

Diplomatic and Journalistic Comments on the Agreement between the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria in 1904

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ABSTRACT

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Bulgarian-Ottoman relations from the end of the XIX-th and the beginning of the XX-th century played an important part in the process of transformation of the European Ottoman heritage into the modern state and political system of the Balkans. The Agreement between the two states from 1904 is a significant page in the history of those relations. The agreement entered into between the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria solved a number of problems at a moment crucial for the development of the Macedonian Question. The agreement was welcomed by the official diplomacy and was interpreted as a step forward to affirming the peace in the European Southeast.

In the predominant part of political, diplomatic and journalists' comments, the emphasis is on the outcomes of the agreement for the Bulgarian state. As far as European opinion-making circles were concerned, through that agreement Bulgaria turned into a guarantor - state for conducting the Murzsteg Reforms. That led the country to a higher-reputation level compared to its neighbour-states Greece and Serbia in terms of the Macedonian Question. The Principality of Bulgaria turned out

to be in the centre of the interests of the European political and diplomatic circles and attracted the attention of public opinion in the European capitals so much that its role in the development of the Macedonian Question and for protection of the peace on the Balkans will be later on determined as crucial.

Keywords: Macedonian Question, Murzsteg Reforms, Bulgarian-Ottoman relations, military conflict, agreement, European diplomacy, European periodicals.

ÖZ

KITANOV, Valentin, **Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Bulgar Emareti Arasında 1904 Yılında İmzalanan Anlaşma Hakkında Diplomasi Kaynaklarında ve Gazetelerdeki Yorumlar**, CTAD, Yıl 15, Sayı 30 (Güz 2019), s. 85-108.

19. yüzyılın sonları ve 20. yüzyılın başlarındaki Bulgar-Osmanlı ilişkileri, Avrupa Osmanlı mirasının Balkanlar'ın modern devlet ve siyasi sistemine dönüşüm sürecinde önemli rol oynamaktadır. İki ülke arasında yapılan, 1904 tarihli Anlaşma, bu ilişkilerin tarihçesinin önemli bir sayfasını teşkil etmektedir. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Bulgar Prenslığı arasında akdedilen anlaşma, Makedonya Sorunu'nun gelişimi için kritik bir anda, bir sürü soruna çözüm olmuştur. Bu anlaşma, resmi diplomasi tarafından hoş karşılanmış ve Güneydoğu Avrupa'da barışın güçlendirilmesine yönelik bir adım olarak yorumlanmıştır.

Siyasi, diplomatik yorumların ve gazeteci yorumlarının büyük bir bölümünde bu anlaşmanın Bulgar Devleti açısından doğurduğu sonuçlar vurgulanmaktadır. Anlaşma aracılığı ile Bulgaristan, Avrupa'nın fikir çevreleri için Mürzsteg reformlarının gerçekleştirilmesi açısından garantör devlete dönüşmüştür. Bu durum ülkeyi, Makedonya sorunu açısından devletin komşuları Yunanistan ile Sırbistan'a göre daha saygın bir seviyeye çıkartmaktadır. Bulgar Prenslığı, kendini Avrupa'nın siyasi ve diplomatik çevrelerinin ilgisinin merkezinde bulmuş ve Avrupa başkentlerinde kamuoyunun ilgisini o denli çekmiştir ki Prenslığın, Makedonya sorununun gelişimindeki ve Balkanlar'da barışın korunmasındaki rolü daha sonra kilit rol olarak nitelendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Makedonya sorunu, Mürzsteg reformları, Bulgar-Osmanlı ilişkileri, çatışma, anlaşma, Avrupa diplomasisi, Avrupa süreli yayınları.

Introduction

The Treaty of Berlin of 1878 was the onset of one of the most complicated issues on the Balkans – the Macedonian Question. For decades, it played an essential part in modelling the inter-state relations on the peninsula and was in the focus of European diplomacy. Directly referring to the status of the Ottoman European provinces of Macedonia and Adrianople /Eastern/ Thrace, it is a blend of intertwining cultural-historical, ethno-national, economic and geopolitical projections. The future state and territorial configuration in the European Southeast depended on its solution. That explains the enormous

financial, spiritual and military-political resources the Balkan states devoted to building positions as to the Macedonian Question.

In 1893, the organized Macedonian-Adrianopolitan liberation movement originated in the Ottoman Empire. In Thessaloniki, a revolutionary committee was organized and it became famous in history with its later name – Internal Macedonian Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization.¹ The organization formulated as its major goal the autonomy of Macedonia and Eastern Thrace. Its activity throughout the following ten years radicalized the Macedonian Question and raised it for solution before the Sublime Porte, the Balkan states and the international factors with all its complexity. The Principality of Bulgaria engaged with the problem in the long run in view of the national characteristic of the revolutionary movement and the significant presence of Bulgarians in the ethnical, social and economic characteristics of a number of parts of both Ottoman provinces.

Soon there were accusations by the Sublime Porte that the Bulgarian state was behind the Macedonian-Adrianopolitan revolutionary movement. All that led to accumulation of tension, which was a frequent cause of disturbing the normal rhythm of diplomatic relations in the years to follow, and even in certain cases reaching critical dimensions. Gradually, Bulgarian-Ottoman relations were beginning to play an important part in the process of transforming the European ottoman heritage into the modern state and political system in the Balkans turning out to be crucial within the context of the Macedonian Question. The agreement between the two states from 1904 was an important page in the history of those relations. It was the means to overcome the threat of a very serious military conflict on the Balkans.²

¹This name of the organization was accepted for the first time on its First Rila General Congress in 1905. Until then the organization was known as *the Macedonian Revolutionary Committees /MRC/*, *Bulgarian Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Committees /BMARC/* and *Secret Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization /SMARO/*. For the founding and initial development of the organization, see Hristo Silyanov, *Osvoboditelnite borbi na Makedoniia. Fototipno izdanie*, V. 1, Sofia, 1983 (Hristo Silyanov, *The Liberation Struggles of Macedonia, Phototype edition*, v. 1, Sofia, 1983); Duncan Perry, *The Politics of Terror. The Macedonian Liberation Movements 1893-1903*. Durham and London, 1988; Kostadin Pandev, *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnoto dvizhenie v Makedoniia i Odrinsko 1878-1903*, Sofia, 2000 (Kostadin Pandev, *The National Liberation Movement in Macedonia and in Adrianople Region, 1878-1903*, Sofia, 2000); *Vatreshnata makedono-odrinska revoljutsionna organizatsija prez pogleda na nejnite osnovateli. Spomeni na Damian Gruiev, d-r Hristo Tatarchev, Ivan Hadzjinkolov, Andon Dimitrov, Petar Poparsov*. Sastavitelstvo, predgovor i belezki Todor Petrov, Tsocho Biljarski, Sofia, 2002 (*The Internal Macedonian Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organisation through the Viewpoint of its Founders. Memories of Damyan Gruiev, Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, Ivan Hadzjinkolov, Andon Dimitrov, Petar Poparsov*. Compilation, preface and notes by Todor Petrov, Tsocho Bilyarski. Sofia, 2002).

² Concerning the issue of the Agreement between the Ottoman Empire and The Principality of Bulgaria, see Tushe Vlahov, *Tursko-balgarskoto saglasenie ot 1904 g. V Sbornik v pamet na professor*

Crisis in the Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria and the Diplomatic Effort for Overcoming

In 1903, the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria sharply worsened in relation to the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising. It was organized and conducted by IMARO and was interpreted by the empire as intervention of the Principality of Bulgaria in its internal affairs. The Ottoman Empire mobilized military troops and this provoked similar response measures on behalf of Bulgarian armed forces³.

The European governments did not favour the sharpening of the inter-state relations on the Balkans at that moment and interpreted the activities of the revolutionary organization on the preparation of an uprising as political pressure to provoke foreign intervention in favour of the autonomy of Macedonia and the Adrianople regions⁴. That predetermined the political and diplomatic lack of popularity of an eventual military conflict between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire and thus the two states undertook diplomatic steps to normalize their relations prior to the outburst of the uprising. Within the context of those efforts was the mission of the famous Bulgarian politician and diplomat Grigor Nachovich in the Ottoman capital in the period from 15 to 31 May 1903. Nachovich succeeded in conducting important meetings with senior Ottoman statesmen with the ambassadors of Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, Italy, and, of course with the Ottoman sultan Abdul Hamid II. The main purpose of his mission was to dispel the doubts in Ottoman political circles

Aleksandar Burmov. Sofia, 1973, s. 304-322 (Tushe Vlahov, *The Turkish-Bulgarian Agreement of 1904. In a collection in memoriam of Professor Alexander Burmov*. Sofia, 1973, p. 304-322); Tushe Vlahov, *Križa v balgaro-turskite odnosbenija 1895-1908*. Sofia, 1977 (Tushe Vlahov, *Crisis in the Bulgarian-Turkish Relations 1895-1908*, Sofia, 1977); Radoslav Popov, "Germanija i balgaro-turskite odnosbenija (1902 – 1904)", v *Studia Balcanica 16, Velikite sili I balkanskite vzaimootnosbenija v kraja na XIX i nachaloto na XX v.*, Sofia, 1982, s. 220-253 (Radoslav Popov, "Germany and the Bulgarian-Turkish Relations (1902-1904)", *Studia Balcanica 16, The Great Powers and the Balkan Relations at the end of the XIX-th and the beginning of the XX-th century*, Sofia, 1982, p. 220-253); Elena Stelova, Radoslav Popov, Vasilka Tankova, *Istorija na balgarskata diplomatsija 1879-1913 z.* Sofia, 1994, s. 291-375 (Elena Stelova, Radoslav Popov, Vasilka Tankova, *History of Bulgarian Diplomacy 1879-1913*. Sofia, 1994, p. 291-375); Valentin Kitanov, *Prinos kam diplomaticheskata istorija na Balgarija. Grigor Nachovich I Balgaro-turskoto sporazumenie ot 1904 g. Dokumentalen sbornik*, Sofia, 2004. (Valentin Kitanov, *Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement of 1904. Documentary collection*. Sofia, 2004).

³ Elena Stelova, Radoslav Popov, Vasilka Tankova, *History of Bulgarian Diplomacy 1879-1913*, p. 292-293

⁴Simeon Damyanov, *Velikite sili I natsionalnoosvoboditelnata borba v Makedonija i Odrinsko prez 1903 g. V: Osemdeset godini Ilindensko-Preobrazhensko vastanie*. Izd. Na BAN, Sofia, 1988, s. 94-95. (Simeon Damyanov, "The Great Powers and the National Liberation Struggle in Macedonia and Adrianople in 1903" -In: *Eighty Years from the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising*. Ed. BAS, Sofia, 1988, p. 94-95).

that Bulgaria was behind the revolutionary movement in Macedonia and Adrianople region⁵.

At the same time, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany started attempts to exercise pressure on Istanbul and Sofia aiming to prevent the probability of the outburst of war.⁶

The diplomatic stir, however, did not help to de-escalate the tension and the uprising planned by IMARO burst out on 2 August 1903.⁷ The uprising was suppressed by Ottoman military troops in the autumn of the same year and its consequences were expressed in a large number of victims, disrupted social and

⁵Elena Statelova, Radoslav Popov, Vasilka Tankova, *History of Bulgarian Diplomacy 1879-1913*, p. 292 – 293.

⁶R. Popov. *Germany and the Bulgarian-Turkish relations (1902 – 1904)*, p. 232-233.

⁷In relation to the uprising see the following summary research and documentary publications: Angel Tomov, Georgi Bazhdarov, *Revoljutsionnata borba v Makedonija*, Sofia, 1918 (Angel Tomov, Georgi Bazhdarov, *The Revolutionary Struggle in Macedonia*. Sofia, 1918); Hristo Silyanov. *Liberation Struggles of Macedonia*, V. I.; Nikola Spirov, *Preobrazhenskoto vastanie*, Sofia, 1965 (Nikola Spirov, *Preobrazhenie Uprising*. Sofia, 1965); Georgi Georgiev, Yordan Shopov, *Ilandenskoto vastanie*, Sofia, 1969 (Georgi Georgiev, Yordan Shopov, *The Ilinden Uprising*. Sofia, 1969); Lyuben Danailov, Stefan Noykov, *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnoto dvizhenie v Trakija 1878 – 1903*. Sofia, 1971 (Lyuben Danailov, Stefan Noykov, *The National Liberation Movement in Thrace in 1878 – 1903*. Sofia, 1971); Lyubomir Panayotov, *Ilandensko-Preobrachenskoto vastanie 1903*. Sofia, 1983 (Lyubomir Panayotov, *Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising 1903*. Sofia, 1983); *Istorija na Balgarija*, T. 7 (1878 – 1903), Sofia, 1991 (*History of Bulgaria*. V. 7 (1878 – 1903), Sofia, 1991); *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnoto dvizhenie na makedonskite I trakijските balgari 1878 – 1944*. T. 2, Sofia, 1995 (*The national Liberation Movement of Macedonian and Thracian Bulgarians 1878 – 1944*. T. 2, Sofia, 1995); *Makedonija. Istorija I politicheska sadba*, T. I, Sofia, 1994 (*Macedonia. History and Political Fate*. V. I, Sofia, 1994); *Ilandensko-Preobrachenskoto vastanie ot 1903 r. Voenna podgotovka I provezhdane*. Sofia, 1992 (*The Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising of 1903. Military Preparation and Conducting*. Sofia, 1992); *Materiali za istorijata na makedonskoto osvoboditelno dvizhenie*. Kn. 1 – 11; Sofia, 1925 – 1931 (*Materials on the History of Macedonian Movement for Liberation*. Book 1 – 11; Sofia, 1925 – 1931); Ivan Ormanszhiev, *Prinosi kam istorijata na vastannicheskoto dvizhenie v Odrinsko (1896 – 1903)*. Kn. 1 – 4, Sofia – Burgas, 1927 – 1941 (Ivan Ormanszhiev. *Contributions to the History of Uprising Movement in Adrianople Region (1896 – 1903)*. Book 1 – 4, Sofia – Burgas, 1927 – 1941); Ivan Gorov, *Dokumenti za makedono-odrinskoto revoljutsionno dvizhenie I za Preobrazhenskoto vastanie*. Preobrazhensko vastanie 1903. Sofia, 1955, s. 233 – 234 (Ivan Gorov, *Documents on the Macedonian – Adrianople Revolutionary Movement and on the Preobrazhenie Uprising*. Preobrazhenie Uprising 1903. Sofia, 1955, p. 233 – 234); *Makedonija. Sbornik ot dokumenti I materiali*. Sofia, 1978, s. 426 – 427 (*Macedonia. Collection of Documents and Materials*. Sofia, 1978, p. 426 – 427); Mihail Gerzhikov, *Spomeni, dokumenti, materiali*. Sofia, 1984 (Mihail Gerzhikov, *Memories, Documents, Materials*. Sofia, 1984); Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, *Spomeni, dokumenti, materiali*. Sofia, 1989 (Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, *Memories, Documents, Materials*. Sofia, 1989); Dame Gruev, *Spomeni, korespondentsija*. Sofia, 1999 (Dame Gruev, *Memories, Correspondence*. Sofia, 1999); *36 godini vav VMRO. Spomeni na Kiril Parlichev*. Sofia, 1999 (36 years in IMARO. Memories of Kiril Parlichev. Sofia, 1999).

economic life, refugee rush towards Bulgaria and the exile of several thousand people to various locations in the empire.

The tension between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire in relation to the Macedonian Question did not drop and the threat of war beginning remained. It was then obvious more than ever before that diplomatic effort to prevent the military conflict should not stop.

On September 20, 1903 the credential letter of Grigor Nachovich from Prince Ferdinand to sultan Abdul Hamid II was signed concerning his appointment as Bulgarian diplomatic agent in the Ottoman capital replacing the pro-Russian Iv. St. Geshov. Nachovich was the most suitable candidate for that position, accepted by the Ottoman side in a period when the Principality was in a difficult international position.⁸

During the days when Nachovich was getting ready to depart for his diplomatic appointment to Istanbul, the two great powers with major interest in the situation in the Balkans – Russia and Austria-Hungary – drew up the next project for reforms in Macedonia. The Reforms from Murzsteg were developed on 17 September 1903 and on 11 November 1903 the ottoman sultan gave his consent for their application.⁹

As it is known, the Murzsteg Program united the reformation demands of Vienna and Petersburg in nine points. The basic issue that had to be solved was related to the reorganization of Ottoman gendarmerie in the three Macedonian vilayets – Thessaloniki, Bitola and Kosovo one. The reform act did not affect Adrianople region.¹⁰

⁸ЦГА, ф. 3 к, оп. 8, а. е. 420, л. 1 – 2. (CSA, fond 3 k, inventory 8, archival file 420, page. 1 – 2).

⁹The act of reform was drawn up by the foreign ministers of Russia and Austria-Hungary – Count Vladimir Lamsdorf and count Agenor Goluchowski who met in the hunting castle of emperor Franz Joseph in the small town of Murzsteg, province of Styria. The act was given to the Sublime Porte on 10 October 1903 but initially rejected by the Ottoman party on 28 October. After long-lasting pressure by the importing parties and by the other European great powers, Abdul Hamid II gave his consent for its application by preserving the right to negotiate on the details. The text of the Murzsteg Reforms see in: *Livre Jaune, Affaires de Macedoine (1903-1905)*, Paris, 1905, p. 40, Annexe; *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*. Vol. V. *The Near East. The Macedonian Problem and the Annexation of Bosnia 1903-1908*. Edited by G. P. Gooch, and Harold Temperley, London, 1928, page. 65-66; Hristo Silyanov, *Osvoboditelnite borbi na Makedonija*. T. II. *Sled Ilindenskoto vastanie*, Sofia, 1943, s. 42-43. (Hristo Silyanov, *The liberation struggles of Macedonia*. V. II. *After the Ilinden Uprising*, Sofia, 1943, p. 42-43).

¹⁰Milcho Lalkov, *Mjurtstegskata reformena programa 1903 – 1908 г., в Национално-освободителното движение на македонските и тракийските българи 1878 – 1944*. T. 3, Sofia, 1997, s. 12 (Milcho Lalkov, *Murzsteg Reform Programme 1903 – 1908 in national liberation movement of Macedonian and Thracian Bulgarians 1878 – 1944*. V. 3, Sofia, 1997, p. 12.) (According to the author, the political development of the Ottoman Empire throughout the following years led to a failure of the reform deed. Among the great powers no agreement or joint actions could be reached

With the appointment of Grigor Nachovich as a Bulgarian diplomatic agent in the Ottoman capital in the autumn of 1903, the essential period of negotiations between the two states actually started; those negotiations initially progressed with difficulty because the empire did not demonstrate any readiness to compromise, especially in relation to the issues concerning Adrianople. Ottoman diplomacy was aware of the concerns of the cabinet council in Sofia related to a possible cooling of relations with Russia. The Sublime Porte also knew about the insistence from Vienna to request clear signals that the Principality would not support the Macedonian-Adrianople revolutionary movement¹¹. Bulgarian perseverance met Ottoman opposition and the negotiations were facing the clear risk of termination. During their conclusive phase the interference of the German ambassador in Istanbul, Baron Marschall was especially effective¹².

Nachovich succeeded in convincing the Bulgarian prince and prime-minister in the necessity of the agreement and on 26 March 1904 - that agreement was signed. Gr. Nachovich signed on behalf of the Bulgarian state and Said Pasha – Chairman of the State Council signed on behalf of the Ottoman Empire along with Zeki Pasha – aide-de-camp of the sultan and head of the artillery¹³.

concerning a number of important issues, in relation to Macedonia and the reformation of European Turkey, see p. 23); Alfred Rappoport, a long-year consular officer of Austria-Hungary in Macedonia believed that the controversial actions of foreign representatives were the main reason for the failure of the reforms. See: Alfred Rappoport, *Au pays des martyrs. Notes et souvenirs d'un ancien consul général d'Autriche-Hongrie en Macédoine (1904-1909)*, Paris, 1927, page. 27.

¹¹*Documents diplomatiques Français, II. 1901-1911*, 4, Paris, 1932, page. 121 (Report of the French charge d'affaires in St. Petersburg Butiron to the minister of foreign affairs Delcasse of 21 November 1903); page. 99 (Report of the head of the French diplomatic mission in Sofia Burgarel to the minister of foreign affairs Delcasse of 23 December 1903).

¹²Radoslav Popov, *Germany and the Bulgarian-Turkish Relations (1902-1904)*. p. 246-251.

¹³The text of the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement see in: Dr. Boris Kesjakov, *Prinos kam diplomateskata istorija na Balgarija 1878-1925*. S predgovor ot prof. Stefan Balamezov, Sofia, 1925, s. 22-24 (Dr. Boris Kesjakov, *Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria 1878-1925*. With a preface by Prof. Stefan Balamezov, Sofia, 1925, page. 22-24); *Documents diplomatiques Français, II. 1901-1911*, 5, Paris, 1934, page. 6-8. (In a report of the French charge d'affaires in Tsarigrad Barst to the minister of foreign affairs Delcasse of 28 March/10 April/ the full text of the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement is enclosed); *Osvoboditelna borba na balgarite v Makedonija i Odrinsko 1902-1904 g. Diplomateski dokumenti*, Sofia, 1978, s. 554-557 (*The Struggle for Liberation of Bulgarians in Macedonia and Adrianople Region 1902-1904.. Diplomatic Documents*, Sofia, 1978, page. 554-557); Valentin Kitanov, *Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement.*, page. 126-127.

Agreement between the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria and European Diplomacy

The agreement consists of eight points, the first two points formulating the specific commitments of the Bulgarian principality related to the Macedonian Question. First of all, it was obligated „to prevent on its territory, as well as in Eastern Rumelia, the formation of revolutionary committees and armed bands as well as all activities aimed at bringing of turmoil into the Empire“. The other major commitment of the Principality was related to the promise that Sofia shall „take the necessary measures in order to prevent importing into the neighbouring villages (i.e. again Macedonia and Adrianople Thrace are envisaged, author’s note) of any explosive or poisonous materials along with any products harmful for public health“.

The third and fourth points determine the commitments of the Ottoman state concerning the Macedonian Question, said state being obligated to activate „the reforms agreed between Turkey, Austria-Hungary and Russia related to the vilayets: Thessaloniki, Bitola, and Kosovo“. The Sublime Porte promised to give amnesty to the people convicted for revolutionary and political activity except the perpetrators of „dynamite attacks against ships, railway, bridges and government buildings“. The Ottoman authorities had to allow to refugees in the Principality to return to their birthplaces in Macedonia and Adrianople Thrace and to guarantee „restoration of their housing and return of their land“.

The more important decision in the remaining three points of the agreement pertain to the exchange of deserters and criminals; restoration of normal customs relations and the railway connection between the two countries; free and equal access to civil and court offices in the empire for Bulgarians, etc.¹⁴

In an additional record the two governments expressed their readiness to conclude special treaties on different issues of mutual interest.¹⁵

The Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement is a diplomatic act between suzerain and vassal in a period of state and territorial transformations and rearrangement of the political map in South-Eastern Europe. It not only reflects the complexity of the Macedonian Question and the dangers related to the failure to solve it; the agreement also reveals a number of issues specifically actual and important for that epoch such as the future of the European Ottoman provinces, the role of the great powers in the complex Balkan controversies, the affirmation of the state and the political emancipation of the Principality of

¹⁴ Valentin Kitanov, “The unshared road of conflict or one war less in the Balkans (historical reading of the agreement between the Ottoman empire and the principality of Bulgaria of 1904)”, *Revista Inclusions*, Volumen 5 / Número Especial / Abril – Junio 2018, p. 34-35.

¹⁵ Boris Kesyakov, *Op.cit.*, page. 22-24; Valentin Kitanov, *Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement.*, p. 126-127.

Bulgaria and the prospects for the political, commercial and economic relations on the peninsula.

All this rich palette of problems predetermined the demonstrated interest and active part of European diplomacy in what was happening in the relations between the Bulgarian Principality and the Ottoman Empire. While negotiations between the Turkish and the Bulgarian state were in progress, the diplomatic offices of the great powers tried to indoctrinate the Bulgarian government with their opinions in relation to the problems in the Balkans in their part concerning the Macedonian Question. Most of those opinions demonstrate an understanding that the reasons for complications had to be sought both in the social and political conditions in the Ottoman provinces, and also in the policy of the Bulgarian principality. That is why, the successful conclusion of the negotiations and the signing of an agreement with the Ottoman Empire was interpreted as a change in the positive direction, in line with the European efforts to establish peace on the peninsula. That evaluation is clearly visible in the correspondence of Bulgarian diplomatic representatives in European capitals, on the pages of European press and in the behaviour of diplomatic circles in the Ottoman capital.

In the course of a conversation from 28 January 1904 between the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in Vienna Iv. S. Geshov with the Austrian-Hungarian minister of foreign affairs Count Agenor Goluchowski, the readiness of Austria-Hungary was emphasized “*to support the peaceful and reformation deed we have undertaken together with Russia*“. It was clear that a durable agreement between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire was accepted by Austria-Hungary as an element of the Murzsteg reform programme.¹⁶ A similar evaluation was shared by formal Russia, expressed by the foreign minister Count Vladislav Lamsdorf who stated as early as at the end of February 1904 before the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in Petersburg Dimitar Stanchov that „*the agreement will be beneficial for both countries and should be accepted by Bulgaria*“.¹⁷

The political circles in France also followed with expressed interest the crisis between Istanbul and Sofia. The fact that it took place at a time when Russia in the war with Japan arose serious concerns in Paris as to whether the events in the Balkans would make the policy of Austria-Hungary more aggressive in terms of Macedonia. On the other hand, the Russian commitment could encourage the Ottoman side to set forth unacceptable conditions for the Bulgarian government and thus become the cause of military conflict –

¹⁶CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 34-38; Valentin Kitanov, *Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement...*, p. 85.

¹⁷Tushe Vlahov, *Crisis in the Bulgarian-Turkish Relations*, p. 82.

something definitely unacceptable for Paris. That was the assessment made by the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in the French capital Lyubomir Zolotovitchin his report from the end of January 1904.¹⁸

A certain nuance is evident in the English position regarding the situation in the Balkans. The emphasis was mainly on the cruelties on behalf of Ottoman authorities in suppressing the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising and on the danger of war conflict outburst. These issues were discussed by the Chamber of Lords. The diplomatic agent in the British capital Dimitar Tsokov informed by an encoded telegram No.52 of 3 February 1904 to the Bulgarian government that the English foreign minister Lord Lansdowne completely shared these concerns. The question of the amnesty and of effective introduction of reforms was of primary importance for the British policy on the issue.¹⁹

As a result of the cleverly conducted campaign around the negotiations, the diplomatic corps in Istanbul was also positive about the forthcoming entering into the agreement between the Principality and the Empire. On 14 February 1904, Prince Ferdinand's birthday, the Russian, German, French and other ambassadors in the Ottoman Empire went to the Bulgarian mission to send their congratulations and shared their positive expectations about the agreement. Grigor Nachovich would write in a letter to Strashimir Dobrovich, secretary and head of the Secret Office of the castle in Sofia: „*Our agreement with Turkey makes the best impressions here; not only ambassadors and ministers have changes their attitudes towards Bulgaria but you can see a new mood in relation to us in the population itself, in the ordinary clerks.*“²⁰

During the course of the negotiations, the attempts of Ivan St. Geshov to engage the support of Austria-Hungarian diplomacy for spreading the reforms in Adrianople Thrace as well did not succeed. In a conversation with Dimitar Stanchoy, Count Vladislav Lamsdorf also advised the Bulgarian government to sign the agreement with the Empire and not to insist on issues concerning Adrianople Thrace.²¹ Given that situation and the negative position of the two

¹⁸CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 34-38; Valentin Kitanov, Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement, p. 85.

¹⁹CDA, Mikrofilmi I kopija na dokumenti ot Huvarovija arhiv na vojnata, mira I revoljutsijata, SAD, 19-18, 2 l. blanka, prepis. Publikovano V: Iz tajnija arhiv na balgarskija tsar Ferdinand I. Dokumenti za voennata I politicheskata istorija na Balgarija, Sofia, 2001, c. 81. (CSA, Microfilms and copies of documents from Hoover archive of war, peace and revolution, USA, 19-18, 2 p. template, transcript. Publ. in: From the Secret Archive of the Bulgarian king Ferdinand I. Documents about the Military and Political History of Bulgaria, Sofia, 2001, page. 81).

²⁰CSA, fond 3 k, inventory 8, archival file 589, page. 4-5; Valentin Kitanov, *Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement.*, p. 99.

²¹ CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 79-80.

great powers, Bulgaria accepted their suggestions and thus created the impression it will be working in line with the common sense of European diplomacy. That was the line of political behaviour that Grigor Nachovich adhered to throughout the entire period of the negotiations.

The agreement signed on 26 March 1904 and its text justified the efforts of the great powers to overcome the danger of military conflict between the Principality and the Empire. The content of the agreement text synchronised the interests of the two Bulgarian states with the main requirements of European diplomacy. On the one hand, pursuant to the first point, the Bulgarian principality assumed the obligation not to admit on its territory to form revolutionary groups or to prepare and carry out activities directed against the Ottoman Empire.²² Thus, the Ottoman party was satisfied. The request of the great powers that Bulgaria should refrain from intervention in European Turkey which was expressed by Russia and Austria-Hungary was also satisfied.²³ Point 3 and 4 of the agreement guaranteed amnesty for the political prisoners and gave the right to the refugees to return to their homes.²⁴ In this case, the Bulgarian party was satisfied and another important condition of the great powers expressed in their conversations with Bulgarian diplomatic agents.²⁵

On 27 March, only one day after the agreement was concluded, the Bulgarian prime-minister and minister of foreign affairs Gen. Racho Petrov sent an encoded telegram a summary of the text of the agreement to the diplomatic agents in Petersburg, Vienna, Paris, London, Rome, Belgrade, Bucharest. That was done with the purpose that Bulgarian diplomatic representatives in the European capitals be prepared in the event of meetings with members of the respective government circles and conduct an active propaganda campaign to enlighten public opinion in the relevant countries.²⁶

²²Boris Kesyakov, *Op. Cit.*, p. 22-24; Valentin Kitanov, *Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement*, p. 126-127.

²³CSA, fond 3k, inventory 8, archival file 531, page. 52-53; CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 34-38.

²⁴Boris Kesyakov, *Op. cit.*, p. 22-24; Valentin Kitanov, *Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement*, p.126-127.

²⁵CSA, fond176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 34-38; V. Kitanov.*Op.cit.*, p. 126-127.

²⁶CSA, fond176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 120-121; Tushe Vlahov, *Op. cit.* p. 93; Valentin Kitanov, *Otvukat ot Balgaro-turskoto sporazumenie ot 26 mart 1904 g. v chuzhbina (po raporti na balgarskite diplomaticheski agenti v evropejskite stolitsi)*. V: Nauchni izvestija, g.I, kn.I, Jugozapaden universitet "Neofit Pilski", Blagoevgrad, 2005, s. 317. (Valentin Kitanov, *The Response to the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement of 26 March 1904 Abroad (according to Reports of Bulgarian Diplomatic Agents in European Capitals)*. *Scientific Proceedings*, v. I, b. I, South-West University „Neofit Rilski“, Blagoevgrad, 2005, p. 317).

The multiple reports of Bulgarian diplomats provide an opportunity to reveal very accurately the reactions in the relevant state and the evaluations said state had concerning the agreement.

Ivan St. Geshov communicated the response to the agreement in the Austrian-Hungarian capital in a confidential telegram of 30 March 1904. According to the Bulgarian diplomat, the notification of its signing made “*a good and calming impression*” in the circles of authority, regardless of the fact that “*there are still many sceptically looking at the agreement, as far as its implementation and its duration are concerned*”. Nevertheless, the entire diplomatic body in Vienna congratulated the Bulgarian diplomatic agent for this success and expressed its conviction that it had a significant moral effect for Bulgaria. Geshov received special congratulations by the French ambassador in Vienna Bevercaux. An exception to the positive attitude were the Romanian, Serbian and Greek ambassadors who according to the Bulgarian diplomatic agent “*would hardly be pleased with this turn in Balkan affairs*”.²⁷

Serious interest in the agreement was evident in English political and diplomatic circles as well. In a report of the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in London Dimitar Tsokov to gen. Racho Petrov, an evaluation was made that according to the Kingdom, “the official recognition on behalf of the Porte of the right of Bulgaria to stand for its countrymen in European Turkey is a huge victory for Bulgarian diplomacy”. In the English reputable circles this act was supposed to provide Bulgarian foreign policy with additional advantages in pursuing to affirm Sofia as the sole factor capable of protecting the rights of the population in Macedonia and the Adrianople region.²⁸

France was one of the European states where the interest in the signed agreement was most distinctly expressed. That was evident from the reports of the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in Paris Lyubomir Zolotovich to the prime-minister Gen. Racho Petrov. The French foreign ministry was informed immediately of the concluding of The Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement by the French ambassador in the Ottoman capital. The French press itself closely followed the course of negotiations and the reading public was acquainted with the eventual complications that would ensue from an eventual failure of the negotiations and Grigor Nachovich leaving Istanbul. That, according to reputable observers, would be “*equivalent to a termination of diplomatic relations*” That is why the news of signing the agreement was welcomed in Quai d’Orsay with “*certain pleasure*” it meant a secure step towards peace in the East. The exact

²⁷CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 147-148; Tushe Vlahov, *Op. cit.* p. 93; Valentin Kitanov, Contribution to the Diplomatic History of Bulgaria. Grigor Nachovich and the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement, p. 133.

²⁸CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 152-153.

evaluations for the position of France regarding the Bulgarian-Ottoman agreement that the diplomatic agent in France made were based on meetings conducted and conversations with the reputable circles in the French capital. For the French it was important that through the agreement, the threat of war on the Balkans was eliminated and the relations between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire normalized. The political elite in the country kept certain skepticism in view of the readiness of the Sublime Porte to work consistently in the spirit of the agreement. The French were impressed by the manner in which the Austrian-Hungarian Embassy and the Greek Legation met the news about the agreement. The evaluation was that the news was met with displeasure because in case it was fulfilled then not only the danger of a military conflict in the Balkans was eliminated but with it, the reason for an Austrian intervention in Macedonia was also removed. Formal France viewed the agreement as a heavy blow to Greek claims regarding Macedonia, *“because Turkey deemed it necessary to treat with the Principality on an issue concerning which the Greeks by all means endeavoured to prove to the wide world that Bulgarians had no interests whatsoever in Macedonia where only the Greeks had interests and rights”*. Paris also considered the agreement a great moral victory for Bulgaria because through it the state was treated as a factor equal to the Great Powers in terms of the application of the Murzsteg reforms, and thus The Sublime Porte recognized the Bulgarian rights in relation to Macedonia and the Bulgarians living in European Turkey. The agreement was interpreted by the French state as an additional support of the European efforts to pacify Macedonia, *“where the international gendarmerie is on the eve of commencing its factual functioning.”*²⁹

The development of the behaviour of Germany concerning the Bulgarian-Turkish negotiations and signing the agreement is a demonstration of how the accumulation of circumstances when accounting for the German interest led to a radical change in the evaluation of the situation in the Balkans after the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising and in the spring of 1904. Initially, Berlin assessed an eventual Bulgarian-Turkish agreement as harmful to the German political and economic interests in the Ottoman Empire. Through its ambassador in Istanbul, Baron Marschall, Germany advised the ottoman sultan and the Sublime Porte to stick to the reformation efforts of Russia and Austria-Hungary, and to divert any attempts for direct agreement with the Bulgarians. The reason for that German position stemmed from the concerns that a direct agreement between Sofia and Istanbul could be interpreted as ignoring the reform efforts of Russia and Austria-Hungary and thus lead to an even more definitive intervention on their behalf in the Macedonian Question - something

²⁹CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 38-41.

Berlin did not want to happen.³⁰ The German position changed after taking into account the fact that the agreement did not disavow the Murzsteg reforms or lead to changes in the positions of the Great Powers on the Macedonian Question. The merit for that change belonged to the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in the ottoman capital Grigor Nachovich as well, as he managed to persuade Baron Marschall in the necessity of the agreement.³¹ In the conclusive stage of the negotiations between the two Balkan states, the German diplomacy actively worked in favour of reaching the agreement, so the response in the German capital concerning the event was positive. Among German political and diplomatic circles the conviction was affirmed that it was especially owing to the effective intervention and active support by Germany, in the person of its ambassador Baron Marschall that the agreement came into effect. The German ambassador in Sofia, Belov, shared a similar opinion in his conversation with the secretary of the Bulgarian ministry of foreign affairs and religions G. Vernatsa on 7 April 1904.³² In the correspondences of the Bulgarian Commercial Newspaper from Berlin, the increased trust of German politicians in the Bulgarian government after concluding the agreement was emphasized.³³

The assessment given to the Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement by diplomatic representatives in the very Ottoman Empire is of great importance for the reaction to the Bulgarian-Ottoman agreement abroad and the positions of the relevant European countries. The report of the Bulgarian trade agent in Bitola Andrey Toshev to Grigor Nachovich from 31 March 1904 contains interesting information. “*The consuls*”, Toshev writes, (author’s note)

“[A]ccepted the news differently. None of them said they were displeased but only the English consul seems to me really pleased with this result. The Russian consul is partially pleased too. The Serbian, Greek and Austrian consuls were unpleasantly impressed by the news. The Austrian consul, Mr. Kral, with all his efforts is not able to hide his dissatisfaction. As far as the Greek consul is concerned – he is just out of control.”³⁴

From the preserved diplomatic documents the emphasized discontent with the agreement on behalf of Serbia and Greece is evident, in contrast with the opinions of most European political and diplomatic factors. In a formal report from 2 April 1904, the Bulgarian trade agent in Skopje Todor Nedkov

³⁰Radoslav Popov, *Germany and the Bulgarian-Turkish Relations (1902-1904)*, p. 237.

³¹Popov, *Ibid.*, p. 244-245.

³²CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 52.

³³„Balgarski targovski vestnik“, Sofia 13/26 april 1904 g. (The Bulgarian Commercial Newspaper, Sofia, 13/26 April 1904); Tushe Vlahov, *Op. Cit.*, p. 93; CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 89.

³⁴CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 155-156.

remarked that the Serbians, *“in order to downplay the success of the Bulgarian government before the local population spoke with their typical gloating that the agreement was just another misleading delusion of the ones Bulgarians often to use to impress the Macedonian population.”*³⁵

The evaluations of the agreement by Romanian politicians were significantly more moderate. In a confidential report of the principality's diplomatic agent in Bucharest Petar Dimitrov to Gen. Racho Petrov it becomes clear that according to the Romanian prime-minister Dimitrie Sturdza and according to Dimitar Bratiyano, minister of foreign affairs, Romania approved the agreement because it was in line with its policy for keeping the status quo in the Balkans.³⁶

Evaluation of the Agreement by European Press

The significance of The Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement for the development of the Balkans and the active position of the European states in relation to it led to wide reflection of all details around the negotiations, the results and behaviour of the different states in the European press. The political analyses and journalist evaluations were constantly commented on in Bulgarian daily press and that complemented the overall understanding of the national and international significance of the event.

On 31 March 1904, the Sofia newspaper *Nov Vek* commented on the opinion of the Vienna liberal newspaper the *Neue Fh. Presse* concerning the agreement and published texts from the Austrian release emphasizing that the agreement is *“of huge importance not only for Bulgaria and Turkey but also for the entire Europe, which is freed by it from its concerns and doubts of possible complications in the Balkans”*. The Vienna newspaper paid attention to the fact that by means of the agreement the Sublime Porte was obligated for the second time after the Murzsteg reform initiative on the issue of reforms in its European provinces. That in turn made Bulgaria an additional warrantor for the reforms after Austria-Hungary and Russia. These findings were grounds for the newspaper to make an evaluation that Bulgaria affirmed its state authority and international prestige. Building its agreement with the Ottoman Empire on a solid and reputable basis, according to the newspaper the state *“will in the future be pursuant to its agreement a recognized by Turkey patron of its compatriots in Macedonia, in contrast to having been considered an usurper of that patronage so far and having been the cause of discontent of the two reformation powers and threatened by was with its suzerain in Istanbul”*³⁷

³⁵ CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 13.

³⁶ CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 1856, page. 154.

³⁷ *Vestnik „Nov vek“*, бр. 724, София, 31 mart/13 april 1904 g. (*Nov Vek* newspaper, issues 724, Sofia, 31 March/13April 1904).

In the English press, a justified interest in the situation around the Macedonian Question and the signing of the Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement was observed. In the reports of the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in London Dİmitar Tsokov, the various evaluations of the reputable English newspapers are visible. For example, even during the first days after signing the agreement, the Liverpool Mercury newspaper was definitive about the role of the agreement for elimination of the threat of outburst of a military conflict on the peninsula. In view of the desire of the great powers for actual implementation of reforms in European Turkey, according to the newspaper “*the now concluded Bulgarian-Turkish agreement, binding both states for preserving peace will help for the ultimate and desirable solution to the issue.*”³⁸ In its turn, the Pall Mall Gasette was even more cautious in its assessments. In a comment of the editor dated 1 April 1904 it is reminded that the agreement between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire followed the Anglo-French agreement and reviewed it as “*a temporary measure, which will serve to improve the tense relations between the two states*”. According to the newspaper, the commitments undertaken by Sofia and Istanbul will probably prove sufficient to “*prevent the Turkish-Bulgarian war, which was getting ready to outburst this spring and we should only be thankful for that*”. It becomes clear from the article that a number of circles in English society viewed peace in the Balkans as a function of good Bulgarian-Ottoman relations.³⁹

The St. James’s Gazette commented on the impossibility to satisfy the claims of Bulgaria for application of the reforms in the Adrianople vilayet as well. Nevertheless, the newspaper was of the opinion that

“the present agreement, in spite of the exclusion of any allusions for reforms in the Adrianople vilayet, will raise the prestige of the Bulgarian government and will help it continue to undertake measures against the committee (IMARO, author’s note). It will at the same time also promptly assist the Porte to reduce the number of its military troops in Macedonia, which is an important consideration from the financial perspective.”⁴⁰

The satisfaction with the avoidance of conflict in the Balkans was also reported even in cases when the actions of the Bulgarian government were viewed as a success of Russian diplomacy, which did not want the outburst of war in the Near East at a period when its military forces were engaged in the war with Japan, as commented by The Leeds Mercury newspaper. At that background, the balances viewpoint of the London newspaper, the Standard, is impressive. Here, again a comparison is made with the event much more significant for the international development, as is the Anglo-French agreement

³⁸ CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 14-15.

³⁹CSA, fond 176 k, Ibid., page. 16-17.

⁴⁰ CSA, fond 176 k, Idiv., page. 18-19.

without however underestimating the agreement between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, which were pointed out to be “*the most important factors by means of which preserving the peace in South-Eastern Europe could be accomplished*”. In the comment of the London issue, satisfaction was shared that the Russian-Japanese war did not encourage the adventure between the two Balkan states, on the contrary, they had proved that “*they are ready to act with the other European powers in their endeavours to eliminate the causes for past and future complications*”, in order for the reforms in Macedonia to be successful.⁴¹

Part of the London press, such as the influential *The Morning Post*, used the topic of the agreement to point out to Macedonian revolutionaries and the Bulgarian government as the direct culprits for “*the bloody events from the previous year*” around the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising. The newspaper emphasized the sultan’s amnesty. The London liberal newspaper, *The Daily Chronicle*, was skeptical concerning the probable implementation of the commitments undertaken under the agreement in its issues from the end of March 1904, accusing the Ottoman governing power in non-performance of the commitments undertaken for reforms up to that moment and their remaining solely at the stage of written promises. According to the author of the comment, neither Bulgarian, nor Ottoman promises will change the situation in Macedonia and said author also underlines that statement that if the sultan’s promises for reforms had had practical implementation, then “*Turkey would today be the best governed state in Europe*”. The Sheffield conservative body, *The Sheffield Telegraph*, also commented on the agreement by pointing out that “*Bulgaria is the key to the Macedonian Question and while the Bulgarian government allows Macedonian rebels to organize freely and unhindered, all efforts by Europe to improve the state of affairs in this Turkish district will remain in vain and without results.*”

Practically, the Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement became a convenient occasion to share the opinions of the separate public circles in England concerning the Macedonian Question; that is why different viewpoints are evident in the comments, depending on the political interests and preferences.⁴²

Russia, as one of the countries most interested in Balkan problematic, accepted with satisfaction the signing of the Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement, in view of the serious commitments in the military activities with Japan and the Far East.⁴³ In contradiction with the positive evaluation of formal Petersburg, there were also tendentious reflections of the agreement in Russian press. The

⁴¹ CSA, fond 176 k, Idib., page. 22-23.

⁴² Valentin Kitanov, *The Response to the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement of 26 March 1904*, p. 323-324; CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 24-31.

⁴³ T. Vlahov, *Op. Cit.*, p. 93.

negative evaluation of the agreement by the Petersburg Vedomosti newspaper became the reason for the Bulgarian diplomatic agent in the Russian capital Dimitar Stanchov to file a protest to the Russian ministry of foreign affairs. In a report of 12 April 1904, he informed the Bulgarian prime-minister Gen. Racho Petrov of his activities. Owing to his intervention, the Russian authorities were engaged and in The Novoe Vremya newspaper, a positive editor's comment was published concerning the agreement.⁴⁴ The article in The Peterburg Novosti provoking the activity of the Bulgarian diplomatic agent, was from 31 March 1904 entitled "*The Turkish-Bulgarian Agreement*". In that article, the two states were reproached of secretly trying to paralyze the joint diplomatic initiatives of Austria-Hungary and Russia for reforms in Macedonia and possibly eliminate Russian intervention in Balkan problematic. In an emphatically derogatory tone the issue expressed the opinion that regardless of the theoretically beneficial for Bulgarian national politics stipulations the agreement "*will remain a dream of Bulgarian politicians impossible to come true because Turkey, which did not hesitate to breach its international commitments before the great powers all the time will not even think of fulfilling just one point of its commitments in the just signed agreement having to do with only small Bulgaria.*" According to the said newspaper, the agreement was stillborn and cannot influence international politics or have an importance for the reforms in Macedonia.⁴⁵ On 3 April 1904, the newspaper published a new article on the Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement. In it, Bulgaria was accused of the trend of "*poorly disguised anti-Slavic policy.*" The event became the reason to accuse the Bulgarian prince Ferdinand and put to doubt all of his actions with demonstrated Orthodox-Russian content such as the christening of the heir to the throne Boris, the celebrations of the 25-th anniversary of the fights on Shipka during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, the appointment of Russophile cabinets in the principality, and so on. The behaviour of the Bulgarian prince around the agreement was characterized as pursuit of narrow dynastic interests in the ambition to obtain the title of tsar from the sultan. In order to ignore the Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement, the newspaper called Grigor Nachovich "*a desperate Russophobe*", and the purpose of the political course of Bulgaria was called "*a denial of the Russo-Bulgarian unity.*" The agreement even became the reason for the newspaper to accuse English policy on the Macedonian Question. The active campaign of Great Britain for protection of the Macedonian Bulgarians was defined as an attempt to remove the reformation Austria-Hungary and Russia from the problems of Macedonia

⁴⁴ CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 69-70.

⁴⁵CSA, fond 176 k, Idib., page. 69-70.

and a demonstration of London's desire to control the Macedonian liberation movement.⁴⁶

The evaluation of the Petersburg newspaper *The Novoe Vremya* was totally opposite. In an article from 11 April 1904, entitled "Bulgarian Opposition", the newspaper criticized the opposition press in Sofia, which denied the importance of the agreement. According to the newspaper, the promises of the Sublime Porte around the agreement could have an influence "for changing the entire picture of the international situation of Bulgaria"⁴⁷

The contradictory signal coming from the Russian press were sufficient grounds for a meeting of the Bulgarian diplomatic agent with the Russian foreign minister Count Vladislav Lamsdorf in the Russian capital; information of it is contained in the report of Dimitar Stanchov to the prime-minister Gen. Racho Petrov of 19 April 1904. Stanchov's assessment is that formal Russia was in favour of the agreement, Lamsdorf himself having expressed his satisfaction with the fact that the agreement had accepted as a basis the Russo-Austrian reform initiatives. Russia also approved the decision of Bulgaria not to insist Adrianople Thrace to be included in the text of the agreement. The emphasized interest of the Russians in the Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement had another importance nuance related to the concerns of Petersburg as to whether a secret military convention has been entered between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. Dimitar Stanchov, who was well-acquainted with the situation in Russia, was convinced that public opinion and the Russian press probably did not completely share the formal Russian position concerning the agreement between the two Balkan states. From his conversations with foreign diplomats, Dimitar Stanchov found out that England, France and Germany were convinced in the benefits from the agreement, Greece was displeased, while Serbia and Romania did not keep their agents in the Russian capital posted.⁴⁸

Conclusion

The agreement concluded between the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria solved a number of problems in a period critical for the Balkans and for the development of Macedonian Question. According to its clauses, the Bulgarian party undertook not to tolerate an open revolutionary movement in Macedonia and Adrianople Thrace. The empire government had to put into force the Murzsteg reforms and agreed to amnesty the political

⁴⁶ Valentin Kitanov, *The Response to the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement of 26 March 1904*, p. 325; CSA, fond 176 c, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 69-70.

⁴⁷ CSA, fond 176 k, inventory 1, archival file 2022, page. 69-70.

⁴⁸ CSA, fond 176 k, *Ibid.*, page.113-114.

prisoners and exiled people, as well as to cooperate in the returning of refugees.⁴⁹

The review and follow-through of the reactions to Bulgarian-Ottoman relations in 1903 and the first months of 1904 and of the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement of 26 March 1904 makes it possible to draw some important conclusions of the place of this event in Balkan political reality as seen by the capitals of the European Great Powers. The substantial scientific contribution of the present study is contained especially in the analysis of these evaluations.

Above all, it is impressive that the negotiations and the very signing of the agreement were monitored very carefully by European diplomacy and by the daily press of the Old Continent. The agreement became a fact under the conditions of intensified interest in the situation in the Balkans, within the context of the Macedonian Question. For various reasons, the Powers did not want its complications. Russia was engaged in a war with Japan in the Far East, Austria Hungary realized it was not able to get personal benefit at that moment from an eventual military conflict on the peninsula. Germany viewed the status-quo on the Balkans as a prerequisite for affirming its economic presence in the Ottoman Empire. That is why the agreement was welcomed by the formal diplomacy and was interpreted as a step forward to affirming the peace in the European Southeast.⁵⁰

Regardless of its political or ideological preferences, the entire European press emphasized on the very fact that the Bulgarian-Ottoman Agreement prevented the danger that was present in 1903 of the outburst of military conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria.⁵¹ Thus, the reputation of the young principality abroad, which was seriously shaken after the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising, was now restored.⁵²

On the other hand, the prevailing part of political, diplomatic and journalist comments placed the emphasis on the results the agreement had for the Bulgarian state. The impartial evaluations indicate that the government in Sofia accomplished a serious victory because the agreement actually constituted the first international recognition of Bulgaria as a party to the Macedonian Question. That was a convenient occasion for the principality to undertake commitments for its subjects in Ottoman European provinces. Throughout the following years the government in Sofia would try to affirm that position

⁴⁹ *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, p. 108-109.

⁵⁰ Valentin Kitanov, *The Response to the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement of 26 March 1904*, p. 326.

⁵¹ Valentin Kitanov, *The unshared road of conflict or one war less in the Balkans (historical reading of the agreement between the Ottoman empire and the principality of Bulgaria of 1904)*, p. 38.

⁵² Valentin Kitanov, *The Response to the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement of 26 March 1904*, p. 326.

because it gave rise to its legitimate right to political, diplomatic or military intervention.

Also very important was the attention paid by the press in Western Europe, especially by the English press, to the decision for amnesty of exiled and imprisoned Bulgarians and the issue for the return of refugees, despite the fact that evaluations varied from congratulations for “*the sultan’s generosity*” to defining the event as a success of Bulgarian diplomacy. And that was logical because as a result of the agreement, more than 4000 prisoners and exiled people were freed from the prisons in Thessaloniki, Skopje, Adrianople and Bitola, from the prisons and fortresses in Anatolia, Asia Minor and Africa where they had been sent for their participation in the uprising activities against Ottoman power. A process of returning of the refugees to their home places in the Ottoman Empire also began and almost 30 000 people returned to Macedonia and Adrianople.⁵³

For the European circles of authority, through the agreement Bulgaria turned into a guarantor - state of giving effect to the Murzsteg Reforms. That moved the country to a more reputable level than its neighbours Greece and Serbia in terms of the Macedonian Question. Thus, for just a few months the Bulgarian principality became the centre of interest of the European political and diplomatic circles and engaged the public opinion in European capital cities to such an extent that its role in the development of the Macedonian Question and for preserving the peace in the Balkans will be defined as crucial.⁵⁴

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⁵³Valentin Kitanov, *Mjastoto na balgaro-turskoto sporazumenie ot 1904 g. v razvitiето na makedonskija vapros. Plovdivski universitet “Paisij Hilendarski”, Filosofski-istoricheski fakultet, Nauchni trudove*, t. I, kn. 1, Plovdiv, 2006, s. 293-301. (Valentin Kitanov, *The Place of the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement of 1904 in the Development of the Macedonian Question*. Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”, Faculty of Philosophy and History, Scientific works, v. I, b. 1, Plovdiv, 2006, p. 293-301.)

⁵⁴Valentin Kitanov, *The Response to the Bulgarian-Turkish Agreement*, p. 327.

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