴ Even under these circumstances, its sustainability would be questionable. *Thirdly*, Russia's interest to have friendly relationships with the three Balkan states was more important since they provided for its wider (regional)

⁵⁰ *Macedonia in International Treaties...*, pp 162-169

⁵¹ AVPRI. F. 151. Op. 482. D. 3760. L. 5; D. 3714. L. 573–574.

⁵² *Ibid.* D. 3698. L. 325.

⁵³ In relation to the articles in the European press that Austrian-Hungarian forces would be deployed in Macedonia in order to implement the Mirzschteg reforms, official Serbia decidedly informed Russia that it would consider it as *casus belli*, thus showing its intentions regarding Macedonia.

⁵⁴ After the Uprising in 1903, Russia got from Austria-Hungary such proposal, regarding the Mirzschteg reforms. Russia did not accept this proposal.

influence, enabling Russia to impose its control over the straits – which was its main interest.

In other words, by dividing Macedonia among the three Balkan states, Russia believed it would finally prevent any possibility for Austria and Italy to gain control over the Balkans. Furthermore, that would please the three Balkan states and provide peace and stability on the Balkans for a considerable period of time. By controlling this division (which was its main concern), Russia could establish balance in the power of the Balkan states and paralyze their abilities to endanger its future plans for control over the straits.⁵⁵ Therefore Russia intended to raise the issue of the straits and impose it only after the controlled partitioning of Macedonia and of the other parts of the Balkans among Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece.⁵⁶

The other great European powers, at least until 1908-1909, did not seriously take into account the partitioning of Macedonia. This is especially true of England. However, later on, when the European military conflict became certain, they also considered this option.⁵⁷ In this respect, it was estimated that the three Balkan states could attract 500 thousand soldiers of the opposing block, which was good enough reason for them to support Russian policy for creation of an alliance among the Balkan states and to assist Russia in the efforts to harmonize the positions of Serbia and Bulgaria regarding the partition of Macedonia.

⁵⁵ This was also the argument Kapnist used to support the partition of Macedonia among the three Balkan states – AVPRI. "Secret Archives". Op. 467. D. 156/161 (attachments 14a and 14b).

⁵⁶ AVPRI. "Secret Archives". Op. 467. D. 156/161; Russian diplomats...

⁵⁷ There is a theory that the partition of Macedonia became imminent when England joined the Entente and chose military solution to the competition with Germany. This theory is supported by the fact that it was the Entente that had planned and wanted the European conflict, while the partition of the Ottoman European territories (first of all, Macedonia) was supposed to provoke Austrian-Hungarian and, indirectly, German aggression. See: Hans-Lothar Steppan. *Der mazedonische Knoten. Die Identität der Mazedonier dargestellt am Beispiel des Balkanbundes 1878-1914*. Frankfurt 2004. This work was somewhat supplemented and published in Macedonian in the same 2004.

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