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RUSSIAN DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTATION REGARDING THE EVENTS IN MACEDONIA AND THE BALKANS ON THE EVE OF THE BALKAN WARS

1. Introduction

The Balkan Wars essentially changed the appearance and relations on the Balkans and beyond. In that respect, they “represent the beginning of an era in European history dominated by nationalism and conflict”.¹ In fact, the Balkan Wars were just a realisation of the expansionistic plans that the independent Balkan states had, the roots of which should be looked for as far back as the 19th century, that is in the period after the Congress of Berlin in particular. At the same time, having in mind the role of Russia as the largest Slav country towards which the eyes of the Balkan Slavs were often turned during the entire said period, in this article we stress the reports by Russian diplomatic representatives in the period between 1909–1912 when the Balkan neighbours, who fought each other just yesterday, started growing closer together, and when the creation of the so called Balkan League began intensifying.

The advanced Russian diplomatic network kept a watchful eye on the events on the Balkans and in Macedonia, as well as on any reactions to them within the Ottoman Empire and with the Great Powers. Up until that period, Russia’s foreign policy with respect to the Balkans had been assessed as being conservative, in view of the previous

¹ Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913. Prelude to the first world war* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), IX.

agreements made by the Great Powers, and aimed at preserving the status quo and preventing a major European crisis. More specifically, “for the time being Russia had to prevent any reopening of the Eastern Question until she was strong enough to secure her own interests against the encroachments of third parties should the Ottoman Empire fall.(...)”² More over: “Early in the nineteenth century it had already become an axiom of Russian policy that the preservation of a weak Turkey under predominantly Russian influence would be preferable to its dissolution and partition.”³

At the beginning of the 20th century and right before the Balkan Wars, Russia defined carefully its policy towards the Balkan states, at the same time balancing its relations with the Great Powers, on the one hand, and with the Porte, on the other. Also, it was well informed on the position of the population that was on the territories still under Ottoman rule, as well as on the internal developments and turbulence within the Empire itself. Following the correspondence of Russian diplomatic representatives, we find a lot of important information regarding these conditions, but in this article we shall focus mainly on several aspects.

2. Activities of the Balkan and Russian Diplomats Regarding the Creation of the Balkan League

The events following the Young Turk Revolution and the Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina incited Russia to become more involved in the creation of the Balkan League on the

² More on Russia's position towards the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, see: Alan Bodger, „Russia and the End of the Ottoman Empire“, in *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Second edition, ed. Marian Kent (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 74. The author makes an extensive analysis of this issue, but also lists quite a large bibliography on Russian foreign policy. Also compare: Д-р Јован Донеv, „Стаvот на Русија кон македонското прашање при крајот на XIX и почетокот на XX век (1897–1903), in *Македонско–руски врски во XIX и почетокот на XX century*, редакција: д-р Александар Трајановски (Скопје: Сојуз на друштвата на историчарите на Република Македонија, 1996) [Jovan Donev, PhD, “Russia's Position Regarding the Macedonian Question towards the End of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (1897–1903), in *Macedonian–Russian Relations in the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th century*, edited by: Aleksandar Trajanovski, PhD (Skopje: Union of the Associations of the Republic of Macedonia, 1996)], 119–129.

³ ‘Report of a Special Committee on the Affairs of Turkey, 16 September, 1829’, English translation in M.S.Anderson, *The Great Powers and the Near East, 1774 – 1923* (London, 1970), 35 – 39, quotes taken from: Bodger, “Russia and the End of the Ottoman Empire“, 74.

one side, and on the other to advocate, via its diplomacy, maintenance of the status quo with the purpose to prepare itself better for the upcoming confrontation, as well as to give the Balkan countries some space so as to reach an agreement regarding the division of Ottoman territories on the Balkans.⁴ This policy of balancing is not always an easy one because, as opposed to the Great Powers which were focused on maintaining and securing their geopolitical interests in a broader area, the predominant interests of the Balkan countries were to impose their influence (religious, cultural, as well as military-political) in Macedonia, which often increased the tensions and threatened with an early escalation of the situation.

Thus, in a classified letter dated the 7th October 1909, the Russian advisor Gulkovich states that during the talks on matters concerning the Balkans, the Bulgarian diplomatic representative in Rome at the time, Dimitar Rizov,⁵ pointed out to the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Milovanovich, the idea of Bulgaria and Serbia becoming closer.⁶ At their meeting in Rome at a later date, the Russian diplomatic representative was able to hear Mr. Milovanovich's opinion,⁷

⁴ Влаго Поповски, „Русија, Балканот и Македонија“, in Влаго Поповски, Жила Ленина, *Македонското прашање во документите на Коминтерната*, том I, дел 1: 1923-1925 г. (Скопје: НИП Ѓурѓа, 1999) [Vlado Popovski, “Russia, the Balkans, and Macedonia”, in Vlado Popovski, Zhila Lenina, *Macedonian Question in Comintern Documents*, volume I, part 1: 1923-1925 (Skopje: Gjurgja, 1999)], LXXXVIII.

⁵ British journalist James Bouchier in one of his articles in *The Times* of London (“Bulgaria and her Allies Charges of Aggression”, 25th May) notified that Rizov “played a considerable part in the first stages of the negotiations for the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance”. See: *The Times Correspondent Reporting from Sofia* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1983), 87.

⁶ A classified letter of **the Russian diplomatic representative in Rome, Gulkovich**. Симон Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Зборник руска дипломатска документација - 1894-1913), седми том 1909, 1910-1913, Селектор: Скопје, 2007, 44-45. The archive materials from the *Compilation of Russian diplomatic documentation - 1894-1913 – Macedonia between autonomy and division*, seventh volume 1909, 1910-1913, Selected, translated, edited and commented by Dr. Simon Drakul (Skopje: Selektor, 2007) are used for the purposes of this article.

⁷ The Serbian Minister was in Rome with the purpose to secure the coming succession of King Peter, and also to provide financial support from Rome (for the trans-Balkan railroad). The Serbian diplomat had a somewhat colder reception in Berlin, because it was there that he was told that “the road to Berlin leads through Vienna”. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 44. Such a response was certainly due to the cooling of relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, which was caused by Serbia turning towards Russia after the Karadjordjević family came to power.

namely that: "He too agreed that them abandoning their intentions to conquer Macedonia, could result in reinstating peace on the Balkans, but that he did not believe that the existing order in European Turkey was secure. Its dissolution seemed to him to be a question of imminent future, and so something of the kind of *pacte de désintéressement* seemed to him a thing of an exceptionally temporary significance, and that only an agreement on the division of Macedonia in the case of elimination of the Ottoman reign in Europe, could have positive results. He believed that it would not prove difficult to get consent, with regards to such a division, not only from Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro, but also from Greece, for those territories that were inclined towards any of them in accordance with and by virtue of their tribal kinship."⁸

In the diplomatic correspondence, there is constant reference about the interest for the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, the division of which was conspired by Serbia and Montenegro, even though Gulkovich stressed that it was not the right time for that sensitive issue to be raised.⁹

One of the key issues faced by the Russian policy on the Balkans at the said time period was also the constant strain in Turkish–Bulgarian relations and the threat of an armed conflict outburst. The Russian diplomat Mihail Nikolaevich Girs in his notes dated the 16th December 1909 (St. Petersburg) reports that such a disaster should be prevented by any means necessary because, as he writes, "of all the European countries, it will be us who shall suffer the most".¹⁰

In that regard, the analysis given in the correspondence by the external advisor Tuholka at the beginning of 1910, is even more indicative. He, amongst other things, points out that: "Any assumptions for a division of Macedonia and of Old Serbia (including the former Sandjak of Novi Pazar) seem to me, under the given circumstances – to be impermissible and dangerous for both us and the Balkan Slavs: first, the Balkan states are unable to reach an agreement among themselves

⁸ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 44–45. The conversation between Gulkovich and Milovanovich, undoubtedly led at this occasion, confirmed the course of the Serbian policy, namely that only a partition of Macedonia after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire was the true solution to this issue.

⁹ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 45, 52.

¹⁰ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 57.

regarding that division, so much so that even the issue of dividing the spheres of propaganda and influence cause bloody disputes between them; second, at even the slightest hint at the thought of division, Turkey would hasten to get closer to Austria and Germany, and our relations would definitely be damaged; third, Austria and Germany would not allow that division without them waging a war; fourth, before dividing the Turkish territories, a war with Turkey would have to be waged, and that is far from being an easy thing now, more so because since the introduction of constitution, Turkey does not spare any means concerning its army.”¹¹

Reading through the diplomatic documentation also reveals an analysis of the turbulent development in Greek–Bulgarian relations which go through several stages. The Consul-General at the time in Thessalonica, A. M. Petryaev, reports (in the report dated 3rd August 1910) that they were in the process of becoming closer at that particular time, and states the reasons for that to be: “The intensification of the Crete question and the strain on Bulgarian–Turkish relations are currently making the Greeks and the Bulgarians to think, ever more determinedly, of the necessity to forget, for the time being, their disagreements in Macedonia and focus their forces on fighting the Young Turks.”¹²

Their readiness to overcome the misunderstandings is also accounted by the Russian diplomatic representative in Constantinople at the time, Nikolay Valerevich Charykov, who provides information on the negotiations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate for their reconciliation and getting closer, and even for the withdrawal of the schism on the Exarchate. At the same time, there were also announcements of certain steps to be taken for reaching a political agreement on “calming down the Greek–Bulgarian hostilities to the benefit of both parties.”¹³ Charykov wrote that it was still difficult to draw any conclusions about the announced church–political reconciliation, but his conclusion was as follows: “There is, however, no doubt that this reconciliation would utterly change the ratio of the

¹¹ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 79.

¹² Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 134.

¹³ Telegram is addressed to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Dimitrievich Sazonov (27th October / 29th November 1910). Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 189.

existing national forces on the Balkan Peninsula in general, and in Macedonia in particular, to the benefit of the Orthodoxy and Russia. That would replace the current perilous struggle between the various Balkan nationalities that adhere to Orthodoxy with their spiritual unification and political solidarity, since they rely on their common economic interests on account of which there would be a significant increase in the power of the distinct nationalities for opposing the Austrian–German stance and the Turkish attempts for a general Ottoman denationalisation.”¹⁴

Even though they distrusted each other, there were also attempts made for reaching a Serbian–Bulgarian agreement which was motivated by a decision made by the Serbian government to close the Serbian schools within the Vilayet of Thessalonica, thus withdrawing to the benefit of the Bulgarian side.¹⁵

Besides these manifestations of drawing closer, Russian diplomats constantly report about the propaganda activities of the three Balkan states carried out in Macedonia, as well as about skirmishes mainly between Bulgarian and Greek detachments, but also of some involving Serbian detachments,¹⁶ in the field. However, it is important to note the position of the Macedonian population which, among all the other difficulties, also suffered the consequences of these activities: “The Macedonian Slav population in itself is extremely peaceful and keeps far away from all possible political intrigues by Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and others. The only requests it has are – human rights and the opportunity to live peacefully, without the risk of being beaten up.”¹⁷

Russian diplomats constantly stress the fact that the Balkan nations maintaining good relations with Turkey suits the Russian interests. At the same time they express that they are pleased because the Russian influence is the predominant one in the three Slav Balkan states

¹⁴ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 191.

¹⁵ A copy of the report by the Consul-General in Thessalonica, Belaev, to the imperial Minister in Constantinople dated the 9th December 1910. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 215.

¹⁶ The term *gangs* was often used in the Russian diplomatic materials to name these armed formations.

¹⁷ A letter by the Russian Consul in Skopje, Gadzemukov, addressed to N. Charykov dated the 13th February 1911. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 238.

(meaning Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro), which is the reason for those friendly relations with Turkey.¹⁸

Analysing the roots of the Serbian–Bulgarian disagreements, the Russian diplomatic representative in Sofia, Neklyudov, underlines that asking Bulgaria for any kind of concession to the benefit of Serbia, as regards the San Stefano borders, produces great difficulties. Nevertheless, he says that the reasonable attitudes of the Bulgarian Prime-minister and the Chairman of the Parliament, Gueshov and Danev, open the door for concluding a Serbian–Bulgarian agreement in the near future. The Serbian radicals and the Serbian King himself, who had a Russophile orientation, were also inclined towards such an agreement. But the Russian diplomat points out that it is not something to be dwelled upon, and that another, more sensitive action should be started – the creation of a Serbian–Bulgarian military convention so as to prevent new misunderstandings, disputes and mistrust.¹⁹

The realisation of this idea is soon accomplished, and it is mentioned by the Russian diplomatic representative, Nikolay Henrihovich Hartwig, in his classified telegram sent from Belgrade (dated the 27th February/11th March 1912): “Spalaikovich²⁰ brought the final project in two copies, edited in Sofia, of the text for the Serbian–Bulgarian agreement, together with the corresponding maps.”²¹ At the reception with the Serbian King just before the signing of the agreement, the Russian diplomat conveyed the position of the Russian imperial authorities, namely that “the agreement is to contribute to strengthening the order on the Balkans and the peaceful success of both states, but should not serve as a tool in their hands for any type of conquering intentions”. At the same time he got the Serbian King’s consent that no activities would be undertaken without Russian approval.²²

¹⁸ A dispatch by the hofmeister Charykov dated the 22nd March/4th April 1911. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 252-254.

¹⁹ Classified telegram to the Russian Minister S. D. Sazonov sent from Sofia on 11th February 1912 (received on 18th February). Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 330-332.

²⁰ Serbian diplomatic representative in Sofia.

²¹ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 342.

²² Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 342.

3. Attitude of the Ottoman Empire towards the Announcements for Creating the Balkan League

Rumours of the creation of a Balkan alliance became more present in the Ottoman press in the autumn of 1909. In that respect, in several of his reports, Russian Consul-General Chirkov states that the paper *Yeni-Asır* links the Balkan question directly with the Macedonian question and suspects that Russia and Italy will make an attempt to create an alliance of Balkan states as a counterweight to the conquering aspirations of Austria–Hungary, even though it seemed unlikely for Bulgaria and Greece to draw closer together, on the one hand, and for Romania and Bulgaria to draw closer with Serbia, on the other.²³ The newspaper suggests that Turkey strengthen itself, “which would truly limit the conquering tendencies of its Balkan neighbours”.²⁴

Regarding, however, the relations of the Ottoman Empire with Russia, the already mentioned notes by Girs, dated the 16th December, where they are presented not only at that particular moment but from a historical aspect as well, are quite indicative. He points out that regardless of all the attempts made to incite a peaceful policy, the distrust in one another will always be present. In that respect, he reasons as follows: “Our relations and negotiations with Turkey are in their essence such that they are destined to go round in a bewitched circle. The attempt for them to be pulled out of it at this particular moment in time, when the storm on the Balkans could grow stronger any moment, is something we find appealing to a certain extent.”²⁵

The greatest distress and concern for the Young Turk authorities were caused, as we have already mentioned, by Bulgaria’s actions. Hence, trying to settle down the increased tensions between the Porte and Sofia, in the secret telegram by the hofmeister Charykov, dated 8th /21st February 1910, reaching a political agreement by concluding a Turkish–Bulgarian agreement under the patronage of Russia, which would be accompanied with a Russian–Turkish agreement, was being

²³ Notes from the reports of the Russian consul in Thessalonica (4th, 14th and 19th November 1909). Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 46.

²⁴ *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 46.

²⁵ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 59.

advocated.²⁶ The Consul-General in Thessalonica, Petryaev, however, in his report dated the 7th July 1910, informs that among the members of the Committee of the Young Turk Party there were many adherents to the idea for an agreement with Bulgaria motivated by the fact that “Turkey, in order to secure conditions for its development and carry out the reforms, must secure itself from its most dangerous neighbour”.²⁷

In that respect, the Turkish authorities turn their attention towards Vienna and Berlin, looking for political support.²⁸

In a number of Russian diplomatic reports, it is stated that the Turkish authorities encourage the discord between Balkan nations with the purpose to prevent their unification and any alliances against the Ottoman Empire.

With the beginning of the Turco-Italian War, the Balkan political games and the turbulence within the Young Turk Party increase. As the Russian Consul in Skopje, Kalmikov, informs: “Skopje is a political centre where Bulgarian, Serbian, Albanian, Austrian and Turkish interests collide, and where fierce struggle of the opposition with the Young Turk Committee is led.”²⁹

In the spring of 1912, the concern due to the intensified military preparations by the Bulgarian side increased, following the report of the Turkish diplomatic representative in Sofia, which was the reason for the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs to send, on the 10th April, circulars to the local authorities for heightened monitoring of the borders.

4. Behaviour of the Great Powers

In the reports they sent to their superiors, the Russian diplomats also inform about the ideas for autonomy of Macedonia that come from Macedonian circles and do not correspond to the strivings of the Balkan states. In that respect, and in the context of maintaining the relatively peaceful relations established on the Balkans, and calming down the

²⁶ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 113.

²⁷ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 130.

²⁸ A confidential report by Charykov to the Russian Minister Sazonov, 20th October/2nd November 1910. Articles. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 185.

²⁹ A letter addressed to N. Charykov dated the 11th November 1911. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 295-296.

Balkan states, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Alexander Petrovich Isvolsky, in his letter dated the 19th November 1909, conveys the opinion of “some Bulgarian activists”³⁰ who believe that until the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Macedonia should, being the reason for constant clashes, remain within its borders and gain autonomy later on within the Treaty of San Stefano. It was assessed that this could be the basis for Russia and Italy’s plans for effectuating the motto “the Balkans to the Balkan peoples”, which would affect neither the Ottoman authorities nor Austria. Even though restraining from a more substantial assessment, the Russian minister feels that this position is, in principle, appealing but is sceptic regarding the realisation of this proposal, having in mind, amongst other things, the opinion of the Serbian Minister Milovanovich who was more of a supporter of the “division, and not the autonomy of Macedonia”.³¹

In an attempt to position themselves better and to influence the processes on the Balkans, the diplomatic representative offices did not shy away from using various means and tactics so as to cause trouble for their political rivals with the Porte. Thus, the Russian diplomatic representative in Constantinople at the time, Charykov, found himself in a position to have to explain to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs that Russia was not behind the aid consisting of 25 thousand rifles for the Albanians. These accusations directed towards Russia appeared in the local Turkish press and, as stated by Charykov, this insinuation was spread by the German diplomatic representative office.³² These accusations were also repeated by the Young Turk body *Top* which was distributed in Skopje, where it was said that the Russians were arming the Albanians at the request of the King of Montenegro.

³⁰ One should bear in mind that the terms *Bulgarians* or *Macedonian Bulgarians* were often used in the official Russian diplomatic documentation to name the Macedonian population. It is interesting to mention that in other documents or reports, the Russian diplomats also use the name Macedonians. In this case, **“Bulgarian activists” are, actually, activists from Macedonia close to the authorities in Sofia, and declaring the well-known Bulgarian idea for Macedonian autonomy as a phase for its unity with Bulgaria.**

³¹ A classified letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Petrovich Isvolsky, to the Imperial diplomatic representative in Belgrade, Nikolay Henrihovich Hartwig. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 53.

³² A classified letter from Russian diplomatic representative in Constantinople, N. V. Charykov, to the Russian Minister S. D. Sazonov. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 192.

Italy too was exposed to such attacks, although it really was involved in such activities.³³

At the same time, attempts were made for such positioning to be acquired via realising the infrastructural projects that were of essential importance for the parties concerned. Such was the insistence of Austria–Hungary to realise the project of the so called Sandjak railroad, through which it would secure itself an independent rail connection to Macedonia via Sandjak. Therefore Charykov underlines that if the Porte was considering building the Sandjak railroad, then Russia, together with its allies France, Italy and Serbia, should insist on the Adriatic railroad being built at the same time. It could be explained to the Turkish authorities that this would be a kind of counterweight to the Austria–Hungary advancing towards Macedonia. These Austria–Hungarian aspirations did not find approval with the Italian government as well but, as Charykov informs, secret diplomatic sources “inform of deep suspiciousness of the Porte regarding the cabinet of Rome, which continues on, a suspiciousness which is being supported by Vienna”.³⁴

The cabinet of Vienna also exerted pressure for the other promises given by the Porte to be fulfilled, namely to give the Albanian Catholics the promised concessions and to stop the boycott of Greek goods. But Charykov notes that these requests caused discontent with many of the Turks as well, while the concessions for the Albanian Catholics could not be realised due to the invidious position the state treasury was in.³⁵

On the other hand, the Turkish authorities “criticise the Austrians who, in their opinion, lead an intensified propaganda with the Albanians and spread various proclamations unpleasant for Turkey”.³⁶

³³ A classified letter from the Russian diplomatic representative in Skopje, Gadzemukov, to N. V. Charykov, Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 258.

³⁴ A classified telegram from N. V. Charykov to the Russian Minister S. D. Sazonov (Constantinople, 10th/23th November 1910). Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 196–197.

³⁵ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 195.

³⁶ A classified letter by the Russian Imperial Consul in Skopje, Gadzemukov, addressed to the Russian diplomat A. N. Svechin, dated the 11th January 1911. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 229.

There is no doubt that the support and the requests directed towards the Porte for concessions not just for the Albanian Catholics, but for all Albanians, was part of an Austria–Hungary’s agenda regarding the Balkans. From the contacts with his colleague from Austria–Hungary, Charykov also noted several other aspects of that policy, namely that the mood in Vienna was anti-German, while Austria–Hungary, regarding the struggle between the conservative and the radical factions of the Young Turk Party, was on the side of the former believing that the conservatives had the support of the military minister and even the Grand Vizier himself.³⁷

As events developed, the Russian diplomacy put its efforts into preventing any unwanted reactions from both the Balkan states and the Great Powers as regards the commencement of military activities on the Balkans. Advocating the maintenance of the status quo situation, Russia tried to prevent the penetration of Austria into Sandjak, and at the same time presented the Romanian King with the title of a field marshal of the Russian army on the very day when Bulgaria announced general mobilisation. As a result, the Turkish representative in Bucharest was informed that Romania did not wish to interfere with the war.³⁸ It is said that Turkey is to be blamed for the principle of status quo being abandoned, as it refused to carry out the promised reforms. Elaborating on these actions, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sazonov, in his confidential letter sent on the 18th October 1912, predicts the reactions from England and France regarding the Balkan events at the time, as follows: “Our relations with England and France lead us to believe that the former with its timely initiative and the latter with its support, shall not fail to assist us to resolve the current serious crisis, without upsetting the European peace.”³⁹

³⁷ A classified telegram by the hofmeister Charykov dated the 1st /14th June 1911. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 269.

³⁸ A classified letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, S. D. Sazonov, to the Russian diplomatic representative offices in Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, Constantinople, Sofia, Belgrade, Cetinje, Athens, and Bucharest. Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 396-397.

³⁹ Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот* (Drakul, *Macedonia between autonomy and division*), 398.

5. Conclusion

Even a short review of the Russian diplomatic documentation regarding the events on the Balkans on the eve of the Balkan Wars, offers a multitude of information on the political, military and diplomatic aspects of behaviour of the parties concerned and involved. Advocating the maintenance of the territorial status quo on the Balkans was just a façade for the secret diplomatic network of both the Balkan states and the Great Powers, first and foremost of Russia, for securing their spheres of influence and for carrying out their goals at the time. As we have already mentioned, it offers a broad overview of the internal turmoil and crisis in the fields of politics, society and the military within the Ottoman Empire in the period following the Young Turk Revolution, which are also the subject of extensive analysis made by Russian diplomats. Generally speaking, through the prism of this documentation, one can also follow the Russian policy concerning the Balkan events from the beginning of the last century, which in itself is largely a continuance of the long-term foreign strategy from the previous period.

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RUSSIAN DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTATION REGARDING THE EVENTS IN MACEDONIA AND THE BALKANS ON THE EVE OF THE BALKAN WARS

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The emphasis in this paper is placed on the reports of the Russian diplomatic representatives in the period 1909-1912, that offer numerous information and detailed analysis of current developments. Strong Russian diplomatic network in the Balkans and Macedonia closely follows the rapprochement of the Balkan countries (Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Montenegro) and the contacts of their leaders to official and unofficial levels to solve the so-called Balkan question, as well the echoes of these events in the Ottoman Empire and the great powers.

The materials, among other things, present Russian position and its strategy regarding the implementation of the idea "Balkans to the Balkan peoples", which they 'expect' would not affect neither the Ottoman authorities nor Austria-Hungary. Hence, Russian diplomats continuously report on the attempt of the Austro-Hungarian influence on certain decisions of the Porte, declaring friendship to pursue its efforts to position on the Balkans.

On the other hand, Russia shows open interest for the Ortodox Christian population of Macedonia and supports requirements reforms. These steps support mistrust in the relations between Russia and Ottoman Empire, externally positioned as friendly, and increase the doubt that creating a Balkan alliance occurs under the patronage of Russia and Italy.

In this sense, the sources point out that Russian foreign policy makes attempt for balancing considering the policy of the Balkan states, which show more open intentions for the final territorial expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire.