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Abstract of Thesis.

Relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, 1918-1941.

Within the Balkan peninsula there are two South Slav states, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. These two states have common ethnic, linguistic and religious origins but the process of history has been such as to drive them apart. During the last century there have been numerous attempts to bring the Slav peoples together within a single union or federation but these have failed. The period from 1918-1941 was a time when the most serious attempts were made to bring about a rapprochement but it was also a time of the greatest bitterness and disillusionment.

In the period following the peace settlement of 1918, Yugoslav leaders regarded the creation of the Kingdom as a triumph for the century-long Yugo-Slav movement, and sought to consolidate this achievement by maintaining the status quo. Bulgaria, however, did not see the situation in the same light. Her leaders believed that their country had a right to certain lands which were now part of the Yugoslav Kingdom - particularly Macedonia.

Although moderate leaders in both countries realized that their differences could only be solved by co-operation and friendship, some Bulgarians believed that only by terrorism and the destruction of the "Yugoslav mosaic" could Bulgaria recover her rightful role in European affairs. This powerful minority opinion, which shaped Bulgarian policy in the inter-war period, was supported by King Boris and encouraged by those other countries - especially Italy and Germany - who wished to prevent the formation of a strong Slav bloc in South-Eastern Europe.

Post-war developments have shown that the problems of 1918-1941 were by no means an isolated episode. But the axis, Belgrade-Sofia, is a genuine axis along which the destiny of the peninsula revolves. For whilst the two countries remain politically and economically divided, there can be no sure foundation for peace and stability in the Balkans.

David Shepherd.

RELATIONS BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA
AND BULGARIA, 1918-1941.

by

DAVID SHEPHERD.

A Thesis submitted for the
Degree of Master of Arts in
History in the University
of Durham.

February 1968.

Foreword.

This dissertation has been prepared under the supervision of Mr. W.V. Wallace to whom I owe a very special debt of gratitude for his comments and criticisms which have been invaluable in the presentation of arguments and in the interpretation of events.

I should also like to thank the staffs of the British Museum Library and the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh for their help in the collation of material for this thesis.

David Shepherd.

February 1968.

Preface.

The underlying assumption of this thesis is that in ethnic, linguistic and religious origins, the South Slav peoples of Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bulgaria are one; and that historical evolution, cultural development, economic disparity and mutual jealousy have forced them apart. My object is to show how, through the years - and more especially between 1918-1941 - there have been efforts to bring the Slav peoples of the Balkans together; efforts which have done much to further a rapprochement, efforts which have been vitiated by animosity, senseless strife and personal rancour. Thereby, I hope to create an understanding of why, today, as ever, the South Slav peoples remain divided by barriers greater than their geographical frontier along the Rhodope mountains.

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Chapter 1.

The Historical Background.

There can be no certainty about the origin of the Slav peoples and not much more is known of them than that they were an Indo-European race who spread into parts of Eastern Europe between the fourth and sixth centuries A.D.¹ The date and form of their penetration of the Balkan peninsula is equally uncertain, but there is reason to believe that a major Slav invasion took place in the fifth and sixth centuries, on which the Byzantine writers of that period provide a good deal of information.² The Balkan peninsula has always constituted a crossroads between East and West and this geographical feature has led to a fusion of races and a fusion of cultures.³ One such development was the conversion of the Slav peoples to Christianity by St. Cyril and St. Methodius. The work of these two brothers was not confined to evangelism; they invented a written Slav language (Cyrillic) upon which a common culture and racial unity has grown. The other major development was the infiltration of the peninsula by the Bulgar people, whose Black Sea state had been destroyed by the Avars in 560 A.D. The Bulgars, although belonging to a different racial group, maintained their identity for a relatively long time but, being greatly outnumbered by the local Slav population, were assimilated, adopting their language and culture but leaving behind them their ethnic name, which was adopted by those Slav tribes living on the eastern side of the

1. F. Dvornik, The Slavs: Their Early History and Civilization, Boston, 1956, pp. 3-12.

2. Ibid., pp. 34-36.

3. R.J. Kerner and H.N. Howard, The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente 1930-35, Berkeley, 1936, pp.1-5.

peninsula.⁴

It is one of the great misfortunes of history that even from the earliest times, the South Slav tribes should have been unable to coalesce into a single nation. During times of external danger or under the hand of a strong ruler, there were certain periods of unity but these were usually of short duration. The First and Second Bulgarian Kingdoms preserved a Slav civilization for some four hundred years and, later, the eighth Nemanjid king of Serbia, Stephen Dušan, benefitting from the decline of the Byzantine Empire, succeeded in establishing a Serbo-Roman Empire.⁵ But these transitory attempts to form a single Slav state were destroyed by the advance of the Turks who defeated a Serbo-Bulgarian army at Kosovo in 1389. Kosovo set the seal of Ottoman domination in the Balkans and extinguished the light of South Slav freedom - and the possibility of unity - for almost five hundred years.

During the eighteenth century Russia became interested in the Balkans as an area for expansion and the tide of fortune turned against the Ottoman Empire. In 1717, Peter the Great recognized the independence of Montenegro and Empress Catherine had hopes of establishing a huge Slav Empire extending as far as Greece and Constantinople. Napoleon too, for the sake of his so-called Continental system, was interested in creating, under French auspices, a civilized Slav state which might eventually include all Christian people under Turkish rule in the Balkans. His establishment of the "Illyrian Provinces" after the Treaty of Schoenbrunn in 1809 is generally regarded as the first modern attempt to create a genuine Yugo-Slavia. Serbia, being on the outer edge of Turkish rule and closer to this external influence, was better placed to gain independence than Bulgaria. Karadjordje Petrović, the leader of the 1804 Serbian uprising, asked both France and Russia for help to secure national ind-

4. Dvornik, op. cit., pp. 64-67.

5. Ibid., pp. 126-33, 138-46 and 337.

ependence. Hoping for aid to liberate all the South Slavs under Turkish domination, Karadjordje wrote to Napoleon:

"The Serbians assure his Imperial and Royal Majesty that their compatriots, the inhabitants of Bosnia, and of the grand duchy of Hercegovina and those who live in the Kingdom of Hungary, not excepting the Bulgarians who derive, so to speak, from the same branch, will follow their example at the first move which is made."⁶

His hopes came to nothing for although there were numerous French projects conceived for creating independent states, they came to nothing when Napoleon resolved to preserve Ottoman integrity and attacked Russia instead.⁷

One of the greatest visions of the nineteenth century was that of a huge Balkan state embracing the Greeks, the Slavs and even the Rumanians. But because the birth of freedom in the Balkans came on narrow ethnic and geographic lines and through national initiative, Balkan federation "was destined to wage a hopeless battle against the overwhelming nationalist and imperialist movements."⁸ Rhigas Pheraios was one of the first to urge the need for a unified Balkan state. His proposal, made in 1793-4, envisaged Greek hegemony. He also founded a secret revolutionary society to urge the Bulgarians, Albanians, Serbs and Greeks to join together for the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire.⁹ Czartoryski's plan for a Balkan federation,

6. A. Boppe, Documents inédits sur les relations de la Serbie avec Napoléon I, 1809-14, Belgrade, 1888, nos. 6 and 7. See also E. Driault, La politique orientale de Napoléon, Paris, 1904, pp. 389-90.

7. L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass. 1944, pp. 38-41.

8. Ibid., p. 34.

9. T.I. Geshkoff, Balkan Union. A Road to Peace in South-Eastern Europe, New York, 1940, pp. 18-19. See also D. Michev and B.P. Petkov, La fédération balkanique, Sofia 1931, p. 6ff.

put forward in 1804-5, was designed to strengthen Russian power against Napoleon but, although the plan later influenced the Serbian statesman, Garašanin, it had no immediate effect.¹⁰ After the Napoleonic wars, Capodistras suggested a confederation of Serbia, Moldavia and Wallachia but Czar Alexander I was opposed to this for fear that it might provoke war with Turkey.¹¹ It is significant that, with the exception of the project of Rhigas Pheraios, all the schemes of the early nineteenth century, whether for South Slav unity or for the creation of a federation, were proposed and were to be carried out by the Great Powers themselves.

In 1840, Colquhoun, a British expert on the Near East, wrote to Palmerston reporting that:

"There are at this moment emissaries at Bucharest from Bulgaria and Serbia and there is no doubt an union existing among these three provinces, which may be highly dangerous to the peace of these countries."¹²

The Yugo-Slav and federation movements were both by their very nature revolutionary. In the following year, 1841, a Bulgarian revolt was sternly repressed. Blanqui, who was sent by the French government to investigate the situation, returned with great resentment for Turkish rule and widely canvassed the idea of a Balkan federation.¹³ A series of thirteen articles upon the Balkans appeared in the Revue des Deux Mondes between 1842-46 and Cyprien Robert, one of the contributors, particularly emphasized the necessity for a Serbo-Bulgarian union.¹⁴

10. Prince A. Czartoryski, Mémoires du Prince Adam Czartoryski et correspondance avec l'empereur Alexandre Ier., Paris, 1887, Vol. II, p. 65.

11. Stavrianos, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

12. J.C. Campbell, French Influence and the rise of Roumanian Nationalism, Harvard University, 1940, p. 70.

13. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 62.

14. C. Robert, Les Slaves en Turquie, Paris 1844, Vol. II, p. 413.

This necessity was also realized by Ilija Garašanin, at that time Minister of the Interior and later Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Garašanin worked out a plan, since called his Nachertanija which envisaged the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and foresaw a unification of the South Slavs under Serbian leadership with the creation of a state independent of both Austria and Russia.¹⁵ Later writers hostile to the idea of a rapprochement have seen in Garašanin's project a straightforward example of Serbian imperialism¹⁶ but in fact the Nachertanija represented a very far-sighted and imaginative policy justified by the prevailing political situation.

The movement for Slav unity reached a peak in the year of revolution, 1848. Throughout the whole of Europe, national sentiments were awakened and, on March 24, 1849, in a Pan-Slav club in Belgrade, a declaration was made calling on the Slavs:

"to liberate themselves completely from the Ottoman Empire and to create a Yugoslav Kingdom under the banner of Prince Alexander Karadjordjević, consisting of Serbia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slavonia, Syrmia, Dalmatia and Southern Hungary."¹⁷

In May 1849, the great Congress of Slavs was held in Prague, and in June, Bakunin expressed his hope in "the establishment in Central and Eastern Europe of a federation of free Slav republics."¹⁸ But nothing came of these hopes and aspirations and the restoration of the Hapsburg monarchy to its former power and the outbreak of the Crimean war diminished the clamour for unity or federation.

15. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

16. A. Toshev, The Bulgarian-Serbian Dispute, Sofia 1932, pp. 86-89.

17. M.D. Stranjaković, "La Collaboration des Croates et des Serbes en 1848-49," Le Monde Slave, June 1935, p. 396.

18. From Bakunin's "Appeal to the Slavs". See E.H. Carr, Michael Bakunin, London 1937, p. 170.

However, the movement for the unification of Italy roused enthusiasm once more. Between June 13 and 19, 1857, Mazzini published his four Slavic letters in the Italia del Poppo. The letters, which achieved a wide renown, urged the formation of a Yugoslav state consisting of Croatia, Carinthia, Serbia, Montenegro, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Bulgaria.¹⁹ In Serbia, Prince Michael Obrenović, who came to power in September 1860, had grown up in the atmosphere of nationalism and revolution. He realized that the Balkan countries could not by themselves achieve the freedom they desired, so he decided to form a system of alliances from which he could draw military and political support. This alliance structure later came to be known as the Balkan League.

It was about this time that the Bulgarian people as a whole began to become politically conscious. However, they too realized that they had no hope of getting rid of Turkish oppression without outside aid and the Bulgarian revolutionaries spent much of their time in the various Balkan capitals, collecting arms, organizing insurgent bands and seeking the support of foreign governments. During these years, the relations between the Serbian and Bulgarian people were very friendly. Bulgarian exiles were given refuge and military training in Serbia; Bulgarian students attended Serb schools and Bulgarian books and periodicals were published in Belgrade. It was therefore natural that the Bulgarians should look to their fellow Slavs in their struggle against the Turks.²⁰

But the Serbs found it difficult to come to any agreement with the Bulgarians because there was no recognized leader to

19. H. Bergman, "Mazzini et les Slaves," Le Monde Slave, II, May 1918, pp. 670-4.

20. M.D. Stranjaković, Oeuvre du rapprochement et de l'union des Serbes et des Bulgares dans le passé, Paris, 1930, pp. 8-10.

whom they could turn.²¹ The only leading representative was Rakovski, who has been described as a "diplomat",²² although "agent" might be the more appropriate term. But Rakovski had his doubts about the Serbian government²³ and his view is echoed in a letter by Miss Muir Mackenzie, one of two English ladies who met him in Greece in 1863:

"Rakovski finds the same shortcomings in the Serbs as we do. ie. They are inclined to be narrow-minded and for this they frighten their neighbours instead of attracting them."²⁴

During 1862-3 Rakovski worked for an understanding between Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria. But because he doubted the sincerity of the Serbian government, nothing happened and Prince Michael did not renew his contacts with the revolutionaries until the spring of 1867, when the League was almost complete.

In January 1867, the "Bulgarian Benevolent Society" in Bucharest invited a number of people to "consider the way in which it will be possible to draw nearer to the Serbian government and prepare for our future liberation."²⁵ On January 26, this group formulated Le programme des rapports politiques des serbo-bulgares ou leur entente cordiale. This programme provided for the creation of a joint kingdom under the Crown of Prince Michael. It would possess a common army, a common currency and a government equally divided between Serbian and

21. This point was made during the Serbo-Greek talks on June 11, 1861. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 86.

22. Toshev, op. cit., p. 6. A brief assessment of the life and achievements of Georgi Rakovski is given by C.E. Black, The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Bulgaria, Princeton, 1943, pp. 37-39.

23. Ibid., loc. cit.

24. Ibid., p. 7.

25. A. Toshev, Balkanskite voyni (The Balkan Wars), Sofia, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 75-76.

Bulgarian ministers.²⁶ This plan was relayed to Belgrade where it was warmly received, Garašanin observing that it was entirely satisfactory and urging that it be circulated amongst the Bulgarian volunteers after which it would be signed.²⁷

But the Bulgarian Committee wished to conclude a formal treaty with the Serbian government. A new meeting was convened in Bucharest on April 5, 1867 and was attended by 80 delegates from Bulgaria. After twelve days a new protocol was drawn up which would constitute "the basis for a fraternal rapprochement." The preamble stated their preference for Serbia with whom their interests were identical and laid stress upon the national, religious and geographical factors which had linked the two peoples together. The Protocol differed from the January programme in two respects. For the first time, the joint Serbo-Bulgarian Kingdom was to be known as Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the seed of future discord was contained in Article 2 which ran:

"The Yugoslav Kingdom shall consist of Serbia and Bulgaria, the Bulgarian lands to include Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia."²⁸

The Protocol, containing this phrase specifically attributing Macedonia to the regions comprising Bulgaria, was submitted to Belgrade where it received the full approval of Garašanin. On May 22, 1867, he replied:

"Having examined the contents of these minutes I find that nothing stands in the way of these benevolent objects being furthered by Serbia also. Therefore, in full agreement with the basis of the proposed points we will take steps for action leaving the details to negotiations for a complete understanding."²⁹

26. Stranjaković, op. cit., pp. 10-12.

27. February 2, 1867. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 93.

28. The full text of the April Protocol is given in Appendix A.

29. Toshev, Balkanskite vojni, op. cit., I, p. 81.

This letter was written on the assumption that a Yugoslav kingdom jointly composed of Serbia and Bulgaria would be set up as soon as the latter escaped from Turkish domination. Yet it has been used to prove bad faith and insincerity on the part of Serbia.³⁰ Added support for this Bulgarian opinion is given by the treaty signed between Serbia and Rumania in January 1868. In Article 8 of this treaty, the signatories declared that:

"Old Serbia, Bosna, Hercegovina and Bulgaria, except that part of the latter country allotted to Roumania, shall be annexed forever to Serbia."³¹

This apparent duplicity does not enhance the popular view of Prince Michael but it displays a tendency, which he showed in his dealings with Kossuth and Garašanin, of distrusting and ignoring the Bulgarians, whilst regarding the Serbs as the natural leaders of the South Slavs and destined by fate to unite them into a Serb-dominated Yugoslav state.³² This attitude was again grist to the mill of those who opposed the notion of South Slav unity but it is interesting to note that in Sofia in 1896 a Congress of students from both countries pronounced an effusive toast to the memory of Prince Michael, "the martyr who worked to create for us a great and powerful state and to reunite us with you and found thereby a great Balkan kingdom. Remain glorious amongst us, O Immortal Prince."³³ Prince Michael was assassinated on June 10, 1868, and his work for South Slav unity and the Balkan League perished with him.

Nevertheless, the impetus had been given to the movement for Bulgarian independence. In 1870, the Exarchate Church was set up and in 1871 a magazine entitled "The Yugoslav Star; a newspaper for the reciprocal policy and relations between the

30. Toshev, The Bulgarian-Serbian Dispute, op. cit., p. 8.

31. Geshkoff, op. cit., p. 24.

32. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 103.

33. Stranjakovic, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

South Slavs" appeared in Belgrade.³⁴ During the same period the Socialists espoused the cause of South Slav unity.

Omladina - a secret society believing in atheism, republicanism and revolution - was set up in 1867. One of its first members was Svetožar Marković, Serbia's first Socialist leader, who left the society in 1871 and set up a newspaper and a political party. Marković defined his aims as "liberation and federation", at first with the Bulgarians and ultimately with all the Balkan peoples.³⁵ In Bulgaria, Rakovski's successor, Kravelov, wanted a confederation between Serbia, Rumania and Bulgaria but he was careful to define Macedonia as part of Bulgaria's territory.³⁶

At the time of the Bulgarian uprising in May 1876, there was great enthusiasm in Serbia for the Bulgarian cause.³⁷ But their enthusiasm was brief. The Serbian armies were defeated and a lengthy war ensued between Russia and Turkey which was concluded on March 3, 1878 at the Treaty of San Stefano. It has been said that "the Treaty of San Stefano at last created a Bulgarian state on a fairly sound national basis according to contemporary evidence"³⁸. But did this evidence have any effect on the motives of the Russian government? A later writer observed that:

"The Treaty of San Stefano, an ephemeral creation of an exclusively political character, has remained in history merely as the diplomatic creation of Russian policy of the

34. Ibid., pp. 16-17. 35. "Notre héritage révolutionnaire," La fédération balkanique, no. 146 (December 1931), p. 19. Christo Botev, one of the most important Bulgarian leaders, regarded Serbia as little better than the Great Powers but was willing to work with Marković to create a South Slav federation. See also W.D. McClellan, Svetožar Marković and the Origins of Balkan Socialism, Princeton, 1964.

36. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 117.

37. For Prince Milan's proclamation of war on July 1, 1876, see Stranjaković, op. cit., p. 18. 38. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 114.

time, regardless of all historic and ethnological considerations".³⁹

San Stefano was a deliberate act of Great Power intervention in Balkan affairs and this was to prove a major obstacle to the movements towards closer co-operation and federation. For the "big Bulgaria" of San Stefano was to be a huge country stretching from the Dobrudja to Salonika, embracing large numbers of people who were in no way Bulgarian in origin. The settlement therefore raised immediate protests. The Treaty of Berlin, which sought to rectify the unfortunate consequences only succeeded in embittering the interested parties. Serbia felt she had been deceived; Bulgaria, betrayed.

Despite their immediate bitterness, the two South Slav nations made an effort to resolve their differences. Early in 1880 the government of Serbia entered into negotiations with Bulgaria for the establishment of a customs union. But Austria promptly interposed strong objections to such a union and the negotiations led to nothing. A Serbian writer has said that "had the customs union been concluded, the war between Serbia and Bulgaria would not have taken place."⁴⁰ Indeed, in issuing his ultimatum in 1885, Prince Milan declared that his reasons for making war were "the unjustifiable customs regulations" which "had put a stop to all commercial intercourse between the two countries."⁴¹ In fact, Serbia had become a pawn of Austria and, in the Austro-Serbian Convention of June 28, 1881, had surrendered her freedom of action in exchange for Austrian influence to secure Serbian expansion in any future Balkan settlement. The war of 1885, which was directly due to

39. P. Pipinelis, Such are the Bulgars, London 1942, p. 10.

40. T. Diourdiević, "Le Mouvement Balkanique" in Ière Conférence balkanique (Athènes, 5-12 octobre 1930) Documents officiels, Athens 1931, p. 64.

41. Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914, Berlin, 1922-7, Vol. V, p. 12.

Austrian displeasure at Bulgaria's seizure of Eastern Roumelia, lasted a mere fortnight and culminated in a decisive Bulgarian victory at Slivnitsa. The Treaty of Bucharest, which established the status quo ante bellum, was signed on March 3, 1886. Bulgaria emerged from the war with prestige and had her union with Eastern Roumelia recognized by the Great Powers. Russia and Austria became suspicious of each other's intentions in the Balkans and Serbia's power and position in the peninsula were eclipsed for some twenty years.

In addition to this, there was the difficult problem of who should possess those areas of Macedonia still under Ottoman rule. It will already be clear that a wide difference of opinion has existed between Serbia and Bulgaria on the question of Macedonia. It is a subject which has occasioned much strife and bitterness and has been the chief obstacle to South Slav unity. Although by virtue of language and origin, the Macedonians belong to the South Slav races, they are "a separate race, akin to both Serbs and Bulgarians but identical to neither. They are Macedonians."⁴² Thus it is wrong to try and prove that they are either Serbs or Bulgarians. As Pipinelis, one-time Greek ambassador in Sofia, observed:

"no useful purpose is served by an investigation of the ethnological proportions of the Macedonian populations- a question on which ethnologists will for long continue to differ according to their personal preferences."⁴³

And indeed, personal preferences have been a paramount feature. After the First World War, Bulgaria issued an impressive volume of documents and maps to prove her historical claims to Macedonia.⁴⁴ Statistics are a particularly choice refuge

42. H.D. Harrison, The Soul of Yugoslavia, London, 1941, p.55.

43. P. Pipinelis, Caitiff Bulgaria, London, 1944, p. 37.

44. Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, La Question Bulgare et les états balkaniques, Sofia 1919.

for the ethnologists.⁴⁵ In comparing the statistics of a Serb and a Bulgarian there emerges a totally different picture of the Macedonian population:

Total population of Macedonia	2,870,620 ⁴⁶	2,342,524 ⁴⁷
Bulgarians	57,600	1,103,311
Greeks	201,140	267,862
Serbs	2,048,320	Nil
Aroumains	69,665	79,401
Turks	231,400	548,225
Albanians	165,620	194,195
Jews	64,645	Nil
Others	32,230	105,530

Another writer has observed that to "attempt to assign exact percentages to these various races is impossible. No accurate statistics were available so that each race juggled the figures to suit its own ends."⁴⁸ This much can be adduced from the figures.

But Bulgarian writers are eager to point to literary and historical references to support their claims and Andrei Toshev, a Bulgarian diplomat under King Ferdinand and later Prime Minister, amassed a number of examples to substantiate his theory that the inhabitants of Macedonia had long been regarded as Bulgarians.⁴⁹ The exact nature of the difficulty can be most clearly seen in the religious field.

45. A wide range of different statistics are given by K. Strupp, La Situation Juridique des Macédoniens en Yugoslavie, Paris, 1929, Appendix Chart.

46. Statistics of the Serbian, Spiro Gopčević (1889) ex. Strupp, ibid., loc. cit.

47. Statistics of the Bulgarian, Jordan Ivanov (1912) ex. Strupp, ibid., loc. cit. (Ivanov also wrote (50); see below).

48. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 131.

49. Toshev, The Bulgarian -Serbian Dispute, op. cit., pp. 18-31 and 37-51.

The Bulgarian Exarchate Church was established by Imperial Firman on March 12, 1870. Article 10 is especially important:

"The spiritual jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate Church will be composed of the metropolitan dioceses of Rustchuk, Silistria, Choumen, Tirnovo, Sofia, Vratsa, Vidin, Niš, Pirot, Kustendil, Samokov, Veles, Varna..... If the whole or more than two-thirds of those who practise the Orthodox rite in the localities other than those enumerated and enunciated above wish to submit themselves to the Bulgarian Exarchate Church for their spiritual affairs and if this is ascertained and established, they will be authorized to do this."⁵⁰

The political motives of this Firman are clear. At the time it was issued, Bulgaria and the dioceses listed were all under Turkish rule. In this area, the only religious authority was exercised by the Greek Orthodox Church, which was disliked by the Slav population. It is noteworthy that although dioceses such as Niš and Pirot were undeniably Serb the inhabitants were given no chance to adopt the Serbian Orthodox Church. Naturally, when the population was offered the choice of Exarchate or Greek Orthodoxy, the people opted for the Slav-speaking Church. Between 1872 and 1874, Skopje, Ohrid, Bitolj and Debra also joined the Exarchate Church.⁵¹ It is a fact that the "big Bulgaria" of San Stefano covered the area of the Exarchate Church and during the next thirty years of Ottoman rule the teaching and culture of the Exarchate churches and schools were concentrated on making the Serb population of Macedonia believe that they were Bulgarian nationals. This movement of "bulgarization"⁵²

50. J. Ivanov, Les Bulgares devant le Congrès de la Paix, Berne, 1919, p. 158.

51. Ibid., p. 159.

52. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 132. See also C.G. Logio, Bulgaria, Past and Present, Manchester, 1936, for statistics of Bulgarian schools, teachers, churches and priests in the period up to 1918.

moved so swiftly that Serbia decided to intervene to prevent a repetition of the situation in Eastern Roumelia, and the Society of St. Sava was established in 1886 to awaken Serbian conscience in Macedonia.

This three-cornered fight - for Greece was equally concerned - lasted twenty-five years and concerted Balkan action was out of the question. Inevitably, Serbo-Bulgarian relations worsened. In August 1889, Nikola Pašić, Serbian Prime Minister, visited Sofia to propose an alliance against Turkey and a delimitation of claims in Macedonia. It was an opportune moment but Stambolov, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, would have no part in such a combination and revealed Pašić's plan to the Turks and in return received more Macedonian dioceses for the Exarchate Church.⁵³

Four years later, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization was set up. IMRO's original aim was to liberate Macedonia from the Turks and establish an independent state within a South Slav federation. Very soon those who wished to use IMRO to prepare Macedonia for its annexation to Bulgaria gained the ascendancy and the "Federalists" were faced not only with the Turks but also by the Sofia-directed Vrhoven Komitet - the Supreme Committee.⁵⁴

53. Ibid., pp. 133-34. The Serbian Radical Party Programme, drawn up by Pašić in 1881, included a demand for an immediate entente with the Bulgars and Montenegrins and also envisaged a complete Balkan federation. See Count C. Sforza, Fifty Years of War and Diplomacy in the Balkans, New York, 1940, pp. 28-29.

54. H.N. Brailsford, Macedonia. Its Races and their Future, London, 1906, pp. 120-24. Brailsford states that from the beginning, all IMRO leaders were Bulgarians and many favoured the union of Macedonia with Bulgaria. Brailsford also stated that there was a close connection between Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria and Sarafov - the leader of the Supremist Committee. Ibid., p. 171.

At the turn of the century, the prospect of closer Serbo-Bulgarian relations once more appeared possible. During 1896-7, Serbian newspapers published articles emphasizing the need for rapprochement and mutual aid between the two peoples.⁵⁵ Abroad, several societies exhorting Balkan unity or confederation were formed.⁵⁶ In 1897, King Alexander visited Sofia and concluded a gentlemen's agreement with Prince Ferdinand to eliminate friction in Macedonia.⁵⁷ After the death of Alexander in 1903, his successor, King Peter, anxious for his country to escape Austrian influence, initiated relations between the two countries, which immediately assumed a cordial nature. On April 12, 1904, two treaties were signed. One was a treaty of friendship, the other a political alliance providing reciprocal military aid against an aggressor and a common policy in Macedonia.⁵⁸ At the end of December 1904, Prince Ferdinand, whilst passing through Belgrade, had a short conversation with King Peter at the railway station.⁵⁹ In the following year, a tariff agreement was drawn up between the two countries and a commercial treaty on the basis of the "most favoured nation", was signed with Bulgaria in December 1906 to thwart the impact of the "Pig War" which had developed when Austria realized that Serbia was seeking to escape her economic control.⁶⁰

55. Stranjaković, op. cit., p. 22.

56. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., p. 17.

57. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 141.

58. W.S. Vucinich, Serbia between East and West, the Events of 1903-8, Stanford, 1954, pp. 143-44. For details of the treaties, see E.C. Helmreich, The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-3, Cambridge, 1938, pp. 463-6. It is worth noting that the existence of the political alliance was unknown till revealed by Toshev in Balkanskite vojni, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 153-8.

59. Vucinich, op. cit., pp. 144-5.

60. Ibid., pp. 180-88 and Helmreich, op. cit., pp. 7-10.

One of the strongest advocates of this pro-Serbian policy in Bulgaria was Petkov and as long as he remained in power, relations continued to be friendly. But in March 1907, Petkov was assassinated. His successor, Stanchov, encouraged closer links with Austria. At the same time, further incidents occurred in Macedonia and these were followed by a denunciation of Serbia's Macedonian policy in the Bulgarian Press.

J.B. Whitehead, the British representative in Belgrade at this time, wrote:

"To sum up the whole situation as regards the relations between Serbia and Bulgaria, it is clear that they can never be cordial and stable until the competition between the two nationalities for an eventual acquisition of the Slav countries still under Turkish rule comes to an end. M. Pašić is in favour of co-operating with Bulgaria for common aims and of deferring the discussion of the rights of the two nations to the expected inheritance, until it should actually fall due, but his intentions were frustrated by the uncompromising claim of the Bulgarians to the whole of the territory awarded to them at the Treaty of San Stefano."⁶¹

Later in the year, on September 16, Izvolsky and Aerenthal, respectively the Russian and Austrian foreign ministers, concluded the Buchlau agreement providing for the annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina to the Hapsburg Empire in exchange for Austrian support for the opening of the Dardanelles to Russian warships. Although this did not directly affect Serbo-Bulgarian relations, Aerenthal had decided to isolate Serbia by making Bulgaria a party to his policy. On September 23, Prince Ferdinand visited Budapest where Aerenthal urged him to throw off the last vestiges of Turkish suzerainty and declare himself King.

61. April 2, 1908. G.P. Gooch and H. Temperley, British Documents on the Origin of the War 1898-1914, London, 1926cc, Vol. V, p. 118.

on October 5, Ferdinand proclaimed the freedom of his country from Ottoman rule and on the following day, Aerenthal announced that Austria had formally annexed Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Although relations between the two countries were cool,⁶² the Italo-Turkish war of 1911, provided an excellent opportunity to attack the Ottoman Empire and Russian ministers worked to create a Second Balkan League. Much of this Russian initiative stemmed from resentment over the one-sided outcome of the Buchlau agreement and Russia was determined to prevent any extension of Austrian hegemony in the Balkan peninsula. The nations themselves were also willing to co-operate when there was a prospect of territorial spoils. In March 1911, the pro-Russian Gueshoff became Prime Minister in Bulgaria. He also held the post of Foreign Minister and sought an immediate understanding with Serbia.⁶³ A preliminary treaty was delivered by the Serbian Minister in Sofia⁶⁴ and the final treaty including its secret annex were signed on March 13, 1912. The secret annex ran:

"Serbia recognizes the right of Bulgaria to the territories to the east of the Rhodopes and the Struma river; Bulgaria recognizes the right of Serbia to those situated to the north of the Šar-Planina."⁶⁵

In Article 4, it was explicitly stated that any differences which arose from this annex "should be submitted to Russia for final decision."⁶⁶ This Treaty was really the first major

62. Helmreich, op. cit., p. 24.

63. I.E. Gueshoff, The Balkan League, London, 1915, pp. 13-17.

64. Ibid., pp. 19-23.

65. Gueshoff gives full details of the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in Appendices I and II, ibid., pp. 112-7. The Military Convention is given in Appendix III, pp. 117-22. He also considers the boundary question, pp. 24-33.

66. Geshkoff, op. cit., p. 42.

accord between Serbia and Bulgaria and yet, on the eve of its ratification, Pašić frankly told his colleagues that he had no faith in King Ferdinand.⁶⁷ His prediction was amply justified.

Following the First Balkan War which was victoriously concluded on April 16, 1913, disagreement broke out among the victors. At Austrian insistence, part of the land allocated to Serbia was now included in an independent Albania. Serbia therefore demanded part of Bulgaria's acquisitions but this demand was resented by the Bulgarians who felt that they had borne the brunt of the Turkish attack. The Sofia government refused to even consider the idea and during the spring of 1913,

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to arbitration and the latter threatened to assassinate King Ferdinand and Danev if they should place the dispute before the Czar. On June 28, 1913, therefore, King Ferdinand with the connivance of his new Prime Minister, Danev,⁷⁰ ordered General

67. Helmreich, op. cit., pp. 58-59. The source of this information was Dr. Gavrilović, a member of the Serbian foreign office and later Pašić's secretary.

68. Ibid., pp. 353-57 and Gueshoff, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

69. Gueshoff, op. cit., p. 92 and Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 172.

70. Ibid., pp. 89-92. Gueshoff resigned his Premiership on May 30, 1913. He stated that he was intent on keeping the Balkan alliance intact and that in this, he was in disagreement with King Ferdinand and had no desire to undertake "the heavy responsibility of a second war." Before leaving office, he had a meeting with Pašić at Tsaribrod. Danev was appointed as his successor in mid-June.

"gentle and retiring; a doubter, not a man of action. Groping, honest, theoretical rather than realistic, he likes to believe the best of people. His personal charm is considerable. He is extremely obliging."¹²

To those who knew him better, his character was far from inoffensive. Kosta Todorov, Minister Plenipotentiary and later Bulgarian Minister in Belgrade, left his first audience with King Boris with the impression that "he was too polite to be honest."¹³ Even those most favourable towards him admit that "one could not help but say of Boris what Prince Metternich said of his father: 'Even when one does not see Ferdinand, one hears him!'"¹⁴

From 1919 to 1923 King Boris lay low, whilst Stamboliski, the Agrarian leader, who had been one of the chief rebels in the "September Revolution", was Bulgarian Prime Minister. A French writer commented:

"For three years and a half, during which time the Agrarian régime lasted, the King counted for almost nothing at all; Stamboliski did not let pass any opportunity to mark the scant regard he had for him. He was the "Tzartcheto" - the little King."¹⁵

It is perhaps hardly surprising that this period of Agrarian rule under Stamboliski, when the power of King Boris was most severely circumscribed, was the era in which Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations improved and much of the wartime animosity and bitterness decreased. But in connection with the Agrarian government, it is significant to note that one of Boris's favourite axioms was: "Il ne faut pas vouloir aller trop vite,

12. J. Gunther, Inside Europe, London, 1936, p. 393.

13. Todorov, op. cit., p. 133

14. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 47.

15. A. Broudier, L'Indépendance Roumaine, September 27, 1944.

il faut savoir attendre."¹⁶ This axiom may be regarded as the key to a real understanding of Boris's character.

This brief study of King Boris highlights one important question concerning the post-war settlement of Bulgaria. To this we now turn.

At the time of the Peace Conference, much was made of Clemenceau's famous gibe "Is Bulgaria a kingdom or a republic?" In view of King Boris's later policy and in view of the peace terms which were imposed at Neuilly, this question deserves serious consideration. One English writer has asserted that:

"had Bulgaria been declared a republic immediately after her collapse, better terms might have been offered her, for public opinion in Britain and America would have surmised that the Bulgarians had definitely renounced the misguided policy of their rulers and had resolved to make a fresh start."¹⁷

It was the opinion of Lieutenant Kenworthy that the Allies were chiefly responsible for the failure of the republican movement in Bulgaria. Speaking in the House of Commons in April 1920, he said:

"We prevented the setting up of a republic in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian people wished to have a republic but this was contrary to British or French policy and British bayonets were used to prop up that discredited, detested dynasty of Ferdinand of Coburg and his people were not permitted to get rid of it. There was a glorious opportunity for getting rid of one of those offshoots of the German royal house who was misgoverning and oppressing one of the small peoples of Europe. But that did not suit the policy of the Allies."¹⁸

16. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 204. "It's not necessary to want to go too quickly but rather to know how to wait."

17. J. Buchan, (Ed), Bulgaria and Romania. The Nations of Today Series, London, 1924, pp. 141-42.

18. Hansard, CXXV111, (April 19, 1920), p. 166.

Lieutenant Kenworthy laid great emphasis on the Allied support for Boris's rule but in fact, after the armistice convention of September 29, the Allies simply occupied a number of strategic points in Bulgaria which was by no means an occupation in the strict sense of the word.¹⁹

However, early in 1919, a Bulgarian delegation was chosen to go to Paris to present their nation's case, and Kosta Todorov was appointed to spread propaganda on behalf of Bulgaria at the Peace Conference.²⁰ Working through the fashionable salons and the columns of the influential French press he set out his government's new policy that "Bulgaria has completely broken with the past and had an honest desire to co-operate with the rest of Europe towards a stable peace."²¹

The official Bulgarian delegation at Paris were treated very coldly and it is reported that no one wished to shake hands with them when they arrived,²² Harold Nicholson summed up his views:

19. G. Desbons, La Bulgarie après le traité de Neuilly, Paris, 1930, p. 266.

20. Born in 1889, Todorov was a third generation revolutionary, his grandfather having been a haiduk against the Turks and his father active in political intrigue against Stambulov. As a result of this, Todorov was born in exile in Russia. At an early age he became involved in the 1905 Russian Revolution and was gaoled for seven years. Returning to Bulgaria, he was indicted on a political charge. Rather than face trial, he fled to the West and during the First World War, fought with the Foreign Legion. In 1916, he volunteered to deliver peace proposals to the Bulgarian government. On his arrival, he was arrested, brought to trial and sentenced to 3½ years imprisonment. Whilst in prison, he became a close friend and supporter of Stamboliski, though not a member of the Agrarian party. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 1-102.

21. Ibid., pp. 113-115.

22. P. Pipinelis, Caitiff Bulgaria, London 1944, p. 27.

"For the Bulgarians, I cherished feelings of contempt. Their traditions, their history and their actual obligations should have bound them to the Entente..... Inspired by the most material motives of acquisition, they had joined with Germany and by doing so, lengthened the war by two years..... They had joined our enemies for purely selfish purposes; their expectations had proved erroneous; and they were now endeavouring to cast on King Ferdinand the blame for what had in fact been a movemnt of national egoism. I did not feel that Bulgaria deserved more mercy than she would herself have been prepared in similar circumstances to accord."²³

At the Peace Conference, the Bulgarian delegation did indeed try to argue that since "the Bulgarian nation did not approve of the alliance with Germany and that the alliance was forced upon it, Bulgaria should not be held responsible for the wrongs committed by her whilst under the despotism of her former German king."²⁴ Within Bulgaria itself, in fact, public opinion placed much of the blame for the war and the disaster of September 1918 upon the intrigues of the Macedonian committees.²⁵

The justice - or injustice - of the Treaty of Neuilly depends upon whether it is seen as an honourable settlement with a vanquished enemy, embodying adequate and legitimate precautions for the future or, alternatively, as a bitter and cynical deception practised upon the Bulgarian people, who had genuinely expected the Peace Conference to respect and consider their views. From the negotiations leading to the conclusion of the Treaty it is quite clear that the peacemakers

23. H. Nicholson, Peacemaking 1919, London, 1934, pp. 34-35.

24. T.I. Geshkoff, Balkan Union. A Road to Peace in South-Eastern Europe, New York, 1940, p. 56.

25. Dr. R. A. Reiss, The Comitadji Question in Southern Serbia, London, 1924, p. 29

regarded Bulgaria as a defeated and infamous enemy.²⁶
 Dr. Temperley observed that:

"the Allied and Associate powers..... cannot lose sight of the fact that in ranging herself beside the Central Powers and remaining there until the moment at which her defeat seemed assured, Bulgaria has broken the chief link between Russia and her allies, opened to Germany the road to the East and thus rendered inevitable the prolongation of the war. She is then responsible for the terrible evils which resulted from this."²⁷

What aggravated Bulgaria's position at the Peace Conference was the "exceptional savagery" that had marked the acts of violence perpetrated by the Bulgarians in the occupied countries - " a savagery that was established in the report of the Committee on the responsibility of the authors of the war."²⁸ This Committee had enumerated 32 different kinds of outrage committed by the forces of the Central Powers and their allies in violation of the dictates of common humanity. Three kinds of outrage were committed only by the Bulgarians: the deliberate starvation of civilians, the confiscation of property, and the confinement of civilians under inhuman conditions.²⁹ The revelation of these atrocities³⁰ and the other details provided by the Committee lost Bulgaria much of the sympathy she had possessed in English circles.

Bulgaria, however, saw the Treaty as a bitter deception and a legitimate source of grievance. In a later presentation

26. Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, First Series, London 1946cc (hereafter referred to as B.D.) I, nos. 8, 11, 17, 19, 22-24, 30 and 33; also II, no. 9.

27. H.W.V. Temperley, A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, London, 1924, IV, p. 414.

28. Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 27 29. Ibid., loc. cit.

30. See above Chapter I, p. 25 Also for specific details, see Reiss, op. cit. pp. 22-27 and 41-45. But for a purely private

of the Bulgarian case, it was stated that "the war for them was of no interest. They were ready to lay down arms with the full hope of receiving justice from the Allied democracies. Their action stopped hostilities and they were directly responsible for the peace which followed."³¹ In the same work, there is perhaps the most succinct formulation of the bitterness and disillusionment which Bulgaria experienced:

"The great war soon followed. Bulgaria made the maximum efforts and gave numberless sacrifices - not to conquer foreign lands or to subdue foreign populations but only for the liberation of its oppressed brothers and its legitimate lands. The heroic feats of her brave army were acknowledged even by her enemy. The Fourteen Points of President Wilson were made public. They contained all that Bulgaria looked for. Bulgaria had implicit faith in them and was the first to surrender her arms and to seek peace. In Salonika, concrete promises were given that she should retain together with other benefits received by virtue of her arms, an outlet to the Aegean Sea. In return for this, two sacrifices were demanded of her, namely the abdication of King Ferdinand in favour of Crown Boris and the First Sofia division to be held as

(continued from the previous page)

opinion, minimizing the significance of atrocities in the Balkans, see L. Buxton, The Black Sheep of the Balkans, London, 1920, p. 127.

31. Bulgarian National Group, Bulgaria and the Balkan Problems, Sofia, 1934, p. 38. (This book was an official publication written for the Balkan Conference and printed with the assistance of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace). The effect of Bulgaria's collapse upon the German war effort is borne out by D. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, London, 1936, II, pp. 1911, 1920, 1944, 1951 and 2002. See also Field Marshal P. von Hindenburg, Out of my Life, London, 1920, pp. 428-29.

hostages under the aegis of Britain and France. Bulgaria readily assented to all the sacrifices required of her but the promises remained unfulfilled."³²

Many points in this assertion are open to criticism, particularly the ingenious view that Bulgaria laid down her arms in response to President Wilson's Fourteen Points. Similarly, in the armistice terms of September 1918, there is no mention of and "concrete promises" on the part of Britain and France.³³ The Bulgarians surrendered firstly because their army was totally defeated by the Allied attack up the Vardar valley, then because of the complete demoralization of their troops and thirdly because of the imminence of civil war within Bulgaria itself. But this view of Bulgaria's sacrifice and her desire to seek peace was the argument pursued by successive Bulgarian governments from 1923-1941, which talked of their country's "legitimate grievances" and the revision of her territorial status. This argument was based upon a false and perverse view of the historical position of Bulgaria between 1915 and 1918.

In fact, the Treaty of Neuilly³⁴ was, in itself, a just document. It made no great alteration to the territorial status of Bulgaria drawn up in the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest but, for purposes which were wholly strategic, Yugoslavia was awarded 2,430 sq. kilometres of territory along the frontier, consisting of the towns of Tsaribrod and Bosilgrad and the Strumica salient.³⁵ The Treaty also forbade military conscription and ordered that the Bulgarian army be reduced to 20,000 soldiers,

32. Bulgarian National Group, op. cit., p. 21.

33. Lloyd George, op. cit., II, pp. 1946-47.

34. B.D., Series I, I, no. 59. Final peace conditions were decided upon on September 17, 1919. The Treaty was actually signed on November 27, 1919.

35. For details leading to the settlement of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian frontier see I.J. Lederer, Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference, Yale, 1963, pp. 128-30, 137-38, 158, 180 and 223-24.

3,000 border guards and no more than 10,000 policemen for internal security. In addition, it was stipulated that Bulgaria should make reparations amounting to 5,000 million gold francs,³⁶ a sum later reduced to 2,250 millions³⁷ after prolonged efforts by Todorov, who succeeded in showing the peacemakers that such a sum was beyond Bulgaria's limited resources.³⁸ Writing on the Treaty of Neuilly, Dr. Temperley stated that "while the territorial clauses undoubtedly entailed some loss on Bulgaria, the reparation clauses were the most fair and practicable in any treaty."³⁹

But "the Peace Treaty concluded in Neuilly with the proclaimed purpose of creating lasting relations for peace, friendship and goodwill amongst the Balkan states did not bring the realization of that which the whole Bulgarian people for ages past had considered as its national right and its legitimate aspiration."⁴⁰ In short, it did not give Macedonia to Bulgaria.

As has been seen, the first line of the Bulgarian argument was that the nation, as a whole, did not want war and was willing to sign an armistice at the earliest opportunity. Their second argument was the familiar one that Macedonia was Bulgarian territory and that the military activities of the Balkan Wars and the First World War were therefore merely an attempt to recover what was Bulgaria's rightful territory. "The Bulgarian people participated in the wars only to attain their national unification not for any imperialistic aims."⁴¹ C.J. Logio, a sympathizer of the Bulgarian position, observed that:

36. £200 millions (at 1919 values).

37. £90 millions (" " ").

38. Todorov, op. cit., p. 122

39. Temperley, op. cit., IV, p. 412.

40. Bulgarian National Group, op. cit., p. 34.

41. Ibid., p. 38

"Much has been written about the severity of the terms dictated to Germany and Austria-Hungary but these treaties, vindictive and harsh as they appear to some, are in the opinion of the Bulgarians, generous when compared to the treaty forced on their country. For in the case of the Germanic Empires the principle of nationality was more or less adhered to, while in the case of Bulgaria, it simply went by the board. And this constitutes the cardinal defect of the Bulgarian treaty, for the economic conditions, however exacting and ruinous they may be, would have been accepted with resignation and without ill-will by the Bulgarians, while the territorial excursions will ever rankle in the hearts of her people."⁴²

The eleventh of President Wilson's Fourteen Points suggested that "the relations of the several Balkan states to one another" should be "determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality."⁴³ Despite the fact that President Wilson specifically demanded the evacuation of Serbia as one of the conditions of a peace settlement, Bulgaria put great hope in the loophole that the Fourteen Points provided for asserting that Macedonia belonged to Bulgaria along just such "historically established lines of allegiance and nationality." Indeed, says Nikolaev, "she looked forward to a much brighter future and one of the pillars of this hope was that Bulgaria had never declared war on the United States, with whom diplomatic relations had continued as normal for the duration of the war."⁴⁴ It is important to remember that although the declaration of the Fourteen Points was not regarded as being at variance with the vital interests of the Allies, it constituted no part of the

42. Buchan, op. cit., p. 154.

43. H.S. Commager, Living Documents of American History, pp. 65-67.

44. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 136

official policy of the Alliance.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, at a meeting at Sofia University in December 1918, a number of Macedonian Bulgarians elected a new "National Committee" which petitioned the Entente Powers for Macedonia's union with Bulgaria:

"All have proclaimed the willingness of the Macedonian population to unite itself with the mother-country, Bulgaria, an aspiration which has not been refuted during the decades of strife when blood flowed freely - and, pointing out that the Great Powers have again and again in several international matters, solemnly recognized the right of Macedonia to unite itself with the other Bulgarian countries; the assembly-general has therefore voted the following resolution:

'The delegates of the Macedonian Benevolent Societies have drawn from the Bulgar population of Macedonia the formal desire to unite themselves with their brothers in Bulgaria and give the executive council the imperative mandate to orientate its activity accordingly on the basis of the following two points:

- 1) The Indivisibility of Macedonia.
- 2) The Union of Macedonia to Bulgaria!"⁴⁶

The Bulgarian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference actually put forward proposals for the annexation of land south of the River Morava, the Dobrudja, Macedonia and both East and West Thrace.⁴⁷ In addition, they produced two large and impressive books of documents and maps which purported to show the right of Bulgaria's claim to extra territory and also sought

46. J. Ivanov, Les Bulgares devant le Congrès de la Paix, Berne, 1919, Appendice aux témoignages et aux documents, no. XXV11, pp. 290-291.

45. Lloyd George, op. cit., II, p. 1494.

47. Pipánelis, op. cit., p. 50.

to refute the accusations brought against her.⁴⁸

"The Macedonians," they maintained, " would have been perfectly happy if Bulgaria had retained Macedonia after the war. The autonomy ideal would have been abandoned for the Macedonians, who have always struck their chests and sworn by autonomy, would have gone back on their goal at the first favourable prospect of a Bulgarian occupation."⁴⁹

It is known that the head of the Bulgarian delegation urged privately in a letter of September 2, 1919 that in place of "the mutilation of Bulgaria", a plebiscite should be held "embracing all the populations delivered from the Turkish yoke since 1912". If this were not feasible, he proposed an independent Macedonian state:

"Let all the nations, big or small, freely use the ports of the new state thus constituted - Salonika, Kavalla and Dedeagatch - and let this new state serve as a pledge for the future Balkan Confederation..... it will eliminate all the pretexts of rivalries and strife between the Balkan states and will facilitate the establishing of the future confederation."⁵⁰

In this connection, it is known that the Bulgarian delegates had been officially authorized to propose the establishment of a Yugoslav federation in which Macedonia would be included as an autonomous state.⁵¹

48. Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, La Question Bulgare et les états balkaniques, Sofia, 1919; and from the same source, La Verité sur les accusations contre la Bulgaria, Sofia 1919.

49. S. Christowe, Heroes and Assassins, London, 1935, p. 126.

50. "Peace in the Balkans; A Bulgarian Solution," Nation CLX, (November 29, 1919), pp. 699-702.

51. H.G. Alsberg, "Union in the Balkans", Nation CLX, (October 4, 1919), pp. 463-64. See also, Buchan, op. cit., p. 158, and Buxton, op. cit., p. 124.

These proposals regarding an independent Macedonian state show that there had been no change of heart in the Bulgarian leaders. For only when Bulgaria was in a weak position did her leaders talk of such independence. At other times, when they thought themselves superior in military power and diplomatic support to their neighbours, they preached a Bulgarian Macedonia.⁵² During both world wars, when Bulgaria had the opportunity to proclaim the autonomy and independence of Macedonia she did not do so.⁵³

The attitude and conduct of the Bulgarian delegation at the Paris Conference substantiates Dr. Temperley's view that Bulgaria had no idea of the reality and enormity of her defeat.⁵⁴ Firstly, they had attempted to cast off the responsibility for the war upon their former king. Secondly, they proclaimed the myth that Bulgaria had laid down her arms in the interests of peace and, thirdly, they attempted to retain control of the conquests they had made since 1915 - particularly in Macedonia - by a subtle and disingenuous appeal to a bond of nationality which was unlikely to attract the sympathy of the peacemakers at that time. By the terms of Neuilly, only 6,798 sq. kilometres of the pre-1912 Macedonia was recognized as Bulgarian. The new Yugoslav frontiers encompassed 25,774 sq. kilometres of its land and Greece acquired some 34,154 sq. kilometres.⁵⁵ Thus Greece was the principal beneficiary of the re-distributed Macedonian territory. But it was towards her South Slav neighbour that Bulgaria manifested her greatest bitterness and hostility, and through the inter-war period Bulgaria refused to recognize that Macedonia was anything but Bulgarian territory, unjustly and illegally annexed by Yugoslavia.

52. Reiss, op. cit., p. 118.

53. Ibid., pp. 27-28.

54. Temperley, op. cit., loc. cit.

55. Christowe, op. cit., p. 129.

Yugoslavia, or the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was established on December 1, 1918. The new kingdom presented a bewildering variety of religions, laws and systems of education and administration and the internal problems of rationalizing, modernizing and centralizing the new kingdom took many years to solve. The strength of the Kingdom lay in its being Yugo-Slavia, the South Slav state for which the Slavs had been hoping for so long. Yet it was here that it was at its weakest, for those opposed to the centralizing tendencies of Belgrade and the rigorous laws which were required to hold the new state together, could accuse its rulers of "Serbian Imperialism."⁵⁶ One of the regions in the new Yugo-Slavia was Macedonia and within this region there were undoubtedly some who were of Bulgarian origin (particularly those living in the frontier strips in and around Bosilgrad and Tsaribrod - some 92,000 in number)⁵⁷ and, in the Treaty of St. Germain,⁵⁸ Yugoslavia acknowledged the existence of a Bulgarian minority within the borders of the new state: Article 4 ran:

"The Kingdom of SHS acknowledges as Serb, Croat and Slovene subjects, by right and without any formality, the persons from Austrian, Hungarian and Bulgarian nationalities who are born in the said territory from parents whose residence had been in the respective territories, although at the date of this treaty coming into force, their residence is not that of their birthplace."⁵⁹

Undoubtedly, then, there was a Bulgarian minority in Macedonia but, once again, the Bulgarian writers fail to distinguish between the amorphous Macedonian population and those Slavs of a specifically Bulgarian nationality. Toshev and others accuse the new Kingdom of a wholesale "de-nationalization of

56. A. Toshev, The Bulgarian-Serbian Dispute, Sofia, 1932, p. 89.

57. Todorov, op. cit., p. 122.

58. The Treaty of St. Germain was signed on September 10, 1919.

59. Toshev, op. cit., pp. 72-75.

Savov to attack Serbia without any formal declaration of war.

Stavrianos has said that the army's advance was a "political gesture" rather than a serious military attack,⁷¹ but it seems that King Ferdinand hoped to achieve so swift a fait accompli that the Western Powers would recognize his action and not do anything about it.⁷² Nor do the sympathizers of Bulgaria see it as merely a "political gesture": "Foolishly presumptive, he (Ferdinand) counted on a swift and complete victory."⁷³ The Bulgarian attack - described by Gueshoff as "an act of criminal madness"⁷⁴ - was repulsed by Serbian, Greek and Turkish forces and an armistice was signed on July 31.⁷⁵ The Treaty of Bucharest, which deprived Bulgaria of many of the gains she had made in the First Balkan War, was signed on August 10. This defeat has had immense repercussions. Had Bulgaria agreed to negotiate in a friendly spirit in 1913, many of the ills which plagued the Balkans between 1918-41 could have been avoided.⁷⁶ Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, gave an accurate diagnosis of the situation when he said:

"It left Bulgaria sore, injured and despoiled of what she believed belonged to her. Any future Balkan peace

71. Helmreich reported that Savov declared "that he did not give an order (to attack) but only passed on the order, after the King assured him that at the first exchange of shots between Bulgaria and Serbia, an Austro-Hungarian corps would cross the Danube. Op. cit., p. 367. 72. Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 36.

73. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi (Boris III), Uppsala, 1952, p. 33. Gueshoff, op. cit., pp. 92-3, stated that the attack was made without the knowledge or consent of the Bulgarian Cabinet. He stated that the attack was a royal decision enacted "not without the knowledge of the Prime Minister, Dr. Danev."

74. Pipinelis, op. cit., loc. cit.

75. For details of 2nd. Balkan War, Helmreich, op. cit. ch.XVIII.

76. Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 37.

was impossible as long as the Treaty of Bucharest remained. Bulgaria henceforth became a pivot and a pawn in the hands of the Great Powers in the Balkans."⁷⁷

After the Treaty of Bucharest, Serbia's relations with Bulgaria remained embittered. The Bulgarians waited for vengeance and the opportunity came quicker than they expected. It is clear that there was a close political understanding between Austria and Bulgaria between 1912-5. On July 23, 1914, the day on which Austria-Hungary issued her ultimatum to Serbia following the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Count von Berchtold, the Austrian Foreign Minister, instructed his minister in Sofia that:

"the Macedonian Committees in Bulgaria should at once begin intensive activity - which the Bulgarian Government might naturally and categorically condemn and disavow - with the main purpose of concentrically destroying the means of communication (bridges, railways and telegraph) thus cutting off Serbia from Salonika in the south and from Bulgaria on the east. As soon as our mobilization is declared you are authorized to find the ways and means for the promotion of such activity, proceeding carefully and secretly and using money."⁷⁸

Thus, when war was imminent, IMRO mobilized to enter Serbian territory and undertook sabotage and guerrilla warfare even though Bulgaria was not at that time at war with Serbia.

In the spring of 1914, Alexandrov and Protogerov, two of the chief Supremist leaders, re-shaped IMRO in Macedonia and soon their men were roaming the countryside, preaching

77. Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916, London, 1925, Vol. I, p. 263.

78. Document 10550, "Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914, Vienna, 1930, Vol. 8, pp. 609-611.

hatred of the Serbs and promising early liberation.⁷⁹ Early in 1914, the Serbian government extended conscription to Macedonia and it became one of IMRO's particular tasks to incite men against service in the Serbian Army and help them to escape to Bulgaria through underground contacts. Young men reared under the lax Turkish discipline resented the Serbian authority; they and their families were warned of horrid fates when the Bulgarians "liberated Macedonia" if they joined the Serbs,⁸⁰ As a result, several thousands fled to Bulgaria, Albania or to the mountains.

Dr. Reiss, a professor at Lausanne and war correspondent on the Salonika front, made inquiries into the activities of IMRO upon the outbreak of war in 1914. On August 21, seven "comitadjis"⁸¹ were caught trying to blow up the main line to Salonika. All seven were in Bulgarian uniform and carried Bulgarian weapons. They had come from Sofia and crossed the border on August 3-4. In the possession of the leader was a list of sabotage and destruction they should effect "before the defeat of Serbia."⁸² During the late summer and autumn, there were other minor acts of terrorism and sabotage.⁸³ Captured comitadjis stated the Austro-Hungarian Legation in Sofia gave them subsidies. Many chiefs used to go personally to the Legation and were assured by Laska, the military attaché, that the Serbs would be beaten by the Austrians.⁸⁴ The function of the comitadjis was therefore to divert Serbian troops from the Northern frontier. On Good Friday 1915, several hundred Bulgarian comitadjis attacked detachments of Serb troops at Valandovo and the bridge over the Vardar near Strumica station. At the most conservative estimate, the encounter cost the lives of 100 Serbian soldiers.⁸⁵

79. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, pp. 129-30.

80. Ibid., loc. cit.

81. "Comitadjis" literally means "members of a committee".

82. Dr. Reiss, The Comitadji Question in Southern Serbia, London, 1924, pp. 9-11.

83. Ibid., p. 12.

84. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

85. Ibid., p. 19.

On May 24, 1915, several Supremist leaders met in Sofia and formally decided to work for Bulgaria's entry into the war on Germany's side.⁸⁶ In September, Bulgaria signed a treaty and military convention with the Central Powers and on October 14, King Ferdinand declared war on Serbia. His policy did not have the full approval of the Bulgarian people. On September 17, there was a critical meeting between King Ferdinand and the leaders of five political parties. Stamboliski, the Agrarian leader, is reported to have told the King:

"The people have no confidence in your ability to rule. Once before, in 1913, you brought this country to catastrophe. Now you're planning to set yourself once more against the wishes and interests of the Bulgarian people."⁸⁷

Later, in the Sobranje, he outspokenly expressed his hope in a Serb victory:

"You're a Serb!" said a Bulgarian deputy.

"You're right!" Stamboliski is reported to have replied.

"I'm no Bulgarian. I'm no Serb. I am a Slav of the South - a Yugoslav!"⁸⁸

But Stamboliski was very much a lone voice and it has been suggested that the importance of his conversation with the King has been exaggerated and became a regular subject produced by "repentant Bulgarians".⁸⁹

When Bulgaria and Germany had successfully defeated the Serbian armies, Macedonia was annexed to Bulgaria. IMRO, whose members now made no mention of autonomy, were made responsible

86. Swire, op. cit., p. 133.

87. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand. The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, p. 92. See also Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 124.

88. Todorov, ibid., p. 194.

89. G.I. Kapchev, Le débâcle nationale bulgare devant la Haute Cour, Paris, 1925, p. 78. Kapchev gives a verbatim record of the scene between Stamboliski and King Ferdinand.

for the administration of the occupied territory. Shortly before the war, Alexandrov's Supremist Committee was given 30 million gold marks by Germany on the understanding that they would form a Macedonian Volunteer Division from those who had fled into Bulgaria.⁹⁰ On September 16, five days before Bulgarian mobilization, the Macedonian Volunteer Division consisting of 33,764 officers and men were mustered in Sofia.⁹¹

The Macedonian Organization distinguished its period of administration by violence and terrorism. General Jekov, the Commander-in-Chief of Bulgaria's forces, is reported to have ordered "the extermination of all Serbian intellectuals - deputies, priests, doctors, officials, teachers" and commanded his subordinates to "destroy this order after reading and giving effect to it."⁹²

In all wars, the stories of atrocities are liable to exaggeration but certain facts do stand out. There was widespread massacre, rape and regular execution of the wounded. One third of all Serbian prisoners of war in Bulgaria died and the 1917 revolt at Kursumlje led to the burning of villages and 2,000 executions. The Archbishop of Skopje was murdered with the connivance of a Bulgarian bishop who is reputed to have said: "For fifty years, we will cut throats and burn; then we will pray."⁹³

The IMRO leader, Alexandrov, personally received the Iron Cross from the Kaiser at Nis⁹⁴ and Protogerov became a member of the Malinov Cabinet in June 1918.⁹⁵ Between inspections of the comitadjis, Alexandrov would help in the work at H.Q. or accompany Crown Prince Boris on his tours of Macedonia.⁹⁶ In view of this, and bearing in mind the brutality of the occup-

90. Reiss, op. cit., p. 20.

93. Ibid., loc. cit.

91. Swire, op. cit., p. 135

94. Ibid., p. 137.

92. Ibid., pp. 138-39.

95. Ibid., p. 139.

96. Reiss, op. cit., p. 67

ation forces, it is difficult to do more than give a stated fact from a source favourable to Prince Boris:

"Questions relative to the administration of the occupied territories or to the army supplies and even to the internal administration of the country often could not get a satisfactory solution without the personal intervention of the Prince."⁹⁷

These particular details show the degree of involvement of IMRO in Bulgarian affairs in Macedonia from 1913-18 and the connection, however tenuous, between the Macedonian Organization and Crown Prince Boris. This in turn throws a great deal of light upon events in the inter-war period.

It is significant that in any inter-war studies of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, those historians and biographers with bulgarophile tendencies, studiously ignore the events of 1914-18. It is no exaggeration to say that whilst Bulgarian loyalty, decency, nobility and misfortune is trumpeted to the skies, history "stops" at 1913!⁹⁸ H.W.V. Temperley has said that because Bulgaria was not occupied like Germany and other enemy countries and did not know the taste of occupation, such as she meted out on others, it led her to some misapprehension about the reality and enormity of her defeat.⁹⁹ It is from this significant point that we may examine the Peace Settlement and Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations between 1918-41.

97. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 128.

98. This is apparent in several works referred to in this chapter, notably Toshev, Ivanov, Strupp and Nikolaev. It is also apparent in The Bulgarian National Group, Bulgaria and the Balkan Problems, Sofia, 1934, and G.Desbons, Bulgarie après le traité de Neuilly, Paris, 1930. A defence of the Bulgarian position is given by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, La vérité sur les accusations contre la Bulgarie, Sofia, 1919.

99. H.W.V. Temperley, A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, London, 1924, Vol. 4, pp. 411-2.

Chapter 2.

Bulgaria and the Peace Settlement.

"The reign of Boris III began in the poorest way, in tragic conditions; a defeated nation, without friends or support, whose misfortune aroused no pity, weakened and ruined by three disastrous wars on which it had expended much effort; a people atrociously deceived, completely discouraged, divided by political animosity, a profound disorganization in all its domestic services, a total overthrow of national life. To draw Bulgaria from the depths to which she had sunk, to re-ascend the slope, to re-establish order, to alleviate the people's spirit, to re-animate the economic life, were urgent tasks."¹

This is an adequate statement of the situation in which Bulgaria found herself after signing an armistice with the Allies at Salonika on September 29, 1918. Two days before, Bulgarian troops in a revolutionary mood had proclaimed a Republic at Radomir and, at the moment when the armistice was actually being signed, these mutinous troops were marching on Sofia. King Ferdinand ordered General Protogerov, one of the Supremist leaders, to hold the capital against the rebels. With the help of Military College cadets and some German troops, Protogerov succeeded in destroying three trainloads of mutineers.² By this action Bulgaria was spared civil war³ and, on October 4, King Ferdinand abdicated and went to Vienna.⁴

1. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi, Uppsala, 1952, p. 39.

2. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, p. 140.

3. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 135.

4. M. Padev, Escape from the Balkans, London, 1943, p. 77;

He was succeeded by his son, Crown Prince Boris. Boris, to whom reference has already been made in the previous chapter, is an important, if not the most important, figure in Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations during the inter-war years. His reign from 1918-1943 covers the entire period under consideration and his presence and political power give a consistency and continuity to Bulgaria's foreign policy. It is therefore useful to look briefly at the character and background of this man who, at a time of revolution and complete defeat, became King of Bulgaria.

Boris was born on January 30, 1894, the eldest son in a family of four. His mother died in 1899 and he was brought up by a stepmother, Princess Eléonora, who became the second Queen of Bulgaria. Those who knew Boris claim that King Ferdinand induced in him an almost "demoralizing fear which tormented him";⁵ and it seems that his childhood was far from happy.⁶ In 1912, Boris came of age and in the following year he entered the school of war. Boris participated briefly in the Second Balkan War and witnessed the defeat, the retreat and the humiliation of his country, aggravated by an outbreak of cholera. This affected him deeply. At the time of the Treaty of Bucharest, there was discussion among the higher people whether King Ferdinand might abdicate in favour of his son.

(continued from the previous page)

Padev states that in the 1915 Bulgaro-German Treaty of Alliance, Ferdinand prudently inserted a clause ensuring that "in case the war is lost" he would receive for the rest of his life an adequate pension from the German state. Ferdinand died at Coburg on September 10, 1948. For a study of his reign, see H.R. Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, The Dream of Byzantium, London, 1933.

5. Nikolaev, op. cit., pp. 13-24. This section of the life of King Boris is written by Constant Schaufelberger, who taught him for five years.

6. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand, The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, p. 133.

But it was feared that if Ferdinand abdicated it would mean the end of the royalty altogether. For when Boris was asked about this, he commented: "I'm not all that keen on ruling; if the King goes, I shall go with him."⁷

However, by 1915, Boris had changed his opinion. He regarded the alliance with Germany and the attack on Serbia as further imprudence on his father's part and he protested against the decision. His protest evoked stern paternal wrath and Boris was actually put under arrest for several days. However, for the rest of the war Boris served in the Bulgarian army and saw service in several theatres of action in the Balkans. It would seem therefore that Boris' protest was rather timid, but this opposition to his father's policy was noted by the cabinets in London and Paris who ascribed it to his credit when he succeeded his father in 1918.⁸ As has already been stated in the previous chapter, Boris was closely involved in the administration of the occupied territory, in the problems of army supplies and in the internal affairs of his own country.⁹ It was even rumoured that the dismissal of Radoslavov in June 1918 was due to his personal intervention.¹⁰

As a king, Boris made a very favourable impression on those he met. He had a gift for languages - particularly Italian and French - and was able to converse lucidly and intelligently with foreigners in subjects in which they had a personal interest. This ease of manner and the technique he had in dealing with his visitors is essential to any understanding of his character.¹¹ For when Bulgaria was affected internally or externally by any fresh development, opinion abroad exonerated the King from all responsibility, seeing him as:

7. Nikolaev, op. cit., pp. 31-35.

8. Ibid., p. 37.

9. Ibid., p. 128

10. Ibid., p. 215. Radoslavov was Bulgarian Prime Minister from July 5, 1913 till June 20, 1918.

11. Ibid., pp. 26-32

the Bulgarian minority"⁶⁰ (a minority estimated at 800,000 and including all Macedonian Slavs whether Bulgarian or not)⁶¹ and a policy of total "serbianization" throughout Macedonia.⁶² Within these blanket terms, the Yugoslavs were accused of deliberately depriving these Bulgarians of their educational and religious institutions and of constant political and economic persecution. Bulgarian teachers and priests were arrested, deported or expelled and children attended Serb schools instead. No Bulgarian books or periodicals were allowed and all Bulgarian scientific, academic and university publications sent to the University of Skopje were returned. Those with their names ending in "off" were obliged to change them to the Serbian "ić" and Bulgaria was not allowed to provide for the upkeep of her war cemeteries in Macedonia.⁶³ In fact these complaints were unjustified in the sense that the region of Macedonia included in the Yugoslav Kingdom was under Bulgarian control only from 1915-18 and the changes made after the war were simply designed to restore the status quo which had existed before the Bulgarian conquest and occupation.

All these developments were regarded by Bulgaria as "legitimate grievances". Accusations of terror were made and the Sofia government announced that the greater number of refugees who had fled from neighbouring countries were now "overcrowding the limited motherland and creating a spirit of dissatisfaction among the whole Bulgarian people."⁶⁴

Among the malcontents were to be found the 1,662 war-criminals whose extradition Yugoslavia had demanded before the Conference

60. Ibid., pp. 78-80 and 93-94.

61. Bulgarian National Group, op. cit., p. 24.

62. Ibid., pp. 35-6.

63. Ibid., loc. cit. and Toshev, op. cit., loc. cit. For a consideration of the origins and quantity of refugees see Appendix B.

64. Christowe, op. cit., p. 145 and Bulgarian National Group, op. cit., p. 36.

of Ambassadors. The Yugoslav demand was based upon Article 118 of the Treaty of Neuilly:

"The Bulgarian government recognizes the right of the Allied and Associate powers to bring before military tribunals persons accused of having committed acts of violation of the laws and customs of war. Such persons shall, if found guilty, be sentenced to punishments laid down by law..... The Bulgarian government shall hand over to the Allied and Associate powers or to such of them as shall so request, all persons accused of having committed an act in violation of the laws and customs of war, who are specified either by name, or by rank, office or employment which they held under the Bulgarian authorities."⁶⁵

Among the 1,662 whose extradition was demanded, were Alexandrov and Protogerov, both of whom were held responsible for a series of massacres and executions in the Old Serbia and Morava districts under Bulgarian occupation.⁶⁶ Both Alexandrov and Protogerov were arrested in November 1919 and were imprisoned for a short while. However, none of the 1,662 was ever brought to trial and both Alexandrov and Protogerov were helped to escape.⁶⁷

In March 1920, Alexandrov revived the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) as "an answer to the Paris crime"⁶⁸ and Protogerov spread propaganda in Sofia, finding support among the many dispossessed officials who had worked in Macedonia during the occupation.⁶⁹ Another dangerous source of sedition were the thousands of young and ambitious army officers, now deprived of their profession and status, who

65. Reiss, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

66. Ibid., pp. 41-45

67. Swire, op. cit., pp. 145-46.

68. Christowe, op. cit., p. 129.

69. Swire, op. cit., p. 144.

deeply resented the peace treaty and opposed the slightest sign of a conciliatory attitude towards Yugoslavia.⁷⁰ The revival of IMRO attracted many of those who were listed as war-criminals by Yugoslavia,⁷¹ and the ranks of the post-war comitadjis were swelled by those who were guilty of offences in Yugoslavia and fled to Bulgaria rather than face trial.⁷² The revived and renewed Macedonian Organization made its aims quite clear: "IMRO would fight for the national rights of Bulgarians which their army had failed to liberate on the battlefield."⁷³

The reaction of Bulgaria to the peace treaty of Neuilly and the revival of one of the most potent sources of discord between the two nations, could only cause disquiet in Belgrade. The manner of the Bulgarian delegation at Paris, the renewed flood of propaganda in favour of Macedonian annexation or independence and the visible reluctance of the Bulgarian government to hand over those who were known war-criminals engendered grave dissatisfaction in Yugoslav leaders, who saw these developments as a threat to the future well-being of Yugoslavia. Archbishop Stefan of Sofia issued a warning: "Let it not be forgotten that without Bulgaria, Balkan peace is absolutely impossible!"⁷⁴ And H.G. Alsberg, attending a meeting of Agrarian leaders in Bulgaria reported:

"Unanimously I was assured that if Thrace and

70. Todorov, op. cit., p. 136 and Christowe, op. cit., p. 155.

71. Reiss, op. cit., loc. cit.

72. Ibid., pp. 49-66. Dr. Reiss gives a long and comprehensive table of statistics relating to those who departed from the Kratovo district between 1918-1922. Of the 157 who went to Bulgaria, he recorded that 83 went as deserters, 23 were wanted for murder, 3 for brigandage, 17 for harbouring criminals and the rest were either minor offenders or left from personal choice.

73. Christowe, op. cit., p. 155.

74. Bulgarian National Group, op. cit., p. 11.

the Aegean coast were taken away from Bulgaria and there were no federation, then another Balkan War was inevitable."⁷⁵

The successor states were acutely aware of the danger of revisionism leading to war and it is significant that between 1920-22, the foundation treaties of the Little Entente were laid.⁷⁶

A later writer has observed that:

"when Belgrade and Sofia are only linked together by suspicion, no diplomatic effort for the pacification of the Balkans can succeed, for the South Slavs form the majority of the population and the territories they occupy are, strategically, the most important. The axis, Belgrade-Sofia, is a genuine axis along which the destiny of the Balkans revolves."⁷⁷

Stamboliski, the Agrarian leader and Prime Minister from October 1919, was probably one of the few Bulgarian leaders to see the need for an immediate and lasting understanding with Yugoslavia. Despite the misfortunes of the Bulgarian delegation at Paris, he continued to urge the necessity for co-operation and unity.⁷⁸ Speaking on November 27, after signing the Treaty of Neuilly, he said:

"I have signed the treaty but I believe that sooner or later it will be revised. My policy aims at peace and the brotherhood of all peoples, We intend to live up to our obligations, but we shall not cease appealing to the conscience of the world for justice to defeated Bulgaria."⁷⁹

75. Alsberg, op. cit., p. 464.

76. See below, chapter 3, p. 63. Also, N.J. Padelford, Peace in the Balkans. The Movement towards International Organization in the Balkans, New York, 1935, pp. 180-5. 77. Padev, op. cit. p. 69.

78. L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. The Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass., 1944, p. 210.

79. Todorov, op. cit., p. 123.

On the next day, with the help of Todorov, he drafted letters to the Prime Ministers of the three important Balkan powers: the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Greece and Rumania, proposing that the past be forgotten and that all Balkan governments should collaborate for the common security and the economic welfare of the Balkans.

"Not one of them answered."⁸⁰

80. Ibid., loc. cit.

Chapter 3.

The Influence of Italy.

But the Bulgarian Prime Minister was not a man to give up so easily. Born in the small village of Slavovitsa on March 25, 1879, Alexander Stamboliski was a determined and vigorous peasant leader. His bold opposition to King Ferdinand - both for his absolutist rule as well as his catastrophic foreign policy - brought him the leadership of the Agrarian party and a period of imprisonment from 1915-18. Whilst in prison, he drew up his post-war political programme, the "Principles of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union". Article 7 ran:

"The Agrarian Union favours durable and peaceful relations between Bulgaria and her neighbours.....It seeks to strengthen these good relations by uniting Bulgaria with the other Balkan states on a federative basis."¹

The principle was later modified to read:

"The party seeks to maintain friendly relations with all other nations and to work for a close rapprochement with all our small neighbouring states on a federal basis."²

Although Stamboliski never denied the Bulgarian nationality of the Macedonians and although he never hid his antipathy towards the extremist Serbian elements in Yugoslavia, he argued publicly that only through friendly relations with her Slav neighbour,

1. L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass., 1944, p. 209. 2. T.I. Geshkoff, Balkan Union. A Road to Peace in South-Eastern Europe, New York, 1940, p. 55. From Paragraph 28, of the National Peasant Party Programme.

could the Macedonian question be settled. In innumerable speeches, Stamboliski urged rapprochement with Serbia and the unification of all Slavs in the peninsula into one great federated state. This would be the first step to a Balkan Federation. And this Balkan Federation would in turn be the first step to uniting all Agrarian nations into a vast supra-national Green International.³ In this matter, Stamboliski had great confidence in the Croats. He believed that if the Agrarian-minded Croatian Peasant Party, led by Stephen Radić, came to power, then there was an immediate prospect of close relations between the two countries.⁴ Writing to Obov, one of his ministers, he stated that he hoped to see "an integral, democratic and pacific Yugoslavia, extending from Mount Triglav to the Black Sea".⁵

Stamboliski did not immediately become Prime Minister. Following his proclamation of a republic at Radomir, orders were issued for his arrest but, shortly afterwards, a general amnesty was granted and Stamboliski, who in the meantime had been in hiding, eventually became a minister in the reconstructed Cabinet.⁶ This coalition government, led by Todorov - a close friend of the pre-war Premier Gueshoff - lasted from November 1918 until the elections of August 17, 1919. The elections produced no clear-cut majority⁷ and the Prime Minister, who not only disapproved of the terms of the Peace Treaty, but

3. Stavrianos, op. cit., loc. cit.

4. N. Buxton, "The Balkans Today", Nineteenth Century, XC, (August 1921), pp. 333-5. 5. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, p. 142. Mount Triglav is in Slovenia. 6. May 1919.

7. J. Buchan (Ed), Bulgaria and Roumania; The Nations of Today Series, London, 1924, gives the figures:

Agrarians	86 (198,444 votes)	Nationalists	19 (54,556)
Communists	47 (118,671 ")	Danevists	8 (36,566)
Social Democrats	38 (82,826 ")	Radicals	8 (33,343)
Democrats	28 (65,267 ")	Radoslavovists	3 (42,024)
Others - (8,462 votes).			

found that his constituency was no longer part of Bulgaria, resigned. Stamboliski was chosen as his successor and formed his first cabinet on October 6.

In his early months of office, Stamboliskifaced the overwhelming effects of Bulgaria's defeat; the loss of her richest agricultural area in the Dobrudja, the heavy burden of reparations and an unprecedented rise in the cost of living.⁸ This all led to great discontent. A two-month rail strike began at the end of December 1919 and lasted until the strikers' funds were exhausted. In the meantime, Stamboliski armed the peasants and endeavoured to run the railways with the aid of troops. When he had succeeded in breaking the strike, he ordered fresh elections to be held on March 28, 1920, hoping that this would secure a majority for the Agrarian party in the Sobranje. Despite intimidation, his party obtained only 38% of the votes.⁹ Stamboliski refused to accept the electoral decision as binding and proceeded to invalidate enough Opposition mandates to secure a majority of two in the Sobranje. This action, which was by no means uncommon in the Balkans, aroused such indignation, that the Inter-Allied Control Commission in Sofia threatened Yugoslav military intervention. Stamboliski's opponents, dreading any further reduction in their country's size and independence, gave way.

After the 1920 elections, Kosta Todorov was appointed Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Stamboliski himself held the post of Foreign Minister but Todorov was able to run

8. Buchan, op. cit., p. 152. Taking 100 as an index-figure for 1914, the index had risen to 1754 by 1919 and reached 2577 by January 1920.

9. Ibid., p. 153. Results given as:

Agrarians	346,949 votes	Radoslavovists	57,096 votes
Communists	181, 525 votes	Social Democrats	55,017 "
Democrats	97,581 "	Danevists	52,722 "
Nationalists	60,992 "	Radicals	41,770 "

Bulgaria's foreign office without much interference. The conduct of the elections had already caused friction with the Allies and Todorov also encountered great difficulties:

"In my new position, I understood for the first time the implications of Bulgaria's defeat. Several governments had re-opened their legations in Sofia, others still had temporary missions there. Almost every day, Allied diplomats came to me with impossible demands, usually presented as ultimatums. They interfered scandalously with internal affairs and intervened on behalf of Bulgarian subjects engaged with them in contraband trade and speculation. The army of occupation behaved with the utmost decorum but the diplomatic representatives acted like proconsuls..... When they applied pressure, I reminded them that although Bulgaria had signed severe peace terms, it had not granted the Allies extra-territorial rights."¹⁰

In this unfortunate predicament, Stamboliski's government sought to establish better relations with Yugoslavia and with the rest of Europe. Other powers, expecting that their experiences would turn them against Yugoslavia, hoped to profit by the situation. In June 1920, Baron Aliotti, the Italian envoy, called on Todorov for a confidential talk. He began by explaining that Italy felt dissatisfied with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and with all the special favours that Britain, France and the United States were granting to the Serbs. He spoke at length on Italy's right to Dalmatia and stated that Bulgarian and Italian interests now coincided. The Italian government, he said, recognized Bulgaria's claim to Macedonia. Todorov expressed his surprise at this remark and pointed out that at the Peace Conference, Italy had agreed to Bulgaria losing not only Macedonia but also

10. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand. The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, p. 135.

Thrace and the Dobrudja. Todorov reported Aliotti's reply:

"Italy was in no position to resist the will of Clemenceau. But now we must look ahead. An understanding between Italy and Bulgaria would serve the interests of both".

Todorov asked, "What do you suggest?"

The Baron rose. "In the name of my government"; he intoned, "I propose a secret military alliance for the purpose of returning to Italy the Adriatic provinces which are historically hers and for the return of Macedonia to Bulgaria."¹¹

Todorov sent Aliotti to see Stamboliski. He knew that Baron Aliotti's proposal was repugnant to everything in which Stamboliski believed but diplomatic courtesy necessitated a meeting. Todorov observed that:

"the Peasant leader had a clearly defined foreign policy, the keystone of which was the closest possible understanding with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with a view to ultimate Balkan solidarity. His aim was a Yugoslav-Bulgarian union within a free Balkan federation."¹²

It is noteworthy that Baron Aliotti's proposal came two years before Mussolini assumed power. Twice more, the prospect of an Italo-Bulgarian alliance against Yugoslavia was raised, once by Count Aldrovandi, Aliotti's successor, and again at the 1922 Genoa Conference. On each occasion, Stamboliski rejected it.¹³ A few years later, Todorov met Signor Nitti, the Italian Prime Minister at this time, who had left his country after Mussolini's March on Rome, and asked him whether Baron Aliotti's proposal had represented the wishes of his government. Signor Nitti told him that

11. Ibid., pp. 137-38.

12. Ibid., loc. cit.

13. K. Todorov, "The Macedonian Organization, Yesterday and Today," Foreign Affairs, VI, (April 1928), pp. 478-82.

"for years, a permanent clique inside the Italian Foreign Office had been pursuing its objectives with little regard to government policy."¹⁴

In October 1920, following his work at the Foreign Office, Todorov was appointed as Bulgarian Minister in Belgrade. The appointment was in keeping with Stamboliski's desire for a closer Yugoslav-Bulgarian understanding and Todorov's instructions were "to work persistently for good relations between the two countries."¹⁵ His mission required great tact and diplomacy for although Vesnić and Trumbić, Yugoslavia's Prime and Foreign Ministers, received him cordially, the Press was extremely hostile and the stories of wartime atrocities once more filled their columns. Shortly after his arrival, Yugoslavia officially ratified the Treaty of Neuilly and Todorov was in the Skupština to observe the ratification. One of the Yugoslav deputies, Toma Popović, whose constituency had been occupied by Bulgaria during the war, turned to the diplomatic gallery and shouted:

"The presence of a representative of the people who were murdering Serbian citizens a short time ago is an insult to this House. I think he should be shot down in the street."¹⁶

Although Vesnić promptly disavowed the speaker and apologized for the insult to Bulgaria, it was this attitude which was, with some justification, prevalent in Yugoslavia and with which Stamboliski's new policy had to contend. As Todorov said later, "working with our Balkan neighbours for a lasting peace or even a temporary one, was an uphill struggle."¹⁷

In December 1920, Stamboliski visited Rome, Paris and

14. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand, op. cit., p. 138. Nitti resigned the Italian Premiership for the third time on June 6, 1920.

15., Ibid., p. 140.

16. Ibid., loc. cit.

17. Ibid., p. 143.

London "to break the ice hemming in Bulgaria". His visit put an end to Bulgaria's isolation and it was noticeable that the policy of the Agrarian government was thereafter in line with the Western democracies. In Paris, Stamboliski had conversations with French leaders and proposed that Bulgaria enter the League of Nations in the autumn of 1921.¹⁸ In this spirit, he travelled to Prague and summoned the Bulgarian envoys in Belgrade, Berlin, Vienna and Budapest. He told them that two of them, the envoys in Berlin and Budapest, had expressed anti-Allied and pro-revisionist views during his visit to the West and dismissed the pair on the spot.¹⁹ Whilst he was in Prague, Masaryk gave a dinner in his honour at the Hradčany Castle. In the course of the meal, Masaryk advised him to reach an understanding with Yugoslavia and promised that his country would use its influence in Belgrade to help Bulgaria's case.²⁰ His advice was endorsed by Beneš. Upon his return to Sofia, Stamboliski declared:

"We'll break down Belgrade's hostility by demonstrating our good faith. The course of events will show the Yugoslavs that my policy is not only useful to them but a vital necessity."²¹

In the meantime, there had been a major political upheaval in Yugoslavia. The elections for a Constituent Assembly were held on November 28, 1920 and resulted in a wide variety of splinter parties, representing the many disparate elements in the Kingdom.²² The Radicals and the Democrats, with the help of the Moslems and eight deputies from the smaller parties,

18. Bulgaria joined the League in September 1921.

19. Todorov, op. cit., p. 142. 20. Ibid., loc. cit.

21. Ibid., p. 143.

22. The results were:

	Croatian Peasants 50
Democrats 92	Slovene People's Party 27
Radicals 91	Moslems 32
Communists 58	Others 69

succeeded in obtaining a majority in the Skupština. Faced with the prospect of this new Assembly and the inevitable problems of a coalition government, Vesnić resigned. His place was taken by the patriarch of Serbian politics, Nicholas Pašić, now in his seventy-sixth year, without doubt the nation's greatest and most able statesman and diplomat. With considerable oscillations in popularity, survivals after numerous parliamentary defeats and a series of Cabinet crises, Pašić was to remain Prime Minister of Yugoslavia until July 1924.

Pašić was a keen, practical man of few words who had had close relations with Bulgaria in the past. In 1883, he had fled Serbia and worked in the Bulgarian Ministry of Public Works during his exile. He had advocated a close friendship between Serbia and Bulgaria and had vigorously opposed the 1885 war. Later, he signed the 1912 Serbo-Bulgarian treaty, creating the Second Balkan League. When Pašić returned from Paris to be Prime Minister again, he met Todorov and they discussed future Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations. Pašić said:

"all my enemies attack me for it. I haven't changed much in that respect; but it is still too soon for closer relations. We must be patient."²³

Although Pašić appeared to be reasonable and well-disposed towards Stamboliski's policy, Todorov detected an undertone of stubbornness. Was this attitude reflected by the younger generation? In an audience with Prince Alexander shortly before King Peter's death, Todorov solicited the Regent's views on Yugoslav-Bulgarian collaboration. He records that Alexander asked him:

"What does Pašić think?"

In reply to my description, he said, "Pašić has done a great deal for the country but he is an old man now."

I detected a note of irritation. When we parted, Alexander said, "You may count upon my help in your mission. And I'm

23. Todorov, op. cit., p. 144.

not saying this out of mere diplomatic politeness."²⁴

This conversation between the Prince Regent and Todorov was the beginning of a close friendship which lasted long after Todorov's exile from Bulgaria and continued right up to the time of King Alexander's death in 1934.

Unfortunately, this policy of reconciliation and rapprochement propounded by Stamboliski and Todorov, did not represent the views of the whole Bulgarian population. Indeed, there was already a sizeable opposition directed against them. The efforts of the Agrarian leaders to collaborate with Yugoslavia were labelled as "treasonable" by all Opposition parties, and right-wing critics accused the government of sacrificing the national interest and even claimed that they would destroy the political independence of the Bulgarian nation in their desire for the ultimate union of the two countries.²⁵ In this, the right-wing critics found that they had the support of King Boris who had genuine fears for the future of his dynasty and actively opposed anything which might detract from his own or his country's sovereignty.²⁶

All this opposition was encouraged by the Italian Foreign Office. From the day that Stamboliski turned down Baron Aliotti's offer of a secret military alliance against Yugoslavia, the Italians set out to destroy him. Their Press constantly accused him of accepting bribes from the Serbs and praised the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization as being the real Bulgarian patriots.²⁷ The Italians made a great contribution to the success of IMRO. They realized that the Organization would provoke animosity between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and that this would undermine the keystone of Stamboliski's foreign policy. At the same time, the Organization could be used to cause internal unrest and co-operate with the ex-Army officers and those right-wing elements which were anxious to

24. Ibid., pp. 144-45.

26. Swire, op. cit., p. 23.

25. Ibid., p. 150

27. Todorov, op. cit., p.151.

destroy the Peasant Leader. To this end, a branch of the Banco d'Italia was opened in Sofia. The Bank paid out large sums to Opposition lawyers for "legal services". Large amounts of this money paid to Opposition figures went directly to IMRO, enabling them to finance wide-scale terrorist operations and buy better weapons. The records of the Banco d'Italia show that within a few months of its arrival, it had already spent 8,000,000 leva on "legal services".²⁸

When IMRO was revived by Alexandrov in March 1920, he secured the immediate support of those young army officers deprived of status and prospects, and also of those who were wanted by Yugoslavia for war crimes or desertion. But these were by no means his only supporters. All who were dissatisfied with Stamboliski's Agrarian régime, all who were disturbed by the rapprochement with Yugoslavia and all who were unable to regard the Treaty of Neuilly as binding on their country, gave active or tacit support to the Organization. When the war ended, the army units at Kustendil, Nevrokop and Petrich made over their arms to the revolutionaries and these came into the Organization's possession.²⁹ With financial aid from Opposition leaders³⁰ and also from Italian sources, the movement gained power and prestige.

IMRO operations in South Serbia (Macedonia) began in May 1920. Most of the armed comitadjis came from centres at Petrich, Gorna Djoumaia and Kustendil, but some of the groups went to Albania and attacked south-western Yugoslavia from their base at Podgradets.³¹ From July-November 1920, Alexandrov roamed through Eastern Macedonia, in one place speaking of union with Bulgaria, in another promising local autonomy. Throughout the

28. ibid., loc. cit.

29. Swire, op. cit., p. 144.

30. Ibid., p. 145.

31. At this time, Greek and Yugoslav troops were occupying Albania and the atmosphere between Albanian leaders in Tirana and the Yugoslav government was understandably cool.

area, he organized a courier system and appointed special voivodes to denounce people who dared to be friendly or co-operate with the Yugoslav authorities. Alexandrov found that there was so much misgovernment, brutality and corruption by Yugoslav officials in these difficult post-war years, that there were many discontented men willing to work for him. The people of South Serbia were so afraid that the Bulgarians might return and so greatly feared reprisals by Alexandrov's men that they often obeyed them for safety's sake. They supplied food for his bands, paid taxes to his Organization and made no complaint to the authorities for fear of the death and destruction with which the bands had threatened them.³² At this time, the Yugoslav police were very weak in the area and these threats were often carried out, houses being burnt and men murdered with increased frequency.³³ The Yugoslav government put a price of 250,000 dinars on Alexandrov's head.³⁴

Almost all the comitadjis captured in the period 1919-22 wore Bulgarian Army clothing.³⁵ This changed in 1922 when they started to appear in different clothing, including Yugoslav uniforms illegally manufactured by the factory of army cloth at Gabrovo in Bulgaria.³⁶ A great part of their munitions and bombs came from Ivanov Bros., an arms dealer whose stores were situated in Louisa Street in Sofia, near the Sveta Nedelja cathedral.³⁷ It is important to understand that the terrorists,

32. Swire, op. cit., p. 147.

33. Dr. R.A. Reiss, The Comitadji Question in Southern Serbia, London, 1924, pp. 129-56, lists no fewer than 293 terrorist incidents in the period 1919-23. Dr. Reiss stresses that the list is by no means complete. 34. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit.

35. Reiss, op. cit., pp.70-83. 36. Ibid., loc. cit.

37. Ibid. pp. 84-5. When Bulgaria's war material was sold for scrap, enough arms to equip 8 divisions was bought up by bogus dealers who sold the rifles and ammunition on the open market, whilst the heavy munitions were stored in mountain shelters.

their arms and all their clothing all came from Bulgaria for one of Bulgaria's oft-repeated assertions in the period 1921-34 was that the troubles in South Serbia were caused by the local population.

In October 1920, an Immigrants Congress was held in Sofia. It elected a regular Committee under Karandjoulov. The meeting urged a union between all those hostile to Yugo-Slav unification. The Committee also intensified its propaganda abroad and flooded the daily press, especially certain reviews, with articles designed to prove the "Bulgarian character of Macedonia."³⁸ At the Congress, there had been much talk of Macedonian autonomy and an Association for Macedonian Independence was set up in Rome. All this sounded very determined and clear-cut, but Karandjoulov admitted to the British Military Attaché that he would sooner cut his arteries than petition for Macedonian autonomy.³⁹

In November 1921, Protogerov and Athanasov, both leading IMRO leaders, signed a protocol in Albania, pledging themselves to create a Federal Macedonia on Swiss lines with cantons ruled by the dominant race in each local area. When this had been done, Macedonia would be free to decide her own destiny. Protogerov had always favoured a federal solution and when an Immigrants' Congress had been called to discuss the protocol, their representatives voted 160-40 in favour of the plan.⁴⁰ Following the protocol, Protogerov and Athanasov negotiated with leading Albanian figures. The result of their negotiations was a convention which declared that if their joint efforts succeeded, the Kosovo district should be annexed to Albania, whilst Macedonia became autonomous.⁴¹ However, early in 1922, Alexandrov repudiated the Albanian protocol and Protogerov, who had no desire to quarrel with Alexandrov, repudiated it too.⁴²

38. Reiss, op. cit., p. 34.

40. Ibid. pp. 149-50.

39. Swire, op. cit., p. 147.

41. Ibid., loc. cit.

42. Ibid., loc. cit.

Following their talks in Albania, Athanassov and Protogerov went to Rome. There they met a representative of the Italian Foreign Office who, in the course of discussion, urged them to arrange for the assassination of King Alexander, saying that this might lead to the "disruption" of Yugoslavia, which in turn would provide the Macedonians with their opportunity. Athanassov is reported to have rejected the idea out of hand for the adverse publicity it would cause. He suggested that if there were to be an assassination, the Italians should do it themselves.⁴³

Thus, in an indirect and subtle manner, the Italian Foreign Office fostered the growth and ambitions of the most potent source of discord between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Todorov said that:

"they did everything they could to undermine Stamboliski's policy of rapprochement, for every time I delivered assurances of good faith, the question came back: 'Then why do you permit these Macedonian outrages on our territory?'"⁴⁴

At a time when Stamboliski was trying to create a better understanding with Yugoslavia, the Agrarian government was naturally unwilling to accept responsibility for IMRO's behaviour. Dr. Reiss has described their reaction:

"Once the comitadjis had resumed their activities after the war, the Yugoslav government made representations to Sofia. The Bulgarian government replied evasively; at one moment, they cast blame on the population of South Serbia itself, at another they declared that, owing to the small number of troops left to them by the Treaty of Neuilly, they were unable to prevent bands of comitadjis crossing the frontier. When Belgrade became more insistent, Sofia retaliated by exhuming the famous "minorities" clause in favour of the comitadjis. This argument was, however,

43. Ibid., loc. cit.

44. Todorov, op. cit., p.151.

repulsed by a formal decision of the League of Nations, relegating the comitadji question together with that of minorities, to direct negotiations between the countries concerned."⁴⁵

The Yugoslav reaction to IMRO raids and the attendant murder, arson and blackmail was to conclude treaties with Czechoslovakia⁴⁶ and Rumania,⁴⁷ creating the Little Entente which was widely publicized as a bulwark of security in Central and Eastern Europe. The strength of the Little Entente lay in its provision for common action at the League of Nations and in its aim to achieve peace, security and prosperity at a time when the world was facing economic and political unrest. The Entente's great fault was that it was inward-looking and did not foresee the effects of a Fascist Italy, an avaricious Russia or a Nazi Germany - and no provisions were made for such eventualities.

But in 1921-2, the creation of the Little Entente made an enormous impact upon Central and Eastern Europe.⁴⁸ Stamboliski was alarmed by the adverse effects that IMRO's subversive operations were having on his attempts to improve Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations. Early in 1921, a newspaper had been set up in Sofia to explain government policies to the people. Todorov had been the chief editorial writer and travelled regularly back and forth between Sofia and Belgrade. But the newspaper's circulation was small and made little or no impact upon those Stamboliski was most anxious to convert to his policy.⁴⁹ Following the conclusion of the treaties establishing the Little Entente, Stamboliski decided to take vigorous practical

45. Reiss, op. cit., pp. 34-5.

46. August 14, 1920. See N.J. Padelford, Peace in the Balkans, New York, 1935, pp. 180-1 for details of the treaty.

47. June 7, 1921. See Padelford, pp. 182-3, for details of the treaty.

48. Todorov, op. cit., p. 141.

49. Ibid., p. 149.

action to suppress the Macedonian Organization. In July 1921, Alexander Dimitrov, one of his closest and loyalist colleagues, was appointed Bulgarian Minister of War. Before taking up his post, Dimitrov visited Belgrade to see Pašić and learn from him directly what he considered to be the main obstacles to a Yugoslav-Bulgarian understanding. Pašić's response was somewhat reticent and he told Dimitrov that it was difficult to talk about an understanding when "every day our borders are violated and our soldiers killed."⁵⁰ Dimitrov promised that he would go back to Sofia and put an end to IMRO outrages. Upon his return, he initiated a series of drastic measures. One of his trusted friends, Koslovsky, was appointed prefect of police in the Petrich district which was the nerve centre of IMRO operations. Then the command of garrisons was revised to make sure that military commanders were loyal to the government's orders. At the same time, the overall command for frontier posts was altered, this to prevent further lax behaviour on the part of the border guards who tended to regard the comitadji raids as a patriotic gesture. Dimitrov also ordered the whole western border area to be cleared of comitadjis and sent troops to round up known terrorists and move them to eastern Bulgaria. Finally, he ordered the arrest of Alexandrov and Protogerov, but the orders came too late; the two IMRO leaders had already fled their country for Vienna.

Dimitrov's action produced a violent counter-reaction. It was widely rumoured that Dimitrov had "sold Bulgaria to Pašić"⁵¹ and a series of terrorist attacks were made, culminating in the death of Koslovsky, who was shot in October 1921. At the same time, IMRO leaders privately threatened the Minister of the Interior, Tomov, with a similar fate if he did not give them his allegiance. He succumbed to their threats and tried to discourage Dimitrov from his repressive measures.⁵² Dimitrov

50. Ibid., p. 151.

51. Swire, op. cit., p. 149.

52. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 155-56.

ignored his advice and continued with his policies, despite the knowledge that IMRO had passed a death sentence on him. IMRO did not long delay; on November 21, 1921, Dimitrov was assassinated.

Within eighteen months of its revival, the Macedonian Organization had proved itself as destructive as its pre-war counterpart. With the benefit of Italian financial aid and the willing support of the political Opposition in Sofia, it had effectively undermined Stamboliski's policy and carried the war into Yugoslav territory. The Organization had killed those who were officially employed to destroy it and caused statesmen in Belgrade to doubt the authority and assurances of the Agrarian government. This was agreeable to the Italian Foreign Office, the Consulta and other nationalist circles in Rome,⁵³ but it was by no means their only weapon. There was a further, useful wedge to drive between the two South Slav nations; the question of Bulgarian reparations.

The aim of Stamboliski's government was to fulfil, as far as possible, the obligations laid upon their country by the Treaty of Neuilly. The conditions of the Treaty were complied with as regards evacuation of territory, restoration of property and the sale of arms; by September 1921, Bulgaria had paid over £3¼ millions for the upkeep of the Inter-Allied troops and commissions established on Bulgarian territory. The total Reparation debt to be paid was £90 millions⁵⁴ but the annual budget of the state amounted to only £150 millions and in the budget estimates of March 1921, there was a deficit of £11 millions. In this situation, the Bulgarian government was unable to pay the £7 millions which were due in 1921 and was granted a moratorium until March 1922.⁵⁵

53. Ibid., p. 143.

54. Buchan, op. cit., p. 164. This debt was ultimately reduced to £22 millions, repayable over a period of sixty years.

55. Todorov, op. cit., p. 152.

However, Opposition deputies, hoping to discredit Stamboliski and overthrow the Agrarian government, produced a report claiming to show that Bulgaria could afford to pay her debt. The report was quite false and the deputies themselves knew that the country could not pay, but they took the report to Prince Livio Borghese, the Italian representative of the Reparation Committee in Sofia. Borghese, who was no friend of Stamboliski and had publicly condemned Dimitrov's attempts to suppress IMRO, sent the report to his superiors in Rome who took the matter up in Paris.⁵⁶ On August 21, 1921, the Reparation Commission in Paris revoked the moratorium and demanded the immediate payment of that year's instalment.

Stamboliski investigated the matter and when he discovered that Borghese was involved, he made a protest to Paris against members of the Commission interfering in Bulgaria's internal affairs.⁵⁷ Todorov himself was sent to Paris to explain the nature and extent of Italian influence in Bulgaria. After talks with M. Dupuis, the French representative on the Reparation Commission, and M. Berthelot, who was in touch with influential sectors of the French Press, Todorov had a private discussion with M. Millerand, the French President. Millerand was known to be a great friend of the Serbs⁵⁸ and Todorov knew from past experience that the French government favoured Yugoslav-Bulgarian collaboration.⁵⁹ In the course of his discussion, Todorov informed Millerand of the way Italy was using the Reparation issue to prevent an understanding between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Millerand replied that the Commission was afraid to make any concession on reparations for Bulgaria since this would establish a precedent for Germany. Todorov pointed out that Austria had had her debts cancelled but the French President felt that Bulgaria was more prosperous than Austria. Todorov made it clear that if the reparations were

56. Ibid., p. 153.

58. Ibid., p. 154.

57. Ibid., loc. cit.

59. Ibid., p. 143

demanded at this juncture, then Bulgaria's foreign policy towards Yugoslavia, which depended on this delicate economic position, would collapse.⁶⁰ Following his visit, Bulgarian reparations were postponed until June 1922 and Italian intrigues temporarily foiled.

In March 1922, the Bulgarian government had another budgetary deficit - this time, of £3¼ millions - and asked the Reparation Commission to grant a further moratorium on her debt. The Inter-Allied Commission in Sofia informed the Bulgarian government that a moratorium could only be granted on the condition that Bulgaria surrendered control of her customs, her state mines and her entire fiscal system. These conditions, demanded by a body consisting primarily of Italians, seemed tantamount to a surrender of national sovereignty and when a top-level Bulgarian delegation - including Stamboliski and Todorov - went to the International Economic Conference in Genoa in April 1922, they raised strong objections to the demands which had been made upon their country.⁶¹ The Conference was largely a failure because each country was out simply to seek a solution to its own problem and Bulgaria was no exception.

At the Genoa Conference, Italy made one further bid to secure economic advantages from Bulgaria's financial misfortune. Italy, who was the major source of Bulgaria's imports,⁶² was also due to receive 40% of the total reparation debt paid by Bulgaria.⁶³ Shortly before the Genoa Conference, Britain had

60. Ibid., p. 154.

61. Buchan, op. cit., p. 160.

62. Ibid., p. 181. Three principal origins of Bulgaria's imports (given in thousands of leva) were as follows:

	1919	1920
Italy	345,893	624,697
Turkey	146,995	408,466
United Kingdom	104,849	311,207

63. Allocation of Bulgarian reparations were: Italy, 40%; Britain 20%; France, 20%; the other Balkan states, 20%.

entrusted her 20% share of Bulgarian reparations to Italy, thus giving her a 60% claim. Leading figures in the Italian Foreign Office realized that this could help them to obtain economic domination over Bulgaria, such as they later obtained over Albania. During the Conference, Todorov was approached by Count Tosti di Valminuta, an Italian delegate, who told him that the fate of Bulgaria's reparations now depended on Italy. Italy was favourably disposed towards Bulgaria - indeed, all Italians loved the country - and they would be willing to accept a concession of the vast but unexploited Rila forest in lieu of her reparations payments.⁶⁴

Nothing came of this proposal but it serves to demonstrate the nature and objectives of Italian policy in the period, 1919-23. Italy wished to achieve territorial expansion in the Balkans - particularly along the Adriatic coast - but this desire was blocked by the new and independent Kingdom of Yugoslavia. If Italy were to succeed in her ambitions, it could only be at the expense of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Italian Foreign Office therefore embarked on a policy designed to weaken Yugoslavia from within and from without. Bulgaria was a natural ally for Italy; she was poor, weak and embittered by the Peace Treaty; all her richest lands had been annexed by her neighbours and she was burdened with heavy reparations which she could not pay. Yet she refused to co-operate with Italy and the offer of a military alliance was rejected. The Peasant leader, Stamboliski, had set himself the task of bringing Yugoslavia and Bulgaria together in a single South Slav state which would present an even greater obstacle to Italian expansion. Through reparations, through the subversive activities of IMRO and with the co-operation of those Bulgarians most willing to co-operate with her, Italy sought to destroy Stamboliski and his policies. For, if Stamboliski were overthrown, then the whole policy of rapprochement would

64. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 160-2.

collapse and Bulgaria and even more susceptible to
Italian influence.

Chapter 4.

Troubled Waters.

When Todorov returned from the Genoa Conference, he received a cool reception in Belgrade. For several weeks, there had been clashes between the comitadjis and the Yugoslav forces in South Serbia, and the unrest seemed to be growing. The use of terrorism and threats had already brought IMRO great dividends, for now "the Macedonian peasant was no longer sure that the enemy of today might not become the master of tomorrow!"¹ Such a state of mind gave intimidation a clear field. Yugoslav barracks were attacked by snipers, mail services were disrupted and the sub-prefect of Berovo and his wife were shot. Elsewhere there were minor skirmishes. Todorov's return from Genoa coincided with the death of a gendamerie captain and twelve soldiers. They had been killed by one of the most notorious comitadji bands, led by Jovan Brlo, and on the strength of this, martial law was proclaimed in South Serbia.² Todorov realized that the trend of events was likely to create a serious clash between the two countries and so he sent a long ciphered telegram to Stamboliaki, telling him of the mood in Belgrade and the need for immediate action to halt IMRO's operations.³

Stamboliski, who bitterly regretted the death of Dimitrov, agreed that firm measures were necessary and gave his Minister in Belgrade a carte blanche for any proposals he might make to the Yugoslav government. Heartened by his Prime Minister's

1. Dr. R.A. Reiss, The Comitadji Question in Southern Serbia, London, 1924, pp. 86-88.

2. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, p. 151.

3. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand, The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, p. 166.

support. Todorov wrote to Dr. Ninčić, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, suggesting a joint defence force of Bulgarian and Yugoslav officials to man the frontier.⁴ He proposed that the two sides should be linked by telephone and should contact each other if any comitadji band attempted to cross the frontier. If a group of comitadjis crossed the border and the Bulgarian post failed to notify the Yugoslav patrol, the local Bulgarian commander would be held responsible.⁵ The plan was by no means foolproof but it was a distinct improvement upon the existing arrangements which were lax and inefficient. On the following day, Todorov sent Ninčić a further note, proposing a conference between the two frontier commands. But he received no reply to either note.⁶

On June 8, 1922, a royal wedding took place in Belgrade, King Alexander marrying the Rumanian Princess Marie. Many of Europe's leading royal personages were present, including the monarchs of all the Balkan countries, with the exception of Bulgaria. King Boris had not left his country since his accession in 1918 and he appointed Todorov as his personal representative at the wedding. So conspicuous an absence could not but emphasize Bulgaria's isolation. King Alexander was plainly exasperated. Todorov records that when he handed over King Boris's letter, which contained "appropriate felicitations", Alexander gave vent to his feelings:

"Tell King Boris," he responded angrily, "I won't tolerate acts of banditry against my frontier any longer."

"I shall convey your Majesty's words to my sovereign," Todorov replied, "but I have the honour to advise you that I have already transmitted a note to your Foreign Minister

4. Ibid., loc. cit. The proposals were made on May 19, 1922.

5. L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass., 1944, p. 211.

6. Todorov., op. cit., loc. cit.

suggesting a plan to correct the situation."

The King did not appear to hear me. His eyes flashed with indignation. "My patience is exhausted," he said.⁷

Todorov did not immediately perceive the significance of the King's outburst until several days later when he was informed by Sofia that the Bulgarian Minister in Bucharest had been handed a joint ultimatum by Ion Duca - the Rumanian Foreign Minister. The ultimatum was issued in the name of Rumania, Yugoslavia and Greece and demanded that if Bulgaria did not destroy all organizations directed against the security of her neighbours and also give a satisfactory reply to this effect, then the three states would take upon themselves the task of restoring order in the Balkans.⁸ This was a clear indication that Bulgaria's three neighbours were considering a joint undertaking which might well include an invasion of Bulgaria and possibly the occupation of part of her territory.

Both Stamboliski and King Boris were alarmed by the ultimatum. Stamboliski told the King that if there were an invasion, he would resign his Premiership and lead the peasant resistance.⁹ This however proved unnecessary, for Todorov suggested that, since Bulgaria was now a member of the League of Nations, she should adopt Article 2 of the League Covenant and appeal against the ultimatum. The grounds for their appeal were that the joint ultimatum indicated the existence of a secret treaty directed against Bulgaria, a treaty hostile to the very spirit and letter of the Covenant.¹⁰ An appeal was made to the League Council who announced that they would examine the case in London in July. This gave Bulgaria one month's breathing space since the matter was now sub judice. Todorov returned to Sofia at the end of June and handed in his resignation as Minister in Belgrade, believing that whatever was the decision of the League Council, his mission to Yugoslavia

7. Ibid., p. 167.

8. Ibid., p. 168.

9. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit.

10. Todorov, op. cit., loc. cit.

had failed.¹¹

On his return, he found his Prime Minister a worried man. Bulgaria's diplomatic isolation and the prospect of invasion had shown him the poor state of his country's foreign policy. But internally matters were even less satisfactory. After the assassination of Dimitrov, Tomov, the former Minister of the Interior who had been persuaded to work with IMRO, became Minister of War. Whilst giving the impression of being hostile to the Organization, he continued to work secretly with them. Stamboliski was aware of his behaviour but was unable to break with him for fear of splitting and weakening the Agrarian party.¹² Outside the Sobranje, Stamboliski was faced with a vigorous and hostile Press campaign which dwelt with relish upon his personal vices. These attacks were not entirely unfounded. Perhaps the only comforting news in this difficult period was the message from the Reparation Commission which had recommended a further moratorium on Bulgaria's debts until March 1923.¹³

Having resigned his post in Belgrade, Todorov was appointed chief of the Bulgarian delegation to the July meeting of the League Council in London, at which Bulgarian objections to the ultimatum would be heard. Todorov told the League Council about IMRO activities in Bulgaria and how they had killed Dimitrov. He readily admitted that the comitadjis had made raids into Yugoslavia and said that Pašić was quite right to demand that the raids be stopped. He pointed out that he had already made proposals on this matter to Dr. Ninčić but had had no reply. In conclusion, he contested the right of Greece or Rumania to interfere with the matter since it concerned only Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The Council had no option but to accept the justice of the Bulgarian appeal. Titulescu, the Rumanian representative, made a conciliatory speech and the Council suggested that a direct settlement along the lines

11. Ibid. p. 169.

12. Ibid. loc. cit.

13. Ibid., loc. cit.

suggested by Todorov in May, should be negotiated between the two governments concerned. On August 18, 1922, a preliminary protocol was signed to this effect.¹⁴

Before his return to Sofia, Todorov received a telegram from Stamboliski asking him to go to Prague to see Dr. Beneš, the Czech Foreign Minister, and seek his help in getting a reconciliation with Yugoslavia. Beneš promised Bulgaria his help¹⁵ and Todorov returned home having successfully accomplished his mission but no longer holding any particular diplomatic post. In August 1922, Stamboliski invited him to lead the Bulgarian delegation to the League of Nations and he accepted. All his work to achieve a modus vivendi between the two South Slav nations seemed to have come to an impasse, but at Geneva he found that there had been a good deal of backstairs diplomacy. Beneš had spoken to Dr. Ninčić about him and Ninčić came to see Todorov and made a personal request that he would return to his post in Belgrade:

"When Stamboliski comes to Geneva," Ninčić told him, "I'll ask him to keep you in Belgrade. It's not only my personal wish but that of His Majesty King Alexander."¹⁶

In response to this royal invitation, Todorov withdrew his resignation and returned to his post in Belgrade. He found that during his absence there had been a thaw in the Yugoslav attitude. Some political leaders had begun to consider the possibility of a rapprochement with Bulgaria¹⁷ and the idea of a federation was once more in the air - even if only to curb Serbian hegemony within the new Yugoslav Kingdom. Father Korošec,

14. Ibid., p. 170.

15. Ibid., p. 171.

16. Ibid., p. 173.

17. L. Kezman, Constitution of the Neutral Republic of Croatia, Pittsburg, 1923, reports that at this time both the Agrarian and Communist parties favoured a closer relationship with Bulgaria. (Kezman was Secretary-General of the Yugoslav Agrarian Party from 1919-27).

a Roman Catholic priest and leader of the Slovene People's Party, wrote in his party's official organ, Novi Čas:

"The most salient question now facing our state is that of our relations with Bulgaria, because the Bulgarians belong to the national unity of the South Slav states. Without Bulgaria, we shall pursue only a great chauvinistic policy which will sooner or later lead us to isolation and catastrophe. That policy, espoused by the supporters of great Serbian dreams, is the real obstacle to the creation of a strong and united Jugoslavia. All Yugoslav people, independent of the Belgrade politicians, are thoroughly convinced that the security of our future existence as a State demands Union with Bulgaria, all the more since the Bulgarian nation today is fully prepared and qualified for it. We know that this question, left for solution to the Belgrade race alone, will never bring about our consolidation with the brave Bulgarian people. On that account, the whole Slovene and Croatian people should inscribe this demand upon its programme and should never rest until it has been realized. The future Jugoslavia of Serbs, Bulgarians, Croats and Slovenes will be the strongest state in Southern Europe. It will prove a great guarantee for the cultural development of Southern Jugoslavdom and one of the strong citadels for world peace."¹⁸

Although Korosec's views were coloured by the internal political tensions in Yugoslavia, he was not altogether unjustified in blaming the Belgrade politicians for not seizing the opportunity which Stamboliski presented. In the summer of 1922, Stamboliski suggested the establishment of a customs union between Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. But the Serbian politicians in particular were so afraid that such a union might deprive them of their supremacy in a Yugoslav federation that

18. Quoted by C. Stephanove, "Drifting towards a Yugoslav Federation", Current History, XV, (1922), p. 937.

they spurned the idea.¹⁹

Stamboliski's policy of friendship with Yugoslavia, together with his constant inability to produce any positive rapprochement made him a target for wide-ranging attacks by his opponents. At the same time that Stamboliski was attending the League of Nations in September 1922, there was an IMRO revolt at Trnovo. Stamboliski had known that the Opposition were planning a meeting at Trnovo for September 17 and also that the local Agrarian party had ordered a counter-demonstration at the same time and place. Before going abroad, he had banned both meetings but Raiko Daskalov, one of his Ministers, decided that it would cause less trouble to let them take place.²⁰ There were violent scenes at Trnovo and Athanas Bourov, one of the chief Opposition figures declared "We must annihilate the Agrarian criminals".²¹ Tomov, the Minister of War, who was playing a double role in this event, proceeded to arrest Opposition leaders and, disobeying Stamboliski's telegraphed orders to release them, threatened a referendum to decide their fate.²² Such action, although easily attributable to an over-zealous officialdom, was calculated to arouse further opposition against the Agrarian leaders. In October, as a demonstration of loyalty to the Government, the pro-Stamboliski Orange Guards came en masse to Sofia. They were an undisciplined body composed mainly of peasants and soon got out of hand, pillaging, robbing, and burning down the Radical Club. They sniped at the houses of Opposition leaders, danced in the

19. T.I. Geshkoff, Balkan Union. A Road to Peace in South-Eastern Europe, New York, 1940, p. 61.

20. Swire, op. cit., p. 154.

21. Ibid., p. 153.

22. Todorov, op. cit., p. 172. See also J. Buchan (Ed), Bulgaria and Romania. The Nations of Today Series, London, 1924, p. 162. The Opposition figures arrested included Danev, Malinov and Todorov (the Prime Minister from 1918-19 - not the Minister in Belgrade).

streets and were involved in numerous public brawls.²³ The demonstration did not help the reputation of the Agrarian Party. By November, IMRO had openly embarked upon guerrilla warfare against the government itself and Stamboliski was obliged to leave the Lausanne Conference to quell the unrest.²⁴ Despite their reputation, he decided to organize the Orange Guard a peasant militia which could defend the régime.²⁵

Such a force was desperately needed. On December 6, Alexandrov's supporters took control of the town of Kustendil by force and there were rumours in Sofia that a revolt against the Government was imminent. Loyal government troops were sent to Kustendil and Tomov ordered the insurgents to leave the town. Alexandrov's supporters demanded that pro-IMRO officials should be appointed in the Petrich District or they would march on the capital. Tomov gave way to their demands and the insurgents surrendered control of the town.²⁶ His action, which was taken in Stamboliski's absence and reluctantly endorsed by the Government to maintain its small majority in the Sobranje, gave IMRO a controlling influence in south-west Bulgaria which it retained until 1934. Within a few months, the Organization was levying its own taxes and enrolling all men of a military age. Soon it possessed its own militia, which consisted of 8,000 men. Todorov suggested that Stamboliski should overhaul his Cabinet, proclaim martial law, mobilize and arm the peasants and arrest all unreliable officers,²⁷ but Stamboliski, confident that a rapprochement with Yugoslavia would soon be made which would put an end to all these disturbances, did not take any immediate action.

Stamboliski believed that events in Italy, where Mussolini

23. Swire, op. cit., p. 154.

24. Todorov, op. cit., p. 179. The Lausanne Conference lasted from December 1922-February 1923.

25. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit. 26. Ibid., pp. 152-53.

27. Todorov, op. cit., loc. cit.

had recently come to power, would bring the two South Slav nations even more swiftly together. Before his march on Rome, Mussolini declared: "Fascism should become the watchful guardian of our foreign policy,"²⁸ and, in Yugoslavia, memories of D'Annunzio's 1919 attack on Fiume returned. Certainly, the appearance of Mussolini made little difference to Italian foreign policy. Soon after taking up office, he stated his intention of seeking a reparations' settlement and, early in 1923, through Prince Livio Borghese, he demanded that Bulgaria pay her reparation debt. If the Bulgarian government did not pay, he would introduce sanctions against the country and he cited the recent French occupation of the Ruhr as an example of what could happen to a country which defaulted in its payments. Mussolini hoped that Yugoslavia would co-operate with Italy in imposing sanctions on Bulgaria and proposed that Yugoslavia should seize her neighbour's customs and occupy the Pernik coalfields.²⁹ Had Yugoslavia responded to Mussolini's suggestion, all Stamboliski's work would have been in vain and both countries would have lost more than they would have gained. But Stamboliski believed that the Yugoslav leaders now saw the wisdom of his policy. When he went to Belgrade in November, he had lengthy talks with Pašić and Dr. Ninčić. He also had an audience with King Alexander. The King and he had got on well together and Alexander even teased him about his republican outlook. But the importance of the meeting lay in a remark by the King: "I believe," he said, "that an alliance between us is now possible."³⁰

Stamboliski and Todorov discussed Mussolini's demands and when Todorov returned from his consultations in Sofia, he pointed out to the Yugoslav government that if they yielded to Mussolini, only 5% of the reparations would go to Yugoslavia. Therefore, the only beneficiary of Mussolini's policy would be

28. C. Hibbert, Benito Mussolini, London, 1962, p. 90.

29. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 182-83. 30. Ibid., p. 173.

Italy herself, since she would get 40% of the reparations and destroy the prospect of good relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Todorov suggested that Mussolini's demands might well have been made to impede a reconciliation between them. The Yugoslav leaders agreed with this view and Pašić and Ninčić assured him that their troops would not be used against Bulgaria. They promised to seek similar assurances from Rumania. When, in March 1923, the Reparation Commission gave way to Italian pressure and ordered Bulgaria's neighbours to seize her customs and mines, Yugoslavia and Rumania refused.³¹ In the light of subsequent events and of accusations of Yugoslavian military aggression, it is important to remember that at this moment in 1923 when military action was legally sanctioned, Yugoslavia made no move against Bulgaria.

One of the results of Mussolini's policy was to show the urgent need of a Bulgaro-Yugoslav alliance for the mutual protection of the two Balkan states and the eventual solidarity of the whole peninsula against Fascist aggression. The Yugoslav government expressed its willingness to negotiate³² and the first step was clearly an early settlement of the border problems. Both governments agreed to hold a Conference at Niš at which military and police authorities from both countries could work out measures to safeguard their common frontier from IMRO activities.

The Niš Conference, which began in March 1923, lasted for a month. Yugoslavia was represented by M. Lazić, the director of the police department of the Ministry of the Interior, Colonel Ristić, Commandant of the Skopje gendamerie and M. Milčić, the Secretary of the Yugoslav legation in Sofia. Bulgaria too had three representatives; Colonel Neukov from the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior, Colonel Davidov, Commandant of the frontier troops and Colonel Petrov, formerly military attaché at Paris. The Conference agreed to a series of comprehensive

31. Ibid., pp. 183-84.

32. Ibid., p. 182.

measures to improve border control on both sides of the frontier. Dr. Reiss has given a summary of the decisions which were made at Niš:

"Along the frontier to a depth of 100 metres on each side, all forests will be cleared and the free space planted with low-growing plants. The Yugoslav and Bulgarian frontier patrols in difficult country may use routes that in places cross the frontier. Springs on both sides may be used by the frontier guards of both countries. Liaison will be maintained between the officers and patrols of the two States. The Bulgarian government will complete the organization of its authorities in the districts of Petrich, Kustendil and Gorna Djoumaia. To this end, it will transfer from the frontier and neighbouring regions all officials compromised in the activities of the comitadjis. It will also remove from the frontier all refugees and deserters from the Yugoslav Army. In general, it will use every means to prevent the formation of bands and their passage over the frontier. It will prevent propaganda in their favour. It undertakes to consider any person who takes part in the organization and action of the comitadjis, or who abets the latter in any way whatsoever, thus involving State responsibility, as falling under the penalties of the criminal law. Both parties make a reciprocal agreement for the extradition of criminals. The Yugoslav government will take into consideration a request made by the Bulgarian Commission for amnesty for the refugees. Refugees can return and the Yugoslav government will facilitate their return. A further Commission will discuss the measures to prevent propaganda and the formation of bands. This second Commission will meet at Sofia."³³

It is noteworthy that at the Niš Conference, the Bulgarian

33. Reiss, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

delegates formally admitted that the comitadji bands were formed on Bulgarian territory and crossed into Yugoslavia.³⁴ The decisions of the Niš Conference were signed by the two delegations on April 25, and ratified by the Bulgarian government.³⁵ It was agreed that the decisions would come into force on May 12, 1923,³⁶ but the coup d'état in Bulgaria and the overthrow of Stamboliski came so quickly after the ratification of the Niš agreement that the decisions made were never carried out and the Second Conference at Sofia never took place.³⁷

The Niš Conference can rightly be regarded as the high-water mark in Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations in the period 1918-41. Never again did the prospect of a rapprochement seem so close, nor the desire for friendship so great. The bitterness of war had been erased - at least from the diplomatic memory - and the Agrarian policy of goodwill and conciliation had paved the way for a genuine settlement. At the time of the Niš agreement, Stamboliski told a friend:

"I only need a few more years to break down all the existing barriers between the Serbs and ourselves. Believe me, in due course, there will be no frontiers between the two States....."³⁸

On his way to a League meeting in Geneva in May 1923, Todorov met Nincić and arranged plans for a military alliance between their two countries. It was proposed that the plans be kept secret so as to prevent any hostile reaction from Italy. Two officials, Colonel Neukov from Bulgaria and General Pešić of Yugoslavia were appointed to work out the details and it was agreed that when the alliance was concluded, Yugoslavia would ask France to allow military equipment to be despatched to Bulgaria under the guise of supplies for the Yugoslav

34. Swire, op. cit., pp. 158-59. 36. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit.

35. Reiss, op. cit., loc. cit. 37. Reiss, op. cit., loc. cit.

38. M. Padev, Escape from the Balkans, London, 1943, p. 68.

arsenal.³⁹ But events in Bulgaria destroyed the prospect of an alliance and, like the decisions at Niš, no practical steps were ever taken.

When, in January, it was known that Stamboliski had agreed with Yugoslavia to take joint action against the comitadjis, IMRO made plans to wreck the chances of an agreement by provoking the Yugoslavs to reprisals which would cause anger in Sofia.⁴⁰ On January 16, a major attack was made on the Macedonian village of Kadrifakovo. In the attack, 17 of the population were bayoneted to death and six others seriously injured. Houses and stables were burnt and livestock driven away, the total damage being assessed at 188,585 dinars.⁴¹ Later, during the Conference itself, another major raid was made, this time upon the village of Dolani. A sub-prefect and seven policemen were killed and Yugoslav troops pursued the comitadjis to Garvan and shelled their emplacement. In this incident, twenty-eight Bulgarian terrorists were killed. As IMRO had hoped, the event provoked a large demonstration in Sofia with fiery speeches, black banners and demonstrators denouncing Yugoslavia and demanding Macedonian autonomy.⁴²

On March 17, 1923, Stamboliski proclaimed martial law in the Petrich district. This belated attempt to restore the authority of the Bulgarian government did not please the Organization. Alexandrov, who had returned to Bulgaria despite the order for his arrest, declared the District autonomous and threatened all his opponents with death. An assassin was sent to Sofia to kill Stamboliski but the man was caught and the conspiracy discovered. House-to-house searches were organized in Sofia and the leaders of the Macedonian Immigrants were interned. These measures were highly successful except in the Petrich District where loyal troops were repelled by IMRO's

39. Todorov, op. cit., p. 187. See also Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 211.

40. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit.

41. Reiss, op. cit., pp. 105-6. 42. Swire, op. cit., p. 158.

private militia.⁴³

In March, Stamboliski decided to repeat the electoral manoeuvre he had used in 1920 to secure a greater majority for the Agrarian party in the Sobranje. He believed that the rapprochement with Yugoslavia and the change to proportional representation would work in his favour. The results certainly vindicated his optimism, for in the elections which were held on April 22, 1923, the Agrarians gained 212 of the 245 parliamentary seats.⁴⁴ Such a success was not obtained without the use of unscrupulous methods by determined government supporters. The Agrarian party of 1923 was undisciplined, corruption was rife, criticism was not tolerated and many official posts were held by peasants some of whom were incompetent and some even illiterate.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the elections showed an increase in popular support for Stamboliski. After the elections, he was virtually dictator of Bulgaria. Rather unwisely, he allowed rumours to circulate that the "Tzartcheto" would now be deprived of some of his prerogatives and there was speculation whether he would now declare Bulgaria a republic.⁴⁶

For all those who were opposed to Stamboliski, the elections were the deciding factor. There was no chance of defeating the Agrarian leader in a constitutional manner since he had the massive and inalienable support of the peasantry. The only alternative was a coup d'état.

Plans for the overthrow of the government had been continuing for some time. There had been the Trnovo affair in September 1922 and the seizure of Kustendil in December. Two months later, there was open opposition to Stamboliski

43. Ibid., p. 159.

44. Ibid., p. 156. The results were; Agrarians 212
Communists 16
Others 17.

45. Ibid., loc. cit.

46. Ibid., loc. cit.

from within his own Cabinet and Tomov was somewhat belatedly dismissed.⁴⁷ Early in 1923, there had been plans to make an immediate attack on the government but on January 15, six days before the coup was due to take place, Stamboliski visited the Sofia Military Club. Here he met Colonel Ivan Volkov, one of the leading conspirators and head of the Map Division in the Bulgarian War Office. When introduced to him, Stamboliski is reported to have said "So you are the Colonel Volkov who wants to overthrow me!"⁴⁸ After this, the January coup came to nothing. On February 4, a bomb was thrown into the box at the National Theatre where Stamboliski and five Ministers were sitting, The Ministers left the box before the explosion and the King, who was sitting in a box opposite, congratulated his Prime Minister on his escape.⁴⁹ Six days later, the National Theatre was burnt to the ground. It was discovered that Tomov, the ex-Minister of War, and two conspirators had been plotting a second coup and the burning of the Theatre was to be the signal for the operation. It has been said that King Boris disapproved of Tomov's activities - or, at least, preferred Stamboliski to him - and, before the coup was launched, summoned Stamboliski to the palace and warned him of what was afoot.⁵⁰ In March, the Soviet Red Cross was allowed to set up an office in Sofia for the repatriation of those who genuinely wished to return to Russia. 4,000 took advantage of the offer but the remaining 36,000 misconstrued Stamboliski's action. They believed that he was intending to establish diplomatic relations with Russia and was "hand in glove" with the Bolsheviks. They immediately entered into negotiations with the Opposition and promised to raise several regiments in the event of there being a coup or revolution against Stamboliski.⁵¹

47. Todorov, op. cit., p. 184.

49. Ibid., p. 155.

48. Swire, op. cit., pp. 156-57.

50. Ibid., pp. 155-56.

51. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 184-85.

Two days after the election, Alexander Tsankov, a professor of Political Economy at Sofia University,⁵² had a private discussion with Dimo Kazazov - a Socialist journalist who had great influence with the Sofia Press. Tsankov had formerly been a socialist who supported the idea of a Balkan confederation under the aegis of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By this time, he was a determined opponent of the Prime Minister and the policies he stood for. Now, with the Macedonian Organization, the Opposition leaders, dismissed Agrarian ministers, White Russians and opponents of the pro-Yugoslav policy, a "Military League" had been set up. The only common object of the League was the overthrow of Stamboliski and Tsankov asked Kazazov whether he would join the conspiracy. Kazazov thought the matter over for a fortnight and joined the League on May 8.⁵³ Other figures, who were later to play an important part in Bulgarian history, also took part in the coup - Colonel Volkov, Kimon Gheorgiev, Damian Velchev and Ivan Mihailov. Mihailov, a 27 year old Macedonian,⁵⁴ was the main contact between IMRO and the conspirators in Sofia. The Macedonian Organization had passed its death sentence on Stamboliski on March 3,⁵⁵ but Alexandrov was anxious to delay the coup until July when the peasants would be getting in their harvest. Mihailov, however, did not take much notice of Alexandrov's opinion and began to hire men to take part in the conspiracy.⁵⁶ On June 5, it was decided that the coup d'état

52. Tsankov was born at Orehovo in 1879. He was educated in Germany and remained pro-German throughout the inter-war period.

53. Swire, op. cit., pp. 159-60. 54. Mihailov was born at Shtip in 1896. He was educated at Salonika and also at the Serbian High School at Skopje. During the Bulgarian occupation, he was a taxation clerk at Shtip. He joined IMRO in 1920.

55. S. Christowe, Heroes and Assassins, London, 1935, p. 164.

56. Swire, op. cit., pp. 160-61.

would take place four days later - on June 9.⁵⁷

After all the signs of recent months, Stamboliski was fully aware of the impending coup. Indeed, he is reported to have had premonitions of his assassination.⁵⁸ Muraviev, his nephew knew of all the preparations and even the names of some of the conspirators, but did nothing.⁵⁹ In April, a Colonel Lichev of the Sofia Garrison came to Todorov to tell him of the conspiracy that was being formed. Lichev told Todorov that if he was given authority he could crush it and together they went to see Muraviev. The latter listened to them but still did nothing.⁶⁰ It would have been easy to have proclaimed martial law but even this was neglected. One writer, who examined the background of the events of June 1923, stated "Criminal negligence was the Government's undoing."⁶¹

On June 1, Stamboliski retired to his farm at Slavovitsa to prepare changes in the constitution. It seems likely that these changes did involve some reduction in royal prerogative and King Boris visited him at his farm on June 7.⁶² No record of this meeting exists. Two days later, early in the morning of June 9, the coup d'état took place. The Agrarian ministers who were in the capital were arrested⁶³ and, after six hours of indecision, King Boris agreed to make Professor Tsankov Prime Minister of a new government.⁶⁴ At Slavovitsa, the

57. Ibid., p. 162.

59. Ibid., loc. cit.

58. Ibid., loc. cit.

60. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 186-7.

61. A. Radolov, The Plot of June 9, Sofia 1931.

62. Swire, op. cit., p. 162.

63. Several ministers escaped. Obov fled to Rumania, Daskalov to Prague. Todorov, who was in Prague at the time, sent a letter of loyalty to the fallen government and resigned his post.

64. Swire, op. cit., p. 163. Cf. also, N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi, Uppsala, 1952, p. 220.

Orange Guards put up a strong resistance to the units sent to capture Stamboliski but he was caught on June 13. On the following day, he was taken back to his home at Slavovitsa and made to dig his grave. His ears were then cut off and also the hands which signed the Niš Convention."⁶⁵ Finally, Stamboliski was shot and his body dismembered.

The death of Stamboliski is one of the most tragic events in Bulgarian history. At a time when so much was being achieved, the principal architect of the South Slav friendship was destroyed and his government overthrown. Although the pro-Yugoslavian policy was only one of the causes of the coup d'état, it was this which had most embittered the Macedonian Organization. IMRO had been one of the most powerful elements in the conspiracy, and in the post-Agrarian Bulgaria, it exercised a power and influence out of all proportion to its size. No longer was it subject to the government in Sofia; no longer was it constrained by the Niš agreement. With Stamboliski gone, the whole process of rapprochement came to an end. The South Slav cause had lost one of its greatest advocates and gained a "martyr".

65. Ibid., pp. 167-68.

Chapter 5.

The Frontier Question.

The Great Powers regarded the coup d'état as an internal question and felt that since King Boris had recognized the Tsankov administration, the latter must be considered the legal government of Bulgaria. Towards Yugoslavia, Tsankov showed an initial desire to continue Stamboliski's policy of conciliation. Several Macedonian newspapers were temporarily suspended and diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored on June 29.¹ Nevertheless:

"The new administration became very friendly with IMRO. The Macedonians breathed with relief. The new Cabinet practically ceded the Petrich district to IMRO and the eleven parliamentary votes which represented the district went solidly behind the Administration. In other words, the new government and the Macedonians tacitly co-operated and everyone seemed to be satisfied, everyone that is, except the Agrarians, the emigrés, the Communists, the Serbs, the Greeks, France, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, and a few others."²

Following the coup the headquarters of IMRO at Sofia were the premises of the Macedonia-Adrianople Volunteers. The Volunteers, most of whom were already members of the Organization, were ostensibly an association for veteran soldiers but were in fact the young officers and N.C.O.s of the "Volunteer Division", which had been particularly notorious in Serbia during the

1. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, p. 174.

2. S. Christowe, Heroes and Assassins, London, 1935, pp. 162-3. Although on the whole Christowe writes seriously, he occasionally puts over his point with some humour. Throughout his book, his sympathies remain with the Macedonian Organization.

war.³ By having their headquarters at this office in the very heart of Sofia, Mihailov and Alexandrov were assured of being in constant touch with Colonel Volkov, who now became Minister of War. In July 1923, government representatives and some of Alexandrov's senior lieutenants met at a secret conference to plan future IMRO operations in Southern Serbia. To finance these operations, the Government provided the Organization with 30 million leva.⁴

During June, Erlo and other comitadji leaders once more crossed the border into Yugoslavia and resumed their activities. During the summer, there was a steep increase in the number of incidents. On June 20, 115 comitadjis attacked a platoon of 62 police and killed 15 of them. In September, the mayor of Radja (near Gevghele) was hung and bayoneted, and in the village of Svadritse, a Moslem was hung with a notice attached to his body, saying: "So perish all traitors to the Bulgarian organization in Macedonia."⁵ The examples are legion.

Shortly after the coup d'état, Todorov was approached by Colonel Kalfov, the new Bulgarian foreign minister, who offered

3. Swire, op. cit., pp. 169-71. In Bulgaria, many "sporting and cultural organizations" were set up as a cover for paramilitary formations. For instance, in a country of few bicycles, there was an 18,000 strong Cyclist's Association and a Hunter's Association with 55,000 members. In June 1927, following surreptitious rearmament by Volkov, the Entente Representatives of the Liquidation Board stated that Bulgaria was evading the military clauses of the Treaty of Neuilly and had never annulled the statute enacting compulsory military service. Despite this, G. Desbons, La Bulgarie après le Traité de Neuilly, Paris, 1930, p. 248, states: "To be honest, Bulgaria has respected the Treaty of Neuilly. Being a new nation, a peasant nation, she is not militarist and lacks the military spirit. She detests the military tradition." 4. Swire, ibid., p. 174. 5. R.A. Reiss, The Comitadji Question in Southern Serbia, London, 1924, pp. 105-8.

him the post of Minister Plenipotentiary in Paris, with especial reference to propaganda in Yugoslavia and France.⁶ Kalfov told the former Minister in Belgrade that Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations had been getting too close of late and he would prefer to see a more pro-Italian policy. Todorov refused the offer⁷ and joined Obov and Daskalov who had formed a Revolutionary Committee in Prague to work against the "Bulgarian Dictatorship."⁸ Ever since the coup there had been large numbers of refugees crossing from Bulgaria into Yugoslavia and Daskalov suggested that Todorov go back to Belgrade and make arrangements with the Yugoslav government for their food and shelter. Todorov agreed to do this and went to Belgrade, where he received great sympathy from political leaders. The latter were recalling Stamboliski's words in 1915 and his unrelenting efforts to bring the two South Slav nations together. King Alexander, with whom he had an audience, declared that he was sorry that the moment of success for their work had been forestalled. Moreover, Pašić told him that the peasantry would one day reverse the decision.⁹ After seeing the King and Pašić, Todorov busied himself with arranging refugee camps and organizing the exiles - many of whom were members of the Agrarian and Communist parties - into a fighting force, 4,000 strong. Companies of exiles were then placed near the frontier so that their

6. On the eve of the coup, Nikola Milev had been chosen as prospective foreign minister by the conspirators but because of his overt IMRO connections and the effect this might have on Yugoslavia, Kalfov was chosen instead. Milev became head of IMRO's Committee for Politics and Propaganda. He was shot, February 13, 1925.

7. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand. The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, pp. 194-95. Kalfov tried to blackmail Todorov into accepting the post by detaining his wife in Sofia. 8. Ibid., p. 197. Daskalov was killed by IMRO in Prague on August 27, 1923, 9. Ibid., p. 194.

couriers could pass into Bulgaria, doing the work of the Revolutionary Committee. Each company was superintended by a military commander directly under Todorov's control.¹⁰

Within Bulgaria, the new government foresaw the possibility of a peasant revolt and decided to take the initiative. In the second week of September, 3,000 Army officers and IMRO leaders attended a Congress near Rila. The meeting and the sentiments expressed gave the impression that a serious clash between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria was being planned. The Yugoslav government, hearing of the Congress, promptly concentrated large numbers of troops on the border to resist any incursion.¹¹ But in fact the Congress was merely a cover for the attack which the Tsankov government was about to launch on the enemies of the régime. This began on September 12. Claiming that the Communists had planned a revolution for mid-September, Professor Tsankov ordered the arrest of large numbers of Agrarians, Communists and other supporters of Stamboliski. The arrests provoked a violent reaction, as had been expected. On September 20, the Communists retaliated with a major revolt. The lack of planning or co-ordination in their uprising would seem to gainsay the truth of any conspiracy, for the rebels had no rifles, artillery or machine guns.¹² They did not even have the support of the Agrarians, who refrained from taking up arms until September 23.¹³ By then, the rising had spread over most of north-west Bulgaria and Volkov proclaimed martial law. Macedonian bands roamed the countryside, reservists were mobilized and the White Russians were given arms. Within a week these forces had overcome all organized resistance and Dimitrov and Kolarov with 2,000 armed peasants fled to Belgrade where they joined forces with the Revolutionary Committee.¹⁴ Following the uprising, a bitter civil war raged

10. Ibid., p. 197.

11. Swire, op. cit., p. 174.

12. Ibid., p. 175.

13. Ibid., loc. cit.

14. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 196-97.

within Bulgaria and many atrocities were reported. The total number killed has never been established but estimates have ranged from 10-20,000.¹⁵ Many ministers in the Sofia government were horrified by the outrages and two resigned. Nevertheless, the Tsankov government had achieved its goal; peasant resistance to the régime had been ruthlessly suppressed and in the elections held on November 18, 1923, Tsankov's Coalition party, "The Democratic Entente", won 199 out of the 247 seats in the Sobranje.¹⁶

With such a government in power in Sofia, it was inevitable that relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria should rapidly deteriorate. In November 1923, a Yugoslav delegation came to Sofia to arrange for the repatriation of those Macedonians who had not been connected with the Revolutionary Organization. This had been one of the agreements made by the delegates at Niš. These negotiations were resented in Sofia and a physical attack was made on the Yugoslav military attaché and his orderly. The Yugoslav government demanded an apology. Bulgaria apologized with reluctance but said that the assailants could not be found.¹⁷ After the Yugoslav delegation had returned to Belgrade, Tsankov declared in a speech: "Macedonia has the right to liberty and justice..... We demand what belongs to us."¹⁸ His speech evoked protests from Greece and Yugoslavia and Tsankov hurriedly explained that his speech had been wrongly transmitted. Belgrade was not very impressed by his excuses since Alexandrov, still wanted for war-crimes in Serbia, was living freely in Sofia and was even reported to be conferring with King Boris.¹⁹

Early in 1924, following a rumour that Alexandrov was

15. Ibid., p. 197. Todorov states that 17,000 died; Swire, op. cit., p. 176-77, suggests 10-17,000; S.G. Evans, A Short History of Bulgaria, London, 1960, p. 161, estimates 20,000 killed.

16. Swire, op. cit., p. 177.

18. Swire, op. cit., p.179.

17. Reiss, op. cit., pp. 39-40. 19. Ibid., loc. cit.

concentrating 10,000 men for a great offensive in April and following two more attacks on the Yugoslav Military attaché, the Yugoslav authorities began to take stronger defensive measures in South Serbia. Frontier villages were armed against the raiders and more police were drafted into the region. An ex-comitadji leader defected to Yugoslavia and gave useful advice on how to organize the frontier against enemy incursions.²⁰ Abroad, the Belgrade government made it known that if Bulgaria continued to harbour revolutionary bands on her territory, it disclaimed all responsibility for the consequences. The justification for the Yugoslav attitude was clear. Between 1919-1934, there were 467 major outrages in South Serbia involving the deaths of 706 Yugoslav officials and civilians.²¹ Furthermore, the whole process of daily life was disrupted in Yugoslav Macedonia:

"Alexandrov made a good job of organizing his border districts. He had established a courier service and issued stamps bearing either his head or a map of Macedonia. Quite often, peasants were inveigled into paying tax and those who disobeyed or complained to the Yugoslav authorities were likely to find their houses on fire or else they disappeared. Corpses by the wayside warned the truculent. A woman's body, hanging from a tree, a slip of paper pinned to it reading: 'We have killed you by order of the great Alexandrov because you disobeyed the Organization' - such sights struck terror. In three years, raiders murdered 100 people in the Strumica district alone. Sometimes, Macedonian officials in Yugoslav service

20. Ibid., p. 180.

21. Ibid., p. 43. The statistics were as follows:

1923 - 51 outrages.	1926 - not available.
1924 - 74 outrages	1927 - 61 outrages.
1925 - 55 outrages.	1928 - 10 outrages.

were threatened or bribed into collaboration and were put at the head of local organizations, which well-to-do peasants often joined to save their riches and lives from the bands."²²

One Macedonian, a grocer, told Dr. Reiss: "If we tell the authorities, we risk being killed by the Bulgars; if we don't tell them, we risk going to prison."²³ Many chose the latter course. When, later in the year, Dr. Reiss wrote his study of the comitadji question in Southern Serbia, he observed that:

"Up to the present time, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes has been long-suffering for the sake of peace. However, since the activities of the comitadjis in South Serbia amounts not only to a breach of the Treaty of Neuilly but rather an act of war, nobody can deny the Kingdom the right to reply to this act of war by an act which suffices to put a stop to it. The Bulgarian government pretend that they cannot prevent the comitadjis from crossing the frontier because, as they say, they have not enough soldiers. However, the active comitadjis, ie. those who cross the frontier, are estimated to be 5-7,000 in number. Bulgaria with her army was able to overcome the partisans of Stamboliski, who were at least 200,000 in number; how is it that she cannot settle with 5-7,000 comitadjis? The fact is that she does not want to."²⁴

But the revival of IMRO activity after the 1923 coup produced such a strong reaction²⁵ that there was a serious convulsion within the Organization itself. The concentration of

22. Ibid., p. 171.

23. Reiss, op. cit., p. 123.

24. Ibid., pp. 127-28.

25. The Yugoslavs moved troops up to the border after the rumours of Alexandrov's attack. At the same time, IMRO was busily collecting funds and even American citizens of Macedonian origin were bullied for money until the U.S.A. threatened to break off diplomatic relations.

Yugoslav troops in Southern Serbia and the arming of Macedonian peasants to resist the comitadji bands, had made the prospect of a Bulgarian "liberation" of Macedonia somewhat unrealistic. IMRO looked for fresh support and, in October 1923, Alexandrov hinted that he had a few surprises in store for the Yugoslav government.²⁶ Principal among these was an alliance with the Communist Party.

After the uprising of September 1923 and its severe atrocities, the Russian leaders of the Communist movement decided that a genuine Communist revolution in Bulgaria - the most suitable place in the Balkans - could not succeed if was opposed by IMRO. During the winter months of 1923-24, there were conversations between the two sides.²⁷ Alexandrov realized that both they and the Communists were opposed to the Triune Kingdom and remembered that, in the 1920 Yugoslav elections, there had been massive support for the Communist candidates in Southern Serbia.²⁸ Protogerov, who had had fresh thoughts about the objectives of the Organization, was disturbed by the collaboration between IMRO and Volkov during the September revolt. He felt that IMRO's resources had been exploited and declared that the Organization must remain independent. Common interest drew the two sides together.²⁹

In March 1924, Alexandrov and Protogerov went to Vienna and conferred with representatives of the Third International.³⁰ On April 29, as a result of their discussions, Chaoulev, Protogerov and Alexandrov signed a "Declaration of Policy", pledging themselves to work for an autonomous Macedonia within a Balkan

26. Swire, op. cit., p. 180. 27. Christowe, op. cit., p. 175.

28. See above, chapter 3, p. 56. The Communists secured 58 of the 419 seats in the Constituent Assembly. Following a bomb attack on Prince (later King) Alexander and the subsequent assassination on July 21, 1921 of Drasković, the Minister of the Interior, the Communist party were banned and remained so until 1941.

29. Swire, op. cit., p. 184. 30. Christowe, op. cit., pp. 176-8.

Federation.³¹ This did not mean any respite for the Yugoslav government. Indeed, the declaration committed the Macedonian Organization to collaborate with other European revolutionary movements and to resist the "imperialist designs" of the Greek, Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments on Macedonia. A "Manifesto to the Macedonian Nation," embodying these decisions, was signed on May 5, 1924 and appeared in the first edition of Fédération balkanique - a new magazine sponsored jointly by IMRO and the Communists - on July 22, 1924.³²

When the Manifesto which urged a federal solution to Macedonia appeared in print, there was something approaching panic in Bulgarian official quarters. Newspapers publishing the Manifesto were confiscated and government troops in the Petrich district were re-inforced. During June and July, several supporters of the Manifesto suffered sudden and mysterious deaths.³³ Alexandrov, naturally disturbed by the loss of some of his closest colleagues, announced that he would institute investigations into their deaths at the 6th. General Congress of the Organization to be held at Lopovo on September 1. However, on the eve of the Congress, whilst he was on the way to Lepovo, Alexandrov was shot by "unknown assassins". When the news of his death was released on September 16, it was stated that he had been killed at "Yugoslav instigation."³⁴ The fact that the principal beneficiary of Alexandrov's death was Ivan Mihailov would seem to cast some doubt on this allegation. For the next ten years, Mihailov excused much of his feuding in Bulgaria by declaring that he was "pursuing and punishing Alexandrov's murderers."³⁵ But these feuds amounted to nothing less than a thorough purge of all those who believed

31. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit.

32. L. S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. . A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass., 1944, p. 218.

33. Swire, op. cit., pp. 186-87.

34. Christowe, op. cit., pp. 180-88. 35. Swire, op. cit., p. 188.

in a federal solution for Macedonia, the Communists included. On September 12, at Gorna Djoumaia, many key supporters of the Vienna Manifesto were massacred and the hunt for the rest continued for several months. Chaoulev, one of the architects of the Vienna Manifesto, declared that it was the Bulgarian Government that had instigated this purge of IMRO's federalist supporters.³⁶ His allegation has never been denied. On December 23, 1924, Chaoulev was shot in Milan. His assassin, tried by an Italian Court, in April 1926, was acquitted.³⁷

The Revolutionary Committee in Prague and Belgrade were ready to take advantage of this unrest. The September revolt had increased the number of armed exiles to over 6,000. Most of these men had bitter memories and were determined to seek vengeance on the régime which they abhorred. Between October 1923 and April 1925, there were at least 32 raids by these exiles and, as from June 1924, Zemledelsko Zname, an official publication of the Agrarian party was published in Belgrade urging revolution in Bulgaria.³⁸ Imitating IMRO and with the connivance of the local Yugoslav authorities, the exiles crossed into Bulgaria to provoke unrest and spread propaganda against the Tsankov government. The raids were contrary to Todorov's wishes for they brought cautionary warnings from Ninčić,

36. Ibid., p. 192. Peter Chaoulev was a member of IMRO's Action Committee. He was also one of those wanted by the Yugoslav government for war crimes. In the first list of 1,662, he had been no. 1369; on the list of 500, no. 409. He was accused of executions, flogging and pillage at Buchie. Cf. Reiss, op. cit., pp. 41-45.

37. Chaoulev's assassin, Stefan Dimitrov, left Bulgaria in September 1924. The verdict of the Italian Court acquitted him because "he killed a Communist by order of IMRO under the menace of death if he failed." Dimitrov returned to Sofia in triumph. Swire, op. cit., p. 192.

38. C.J. Logio, Bulgaria, Past and Present, Manchester, 1936, p. 453.

Yugoslavia's Foreign Minister, and also impeded the surprise insurrection for which Todorov was working.³⁹ Unfortunately, the Revolutionary Committee was by no means united and two former Agrarian Ministers, Athanassov and Stoyanov, who had escaped from prison in August 1924 and fled to Belgrade, divulged the Committee's plans to Genov, a Communist agent. This led to Communist preparations in Bulgaria designed to produce an uprising before the Agrarian-planned conspiracy could take place.⁴⁰ But neither these preparations nor the Agrarian conspiracy were wholly under way when three major events took place in Bulgaria.

The first, on April 14, 1925, was an attack on King Boris. It was not deliberately directed against the King. Todorov reported that a peasant group led by Tumangelov, which had been engaged in guerilla warfare with Volkov's troops for two years, were on their way out of Bulgaria. Before crossing the frontier, they saw a car of armed men travelling along the road and made a superficial attack upon it.⁴¹ The attack, however, made a profound impression upon King Boris who was travelling in the car. On the same day, General Konstantin Gheorgiev, Chief of Military Justice in Bulgaria, was assassinated in Sofia. Two days later, a funeral service was held in his honour in the Sveta Nedelja Cathedral. During the service, a bomb exploded in the cathedral, killing 128 and injuring several hundred. Among the dead were the Mayor of Sofia, fourteen generals and the Chief of Police.⁴² There was an immediate public outcry and the Communist Party were blamed for the explosion. Although the incident may have been of Communist instigation, it has been suggested that the Cathedral Bomb plot was in fact an earlier version of the Reichstag fire

39. Todorov, op. cit., p. 218. The Bulgarian government put a 2 million leva ransom on Todorov's head.

40. Ibid., p. 220

41. Ibid., p. 222.

42. Swire, op. cit., p. 198.

and that General Volkov, the Minister for War, was responsible for it.⁴³ Whether or not this true, the incident provided him with an excellent opportunity to suppress all opposition to the régime. Martial law was proclaimed, large numbers of Agrarians and Communists were arrested and 300 condemned to death.⁴⁴ These three events proved extremely fortunate for the régime since they disrupted plans for the Agrarian and Communist insurrections and the purge of Agrarian sympathizers was so thorough that the Revolutionary Committee lost many of its internal contacts within Bulgaria and the Committee was formally dissolved in May 1925.⁴⁵

Whatever the personal position of General Volkov, the attitude of the Tsankov government towards the post-Alexandrov IMRO was one of anxiety. During the winter of 1924-25, there were no fewer than 200 political murders in Bulgaria and the Cathedral incident had caused alarm within the Army cadre. There was mutiny in a frontier garrison and talk of a mass IMRO attack on Tsaribrod, which provoked a severe warning from Yugoslavia.⁴⁶ Then, in October 1925, IMRO operations provoked the Greek government to send troops into the Petrich district. Bulgaria appealed to the League of Nations. The League told the Greek forces not to intervene and ordered them to withdraw their forces. A League Commission under Sir Horace Rumbold found that Greece had violated the League Covenant and the Athens government was obliged to pay Bulgaria 30 million leva as compensation.⁴⁷ A scheme for the League's supervision of the

43. Ibid., p. 199.

44. Ibid., loc. cit. A series of 81 trials were held. Apart from the condemned, a further 611 were imprisoned.

45. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 223-24. Nevertheless, in March 1926, Obov, Todorov, Athanasov and Stoyanov were tried in their absence. They were charged with organizing bands against the Tsankov régime and were condemned to death by hanging.

46. Swire, op. cit., p. 198. 47. £45,000 (at 1924-5 values).

Graeco-Bulgarian frontier was set up but this did not apply to the Yugoslav-Bulgarian frontier where there had been many more incidents.⁴⁸ Tsankov and Kalfov, who feared that Yugoslavia might follow Greece's example,⁴⁹ and overthrow the régime, decided to improve relations. Already, there had been some contact. Professor Tsankov had visited Belgrade in December 1924 and Kalfov in May 1925.⁵⁰ In September 1925, Tsankov met Pašić in Geneva, after making some gestures of goodwill including the arrest of several agitators and the dismissal of two district governors for belonging to IMRO.⁵¹ In December, there were rumours in Sofia that Tsankov was planning a customs union with Yugoslavia. At the same time, Kalfov declared that the Bulgarian people as a whole desired friendship with Yugoslavia. "Belgrade," he said, "has understood us and that is enough for us."⁵²

This abrupt change in the policy of the Bulgarian government produced an immediate reaction. Both King Boris and General Volkov disliked the new outlook and the King had private consultations with Andrew Liapchev, a pro-Italian politician.⁵³ Within a fortnight, there was strong agitation against Professor Tsankov and he was publicly blamed for all the repressive

48. Swire, op. cit., pp. 201-3. The Greek troops occupied the Petrich district for 8 days, from October 21 and 29. Previously, relations between Greece and Bulgaria had been comparatively good. Kalfov and Politis had signed a Convention for the Protection of the minorities of both countries on March 24, 1924. However, this treaty was never ratified. Cf. A. Toshev, The Bulgarian-Serbian Dispute, Sofia, 1932, pp. 74-75.

49. Worries that Yugoslavia might follow Greece's example were caused by the Yugoslav-Greek Treaty of Friendship which was signed on August 17, 1926, which was very much in the air at this time.

50. In subsequent months a transit protocol and a property agreement were signed.

51. Swire, op. cit., p. 203.

52. Ibid. loc. cit.

53. Ibid., pp. 203-4.

measures of the past three years. On January 3, 1926, in a packed meeting of the Sobranje, he was defeated and handed his resignation to the King.⁵⁴ His successor was Liapchev, with Athanas Bourov as his foreign minister. Volkov remained Minister of War but Liapchev took personal control of the Ministry of the Interior.

Just as the destruction of Stamboliski had encouraged IMRO, so the rise of Mihailov and the downfall of Tsankov increased the strength and effective capacity of the Organization. A sympathizer of the movement has written:

"After Mihailov had settled his scores with the Communists and 'Federalists', he proceeded to show revolutionary life in the Serb and Greek parts of Macedonia. Tsankov's government had been supplanted by a coalition government headed by the Macedonian, Andrew Liapchev. Liapchev's government lasted a long time and was distinguished for its patronage and tolerance of the Macedonians. Under his régime, the Macedonians ran amok in Bulgaria and Bulgarian Macedonia. At times it was hard to tell just who had the power in Bulgaria, the official government or the Macedonians. As for the Petrich department, one may say without stretching the truth that it existed as a tiny Macedonian state, independent in practice if not on paper."⁵⁵

Mihailov's succession to Alexandrov was not confirmed until the Revolutionary Congress held in February 1925. At this Congress, the districts of Petrich and Skopje were placed under his control.⁵⁶ The Italian government were pleased by the change

54. Cf. Todorov, op. cit., p. 225, who states that Tsankov was forced to resign at pistol point at a banquet on December 31, 1925, after King Boris had publicly asked for his resignation. The two reports are not incompatible. After his resignation, Tsankov became President of the Sobranje.

55. Christowe, op. cit., pp. 204-5. 56. Swire, op. cit., pp.193-4.

in the Organization's leadership and, in the autumn of 1925, they handed Naum Tomalevski 2,000,000 lira to finance future IMRO operations. Shortly after this, a fierce Press campaign was launched in Sofia against "our bloody neighbours" and there were rumours of increased outrages.⁵⁷

Mihailov's accession to power was marked by a significant change in the methods of terrorism. Whereas the previous practice had been to send large bands of comitadjis, Mihailov organized small groups of 4-5 men to prowl through Macedonia. Yet this itself was ineffective, for the incidents were so small that they never reached the columns of the foreign press. Nevertheless:

"Arsenals were destroyed and bombs thrown into cafés patronized by police and army officers. Bridges were blown up and it became dangerous to travel on the Orient Express in the summer months of August and September.

"Under Mihailov's chieftanship, IMRO became more and more a terrorist society. Every time a major act of terrorism was committed by the comitadjis in Macedonia, Belgrade threatened to invade Bulgaria. And Belgrade would not have hesitated to do so but for the state of European politics. Mussolini was ready to attack Yugoslavia should presume to go rough-riding through the Balkans."⁵⁸

It is noticeable that when Bulgaria was engaged in delicate negotiations abroad - such as the 1926 Refugee Settlement or when Liapchev was trying to obtain the Stabilization Loan from the League's financial committee in 1928 - there was a marked decrease in IMRO's activities in Yugoslavia.⁵⁹

King Boris, who had not left Bulgaria since 1918, took advantage of the stability of the new Liapchev government to

57. Ibid, p. 203. Tomalevski, an IMRO supporter of Protogerov, was murdered on December 3, 1930. See below, ch. 7.

58. Christowe, op. cit., pp. 206-7.

59. Swire, op. cit., p. 206.

make a lengthy visit to Western Europe. In 1926, he went to Switzerland and attended the League of Nations. Following this, he went to Coburg to see his father, ex-King Ferdinand, and spent a few days with his sister at Wurtemberg.⁶⁰ In 1927, he travelled abroad again and visited a friend, who lived in Zürich. She wrote:

"He works like a convict, struggling continually under the menace of political conspiracies, of criminal attacks, of personal danger. He believes that six individuals paid by Moscow, Prague and Belgrade have been ordered to kill him before August 30."⁶¹

This fear of attack, although understandable in a Balkan monarch, seems, in King Boris, to have become obsessive. His biographer has stated that:

"When his secretaries showed him articles about himself in the newspapers, he simply asked them what had been written about him. If the articles were kindly or flattering towards him, he did not read them and discouraged anyone from talking to him about them. But those which were, by contrast, directed against him, which contained criticisms or were inspired by malevolence retained all his attention."⁶²

After his visit to Switzerland in 1927, he went on to France and saw M. Doumergue, the French President, and also had a private discussion with M. Poincaré. He enjoyed his stay in Paris but for an article in L'Humanité, which was entitled "Le Tsar Sanglant",⁶³ These visits abroad became annual periods of refreshment but many journalists saw them as flights from Bulgaria to avoid assassination. It is significant that on his visits to the West, he was followed by a great flood of telegrams and business, sent on to him from Sofia. This would indicate

60. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi, Uppsala, 1952, pp. 51-52.

61. Ibid., p. 52. See above, , ,

chapter 2, p. 29. 62. Ibid., p. 206. (Comment by Nikolaev).

63. Ibid., p. 52.

that King Boris was by no means isolated from events in Bulgaria and that, in the period 1925-30, he was very much involved in the workings of his state.⁶⁴

On the other hand, it must be recognized that the Bulgarian government were by no means masters of their own house. Christowe, who first visited Bulgaria in 1927, gave an alarming picture of Macedonian influence:

"The position of the Macedonians in Sofia is analogous to that of the Jews in New York City. They are the backbone of the professional, economic, social, political and cultural life of the capital. The foremost person in any field is likely to be Macedonian, or at least part Macedonian. In 1928, nine of the eleven Bulgarian Minister Plenipotentiaries in foreign capitals were Macedonians. And the Prime Minister is one too. Macedonians in Bulgaria are united in a national organization in Sofia - the Macedonian National Committee. Affiliated and other Macedonian organizations total 600 in number and wherever there was a Macedonian organization, there was IMRO."⁶⁵

After the 1926 Treaty of Tirana and Italian domination of Albania, relations between Rome and Belgrade once more became cool.⁶⁶ IMRO leaders held a conference in Rome⁶⁷ and the constant

64. Ibid., pp. 53-54. It is noteworthy that both Schaufelberger and Nikolaev omit the political background of the period from 1923 to 1930, comment briefly on his visits abroad and make unfounded references to the love and respect shown for him by his people.

65. Christowe, op. cit., pp. 262-63.

66. Stavrianos, op. cit., p.227. When France signed her treaties of friendship with Rumania (June 10, 1926) and Yugoslavia (November 11, 1927) Italy had no option but to befriend the "revisionist" states if she were to maintain a foothold in the Balkans.

67. Swire, op. cit., p. 207.

succession of outrages, murders and sabotage continued. Bombs were left in hotels at Kočane, Gevg'heli and Strumica; trains and military depots were attacked, public buildings bombed and the railways mined.⁶⁸ An old Macedonian chief, Todor Panitza, who now enjoyed Yugoslav citizenship, was shot in a Vienna theatre by Mentcha Karnitcheva, a young Macedonian girl who later became Mihailov's wife.⁶⁹ In September 1927, two terrorists, sent to blow up the Yugoslav consulate at Salonika, were caught by the Greek police⁷⁰ and, on October 5, a Serbian general, Mihajlo Kovačević, was shot at his home in Shtip.⁷¹

The death of General Kovačević prompted foreign intervention. Both Britain and France sent notes to Sofia urging the dissolution of IMRO.⁷² A similar request had been made by Rumania in August 1926 but Bulgaria had replied that she could not guard her frontiers unless she increased her army, adding that since IMRO existed only in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria could not possibly control it.⁷³ However, after the death of Kovačević and the notes from Britain and France, the Bulgarian government did take note of the Yugoslav threats of invasion and proclaimed martial law in the Petrich and Kustendil districts on October 10, 1927.⁷⁴ This had little impact upon Mihailov and the Macedonian Organization for Volkov was responsible for administering the martial law and, whilst he was in power, Mihailov was perfectly safe. To show Bulgaria's sincerity, a house-to-house search was made

68. Ibid., pp. 201-8.

69. Christowe, op. cit., pp. 199-202. Mentcha was imprisoned in Austria but later released because of ill-health.

70. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit.

71. Christowe, op. cit., p. 207 and Swire, op. cit., p. 208. His assassins, Hippocrate Razvigorov and 2 accomplices, were caught in a cave and shot.

72. Ibid., loc. cit.

73. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit. 74. The Bulgarians said that they only did this to prove their sincerity.

in Kustendil but this was merely a convenient opportunity to root out a further number of Mihailov's opponents.⁷⁵

The Yugoslav government, realizing that these measures would have no lasting effect upon IMRO, decided to build an unbroken system of frontier defence. 524 kilometres long, stretching from the Dragoman Pass, near Tsaribrod, to the Greek frontier, along the entire length of their border with Bulgaria. The "Black Frontier", as it was called, consisted of the most elaborate defences. Firstly a row of white pyramids marking the frontier, then a stout thorn fence with barbed-wire entanglements behind it:

"At places, the barbed wire entanglements are ten feet deep. Next to the wirework there are rows of ditches (called 'wolves' chasms' by the comitadjis). To prevent cutting the wire with pincers, there is a system of electric alarms connecting the wire jungle with the blockhouses. The latter are veritable fortresses of cement and iron. Some of them have high towers like battlements upon which stand 'aerial observers'. Between these frontier citadels, there are small huts shaped like bee-hives and built of stone and mud, for the intermediary ground guards. Behind the boundary for a distance of several miles, there are four more lines of defence at regular intervals."⁷⁶

These concrete blockhouses were situated at $\frac{1}{2}$ mile intervals and proved an almost invincible obstacle to all but the most daring intruders.

While the Frontier was being constructed, several further outrages occurred, some of which give us an insight into the ethics and methods of the Macedonian Organization. The first of these occurred at Shtip on October 31, 1927, twenty-six days after the death of General Kovachević. The incident concerned

75. Swire, op. cit., p. 207.

76. Christowe, op. cit., pp. 208-9. By contrast, he described the Bulgarian frontier posts as "mere whitewashed shacks".

Mihailov's brother and father, who were shot in the main street of their home town. It is significant that Mihailov's relations had remained in Southern Serbia and that the two men were on good terms with the local police - in fact, they had just spent the evening in a café with them. Nevertheless, Mihailov singled out "King Alexander and his White Hand Society" as responsible for the crime.⁷⁷ It is still uncertain who actually committed the murder. The Yugoslav authorities blamed the local population who were trying to avenge themselves for the comitadji raids. But one writer has suggested that Mihailov himself ordered their deaths in order to obtain a genuine grievance against the Yugoslav government.⁷⁸ Such a possibility cannot be ruled out.

Another outrage centred around a woman named Mara Buneva, who had set up a hat shop in Skopje. Born in Tetovo, Mara had been a member of the Exarchate Church and married a Bulgarian officer. Approached by Mihailovists, she returned to Yugoslavia, where she soon acquired a wide circle of friends, including Prelić, the vice-governor of Skopje, who had been the prosecution lawyer in a trial involving IMRO in June 1927. On January 13, 1928, Mara met Prelić on the bridge over the Vardar, shot the lawyer and then shot herself. Such was the loyalty that IMRO commanded. As a tribute, a street in Sofia was named after her and her portrait was carried through the streets in sober procession.⁷⁹

77. When, during the First World War, the Black Hand society (see chapter 8, note 9) was suspected of republicanism, Živković, one of Alexander's trusted friends, founded a pro-royalist society, known as the "White Hand". From 1921-29, Živković was Commander of the 18,000 strong palace guard. He exercised a strong influence behind the scenes and became Prime Minister of Yugoslavia in January 1929.

78. Swire, op. cit., p. 208.

79. Ibid., pp. 209-10 and Christowe, op. cit., p. 207.

In April 1928, shortly after Mara's death, there were severe earthquakes in Bulgaria, which wrecked the town of Plovdiv and many villages in southern Bulgaria, causing great loss of life. Yugoslavia promptly re-opened her frontier and supplied 3,000,000 dinars in aid.⁸⁰ Mihailov was disappointed by such magnanimity and decided to engineer another daring outrage. This was the rather curious Lazić-Momtchilov affair which took place in July 1928 and for which there are two versions.

The first view, from the IMRO standpoint, was that Lazić, the chief of Yugoslav National Defence at the Ministry of the Interior, sent Ivan Momtchilov to Bulgaria to assassinate Mihailov. Momtchilov went to Mihailov and told him that he had been sent to kill him. Hearing this, Mihailov decided to turn the opportunity to his advantage. He sent Momtchilov back to Belgrade with orders to kill Lazić and arranged for a mock battle to take place and rumours to reach Belgrade that Mihailov had been killed. Momtchilov would then be received by Lazić and would shoot him dead.⁸¹ A complicated plot! The other, and probably more reliable account, comes from Lazić himself. He told Swire that Momtchilov had received an urgent command from Mihailov to go to Belgrade and shoot him (Lazić). In return for this, Momtchilov's mother who lived in Bulgaria, would receive 500,000 levas. Whatever the true story, it is a fact that on July 12, 1928, Momtchilov went to see Lazić. He handed him a petition to read and whilst Lazić was reading it, he shot him four times.⁸²

After these major incidents, which were widely reported in the Western Press, British and French ministers in Sofia demanded the dissolution of IMRO, pointing out that since the

80. Swire, op. cit., p. 211.

81. Christowe, op. cit., pp. 223-27.

82. Swire, op. cit., p. 210. After shooting Lazić, Momtchilov committed suicide. Lazić, seriously injured, did not die and survived to become Yugoslav Minister of the Interior in 1935.

movement was divided, it was no longer as invincible as Bulgaria claimed.⁸³ Liapchev resented their demands and declared this to be an "unwarrantable interference in Bulgaria's internal affairs".⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the progress of the Stabilization Loan through the League's financial committee had to be considered, and so several of Mihailov's opponents were imprisoned and the Organization's activities curtailed for the time being. It is interesting to observe that Italy dissociated herself from the Anglo-French protest, declaring that "the Bulgarian government will take, of its own initiative, all measures which the situation demands."⁸⁵

A certain amount of Italo-IMRO collusion is evident at this time, for the Lazić outrage and the Anglo-French protest coincided with one of Mihailov's most despicable victories - the death of General Alexander Protogerov.⁸⁶

Relations between Mihailov and Protogerov had worsened over the past few months. In 1927, Protogerov went to Italy to discuss future developments in Macedonia. During his discussions, Mussolini had promised that Italy would support a Macedonian insurrection even to the extent of sending military aid through Albania. However, he proposed that when Macedonia was thus "Liberated", it should, like Albania, become an independent state under Italian control.⁸⁷ Whilst in Rome, Protogerov also learnt that Mussolini had given King Zog assurances that, in the event of a Yugoslavian collapse, Albania would be given a common border with Bulgaria. This could only be at the expense

83. At this time, a rift was growing between the Mihailovists and the Protogerovists. See below.

84. Swire, op. cit., p. 211.

85. Ibid., p. 219.

86. Protogerov was one of those wanted by Yugoslavia for war crimes under Article 118 of the Treaty of Neuilly. On the list of 1,662, he was no. 1,120 and on the list of 500, no. 335. He was accused of various massacres including one at Shtip. Cf.

also Reiss, op. cit., pp. 41-45.

87. Todorov, op. cit., p. 226.

of Macedonia.⁸⁸ Protogerov returned to Sofia, disillusioned and highly indignant. With sudden clarity, he perceived the direction in which IMRO was moving, and the likely outcome of its operations. He realized that only by friendship with Yugoslavia could there be any genuine plans for Macedonian autonomy.⁸⁹ Mihailov, who had paid a secret visit to Rome in December 1927, heard of Protogerov's attitude to Mussolini's proposals and, on his return, postponed the Seventh Revolutionary Congress (planned for February 1928) and made attempts to expel Protogerov from the Organization's Central Committee.⁹⁰ In the meantime, Protogerov made contact with the Yugoslav Minister in Sofia, and plans were laid for coming to an understanding over the Macedonian issue. The final details for this were due to be made on July 8, 1928. But late on the night of July 7, Protogerov was shot.⁹¹ Mihailov admitted full responsibility for the assassination and the reasons for his decision were printed in most Sofia newspapers.⁹² By Protogerov's death, Mihailov gained an almost complete control over the Macedonian Organization and while he remained in charge of IMRO operations, the future of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations was very bleak.

88. Swire, op. cit., pp. 214-15.

89. Otherwise Macedonia would be partitioned, one part going to Albania, the other to Bulgaria.

90. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit.

91. Ibid., p. 212.

92. Christowe, op. cit., p. 238.

Chapter 6.

The Era of the Conferences.

The death of General Protogerov made a profound impression upon the internal events of Bulgaria. By admitting his responsibility for the assassination, Mihailov greatly weakened the position of IMRO. Protogerov's supporters, now led by Pero Shandanov,¹ left the Organization and made a number of unsuccessful attempts to oust Mihailov. There was a minor revolt against him in the Petrich district and a spate of terrorism continued through the summer months.²

This feuding did not commend itself to some Bulgarian leaders, particularly those in charge of the Army, who knew that Mihailov's activities had the tacit support of the War Minister, General Velkov. Their opposition to the political régime had been growing since January 1928 when a new magazine, Zveno, had been launched.³ Its aims were threefold: the restoration of popular government, a more tolerant foreign policy and proper governmental control of the Petrich district.⁴ Kimon Gheorgiev, a participant in the 1923 coup, left the Government and became one of the most prominent "Zvenars", as members of the new group were called. Damian Velchev, another of the 1923 conspirators and one of the disgruntled

1. Pero Shandanov, born in 1895 at Ohrid, was an old IMRO member, who had participated in many of the comitadji expeditions into South Serbia in the 1920s. By 1935, Shandanov had come to favour a union of the South Slavs in a single state. Mihailov's supporters dubbed his followers as "Serbian spies, hirelings of Belgrade."

2. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, pp. 218-20.

3. The Editor of Zveno was Dimo Kazazov. See above, p. 36.

4. Swire, op. cit., pp. 211-12.

Army leaders, took advantage of the situation to issue a strong protest against General Volkov, demanding that King Boris dismiss him.⁵

They were not alone in their protest. Athanas Bourov, the Foreign Minister, had also decided that the time had come for him to go, and publicly declared that he had thwarted all measures taken by the Cabinet against IMRO and that there could be no improvement whilst he remained there.⁶ But King Boris was determined to defy the Opposition. Speaking at a ceremony to commemorate the battle of the Shipka Pass, he warned his officers to avoid "pernicious influences".⁷ Shortly afterwards, on September 3, Velchev was dismissed from his Army post. In justifying his action, Volkov declared that his orders came "from above".⁸ This was a clear indication that Volkov had the support of King Boris. Two days later, following the resignation of two other ministers who objected to Volkov's presence, Liapchev tendered his own resignation to the King. Boris refused to see Volkov dismissed, and insisted on Liapchev's reforming his Cabinet and retaining the services of his deeply compromised Minister of War.⁹

In Yugoslavia, there had been similar turmoil. The long drawn out bitterness between the Serbian and Croatian parts of the Kingdom reached its climax in June 1928 when a Montenegrin deputy shot and killed Stephen Radić and two other

5. Ibid., pp. 218-20. Velchev was at this time Commandant of the Army Cadet school in Sofia. 6. Ibid., p. 219.

7. August 26, 1928. Ibid., p. 220. 8. Ibid., loc. cit.

9. When Volkov was eventually moved from the War Ministry, he was appointed Bulgarian Minister in Rome - a singularly happy choice. 10. Along with Stephen Radić, Bassariček and Pavle Radić were also shot. Puniša Račić, the Radical deputy from Montenegro, was tried on May 27, 1929, found guilty and sentenced to twenty years imprisonment with hard labour.

Croatian leaders in the Skupština.¹⁰ The event led to rioting in Zagreb and, for six months, the possibility of civil war and the division of the Kingdom into two parts seemed almost inevitable. But on January 6, 1929, King Alexander proclaimed a royal dictatorship. He had watched the course of events with growing alarm and decided that the death of Radić symbolized the failure of parliamentary democracy to overcome extreme nationalism. Describing the impact of dictatorship, one writer commented:

"For five years Alexander undertook the sole responsibility for directing the destinies of Yugoslavia. The task was one which he had assumed solely from a stern sense of duty when confronted with the complete deadlock which parliamentary institutions in his country had reached. Once he had put his hand to the plough it was characteristic of the man and the Serb in him that he did not look back but would face his responsibilities to the projected end. At first, questions of internal government wholly absorbed his attention..... However, since his interest has turned to the international sphere, King Alexander has shown himself capable of initiative and vision."¹¹

With the destiny of Yugoslavia now in the hands of a man so determined to prevent the disintegration of national unity, it was perhaps inevitable that his régime should evoke hostility from all those who were anxious to see the end of the "Yugoslav mosaic." Among the Croatian separatists were a secret society, the Ustaše, and its leader, Dr. Ante Pavelić.¹² Both IMRO and

11. A. Londres, Terror in the Balkans, London, 1935, p. 226. The passage above is part of the appendix to Londres's work, added by the translator, L. Zarine, who was Secretary to the Russian legation in Serbia from 1912-16.

12. Dr. Pavelić, a lawyer, was formerly a member of the Croatian Peasant Party in the Skupština. He left Yugoslavia for Italy on January 9, 1929. At Borgotaro, he set up a training

the Ustaše wished to see the collapse of the Yugoslav Kingdom and Dr, Pavelić, who had left Zagreb soon after the proclamation of the dictatorship, was quick to come to an understanding with the Macedonian Organization. In April 1929, he visited Sofia and was given a tremendous ovation by the Macedonian "emigrants". He was ceremonially received, a feast was given in his honour by the Bulgarian National Committee and his visit was made the occasion of vigorous anti-Yugoslav articles in the Sofia Press. Before leaving Bulgaria, Pavelić went down to the Petrich district and met Mihailov. Together they worked out plans for combatting Alexander's "Serbomania" and published an agreement for joint IMRO-Ustaše terrorist activities to "liberate" Croatia and Macedonia. The agreement provoked a stern Yugoslav protest.¹³

Shortly after the creation of the royal dictatorship, Todorov had a private meeting with King Alexander. He told the King that Volkov and Mihailov had convinced King Boris that they were protecting him against a plot by the Yugoslav government:

"Last summer", he informed him, "Mihailov's gang killed

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camp for Ustaše terrorists and this was supplemented later in 1929 by another camp at Yanka Pusta, in Hungary.

13. S. Christowe, Heroes and Assassins, London, 1955, pp. 210-16. Swire tells a delightful story of another visitor to Sofia, this time in June 1931. Claiming to represent the Ustaše, a man named Pero Gruber was given a great reception on his arrival. Immigrant girls were sent with bouquets of flowers to meet him at the station, he was introduced to IMRO leaders, shown their arms stores, received by Bourov, the Foreign Minister, and presented with an album autographed by his enthusiastic hosts. Swire reports that he told an excellent story to the Belgrade police and Press on his return! Op. cit., p. 249.

one of our men and threw his corpse into the garden of the King's summer palace at Vrania with a note stating that the murdered man had come to the palace to kill King Boris. At about the same time, Stoicho Mushanov, a deputy, who was in the delegation to the League of Nations returned from Geneva with a 'document' on the stationery of the Yugoslav Ministerial Council purporting to show that the Yugoslav Cabinet had decided to kill King Boris. The thing was forged, of course, in the office of 'La Macédoine' in Geneva."¹⁴

"Does Boris really believe such rubbish?" Alexander had asked.

"I'm afraid he does," said Todorov. "Ever since they shot at him in 1925, he's been convinced that the refugees are plotting with the Serbs to kill him!"

Alexander commented that he was astounded that King Boris could actually believe that the Yugoslav government were plotting to kill him. "I am a soldier," he said, "and at the same time a King. I would never permit anything so shameful."

Todorov observed that Italy was behind all Balkan intrigues and King Alexander agreed.¹⁵

One of the first achievements of the new royal government

14. La Macédoine was an IMRO publication, produced in Geneva.

15. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand. The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, pp. 231-32. In support of King Boris's fears, it is worth noting that in January 1930, two ex-deputies of the Skupština and a one-time mayor of Skopje, who had defected to Bulgaria, presented a petition at Geneva on behalf of the "oppressed Bulgarians in Macedonia". In the course of this, they stated that King Alexander had asked them to arrange for the assassination of King Boris. Swire, op. cit., p. 209. Their statement was quite untrue.

was the opening of negotiations with Bulgaria over the frontier question. The negotiations, which started in March 1929, centred upon such problems as the liquidation of properties divided by the frontier, the withdrawal of immigrants from frontier zones and the creation of a Permanent Mixed Commission to investigate and settle incidents occurring along the border.¹⁶ Detailed discussions lasted for a year. Bourov, who conducted the Bulgarian delegation, was regarded with disfavour by Italy and Piacentini, the Italian Minister in Sofia, arranged for a Sofia newspaper to publish an article urging the Bulgarian people to disavow their Foreign Minister's Francophile policy. Piacentini's action went beyond the limits of diplomatic liberty and he was recalled. But Mussolini announced that "the sympathies and full support of Italy remain invariably faithful to the Bulgarian people."¹⁷ Despite Italy's attitude, the negotiations were completed and the Pirot Convention was eventually ratified on February 14, 1930.

Whilst the Convention was being discussed, the frontier between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria was re-opened, and Mihailov's Organization took advantage of this concession to redouble their efforts on South Serbia. Trains and railway lines were bombed, shots were exchanged between the two border patrols and a Yugoslav Moslem was riddled with bullets by assassins disguised as Moslem women. In November 1929, part of the Orient Express was derailed near Tsaribrod and further attacks against the train were forestalled by prompt action on the part of the Yugoslav patrols.¹⁸

The Bulgarian government invariably denied that the raiders

16. L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass, 1944, p. 228.

17. Swire, op. cit., pp. 225-26

18. Ibid., p. 224.

ever crossed from Bulgarian territory and claimed that the outrages were caused by "oppressed Macedonians". At the same time, the Bulgarian Press published stories of persecution and murder in the "West Frontier Territory,"¹⁹ The magazine, "Near East", backed up the Bulgarian case by stating that the outrages proved the discontent of the frontier populations and observed that this discontent "must sooner or later rouse public opinion in Europe" - to rectify the frontiers in Bulgaria's favour.²⁰

In view of the attitude of the "Near East" magazine, it is worth remembering that the Macedonian Organization and the Bulgarian Supremists attached a great importance to the Anglo-American Press, believing that by continually stressing the justice of the Bulgarian case in its columns, they could secure support for a revision of the terms of the peace settlement. J. Swire, to whom reference has constantly been made in this work, was Reuter's correspondent in Sofia from October 1932 till December 1935. He commented:

"For years, British and American newspapers have been represented in Bulgaria by Bulgarians or foreigners who, depending for prosperity upon official or IMRO goodwill, either dared not or cared not to send news of which the authorities dis approved. My good friend, the Hungarian Press attaché, who boasted of his friendship with Mihailov, represented one British newsagency; another was served by a Supremist official; a third shared the house of the Press Director. The Director of Bulagence (the Bulgarian Foreign Office Press Bureau) represented a large American newsagency. Small wonder the Anglo-American public thought Bulgaria was a model democracy!"²¹

19. The Bulgarian term for Yugoslav territory around Tsaribrod and Bosilgrad.

20. Near East and India, XXXVII, (1930), p. 311. Article on Macedonian outrages.

21. Swire, op. cit., p. 324. In point of fact, in the 1927

Swire at first accepted the official view but the events of 1929-33 quickly disillusioned him.

In September 1929, Dr. Bajdarov, a veteran supporter of IMRO and a highly placed member of the Bulgarian National Committee, was assassinated, following the publication of a pamphlet in which he stated that the terrorism in the Petrich district was worse than anything happening in Southern Serbia. In the correspondence left by Bajdarov, details were found of a plan to kill Damian Velchev, the ex-Army chief and now leader of a group known as the "Officers' League". An unsuccessful attack was made on Velchev on October 21 and one of the conspirators was discovered to be a certain Lieutenant-Colonel Porkov, the Director of Intelligence at the War Office. On the following day, Velchev wrote an open letter to the Press and to the War Office, publicly accusing Volkov of using members of Mihailov's Organization to get rid of his opponents.²² In March 1930, Porkov brought a libel action against Velchev for his allegations, but was unable to prove his own innocence.²³

This incident is but a small example of the chaos and anarchy which existed within Bulgaria at this time.²⁴ During 1929, there were 28 murders and 138 attempted assassinations. By April 1930, 53 had died,²⁵ a number of the deputies in the

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elections, Liapchev, the Prime Minister, had gained 163 deputies in the Sobranje with 495,000 votes, whereas the Opposition, under Malinov, had elected only 86 deputies, despite their higher total of the electorate (556,000 votes).

22. Ibid., pp. 226-29.

23. Ibid., loc. cit.

24. The biggest scandal of the 1929-33 period was the Marinopolski affair, which has been called the "Dreyfus Case of Bulgaria". However, this Velchev incident is important for it shows a little of the character and nature of the pro-Italian, pro-Macedonian group in Bulgaria, which Velchev was later to try to overthrow.

25. Swire, op. cit., p. 229.

Sobranje were being intimidated, hostile journalists were shot and judges subjected to threats.²⁶ Assassins were only found guilty after long and profound heartsearching and it is interesting to observe that, after a little of this "heartsearching", the public prosecutor "committed suicide".²⁷ No real attempt was made to enforce public order. During a reception towards the end of 1930, King Boris told a Bulgarian named Koulichev that he regretted the constant disputes involving Macedonians. Koulichev retorted that he and his friends only wanted the Government to apply the laws, whereupon the King said that his Government had always felt that they should not interfere in Macedonian affairs.²⁸

Soon after the Pirot Convention had been ratified in February 1930, IMRO increased its activities in Southern Serbia. On March 3, a bomb was thrown into a café at Pirot, killing or wounding twenty-seven people. A similar attack was made at Strumica, killing fifteen more. On March 29, a bomb exploded in the War Office in Belgrade. The outrages continued. Mihailov publicly admitted responsibility for them in the IMRO newspaper, "Freedom or Death", and prophesied the imminent destruction of the Skupština. The Yugoslav Minister in Sofia protested against this flagrant attempt to destroy the work of the Pirot Convention. Britain and France supported the Yugoslav protest and the Mixed Yugoslav-Bulgarian Frontier Commission, faced with the irrefutable evidence that the terrorists came from Bulgaria, signed a protocol calling on the Bulgarian government to take action. The protocol caused controversy in Sofia. Both Bourov and Tsankov demanded that Liapchev should make some effective response, but the Prime Minister was unwilling to take action against the Organization. Tsankov withdrew his 35 deputies from the Govern-

26. The most lively and realistic account of the scene in Bulgaria is given by Albert Londres, op. cit., pp. 7-102.

27. Swire, op. cit., pp. 230-31.

28. Ibid., loc. cit.

ment and only by certain dubious concessions being granted - such as the banning of Protogerovist newspapers (which had condemned the outrages) and the internment of several Protogerovist supporters - was the Cabinet crisis solved. During this uncertainty, Mihailov paid a hurried visit to Rome; on his return, there was a further bomb attack on Niš station.²⁹

Despite the violence and bitterness of Mihailov's reaction to the signing of the frontier agreement with Yugoslavia, the Pirot Convention does to some extent symbolize the more tolerant and constructive attitude of some Balkan statesmen at this time. As early as 1926, a Yugoslav named Georgević had started a newspaper campaign in favour of a Balkan Customs Union. In 1928, he had founded the "Inter-Balkan Association for Peace and Prosperity" and, in June 1929, the Association sent a circular to European statesmen, urging an economic union as a prelude to political rapprochement.³⁰ Many societies, established in memory of Stamboliski in numerous European capitals, were also working for the furtherance of South Slav unity. In 1930, all these societies were united into the "Ligue pour le rapprochement des Serbes et des Bulgares."³¹

These developments, in themselves small and insignificant, helped to prepare the ground for the Balkan Conferences and made an effective contribution to the movement towards confederation in the peninsula. Three other factors were involved; the Locarno agreements in Western Europe in 1925-6, the world economic depression and the need to group the Agrarian nations of Eastern

29. Ibid., pp. 226 and 231.

30. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 224.

31. D. Stranjaković, Oeuvre du rapprochement et de l'union des Serbes et des Bulgares dans le passé, Paris, 1930, p. 1. Societies for South Slav unity were established in Belgrade, Prague, Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Paris, Geneva, Toulouse and Leipzig. The work by Stranjaković was the only published work of the League's Committee.

Europe into a more effective bargaining unit.³² Gradually, a number of inter-Balkan agreements were made. In 1928, Rumania and Greece negotiated a treaty of non-aggression and arbitration; in 1929, Yugoslavia and Rumania signed a general act of conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement; in the same year, Greece and Yugoslavia came to an understanding about Salonika and, by October 1930, friendship between Greece and Turkey had developed to the extent of a treaty of neutrality, conciliation, arbitration and friendship.³³

The actual initiative for calling a Conference was made by Alexander Papanastassiou at the 27th. Universal Congress of Peace which was held in Athens between October 6 and 10, 1929.³⁴ On October 9, at the plenary session of the Congress, Papanastassiou presented a resolution stipulating the necessity for annual Balkan Conferences to study all matters of common interest to the Balkan peoples, and suggested that the International Bureau of Peace should call such a meeting.³⁵ On May 12, 1930, the Bureau issued invitations to a Conference which would be held in Athens in October 1930. By the end of June, all the Balkan states had signified their approval of the purpose of the Conference and expressed their willingness to send delegates.^{36.}

32. During August 1930, eight Agrarian states (including Yugoslavia and Bulgaria) had met to discuss the possibility of forming a Customs Union which would then be able to present a solid Agrarian front to the industrial nations of Western Europe.

33. See also Appendix D. for commercial treaties from 1926-34.

34. For proceedings, see XXVIIème Congrès de la paix, Athènes, 6-10, octobre 1929, Documents officiels, Athens, 1931. For a summary see N.J. Padelford, Peace in the Balkans, New York, 1935, pp. 9-11. 35. Ibid., loc. cit. See also, A.P. Papanastassiou, Vers l'union balkanique, Paris, 1934, p. 11.

36. R.J. Kerner and H.N. Howard, The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente 1930-35, Berkeley, California, 1936, p. 26. The authors note that Kirov, the Bulgarian delegate, received the idea with favour.

The object of the meeting was clearly stated in Article 1 of the "Statutes of the Balkan Conference":

"The Balkan Conference will endeavour to contribute to the rapprochement and collaboration of the Balkan peoples in their economic, social, intellectual and political relations in order to direct this rapprochement ultimately towards the union of the Balkan states (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, Turkey and Yugoslavia)."³⁷

The Athens meeting, which began on October 5, was attended by 150 delegates and observers from the six Balkan countries. Although the Conference was only semi-official in character, many of those present realized that if a Balkan federation could be established, great economic and political benefits would follow. Agriculture, industry and commerce would prosper and having a total population of 60 millions and a land area of 600,000 square miles (including Turkey's Asiatic lands), the new Union would be in itself a Great Power. Thus, at this first Conference, the delegates set up an organism which would serve the idea of a Balkan Union. Six commissions (including a political commission) were set up to discuss various aspects of federation and their members were entrusted with the task of producing some concrete, workable proposals upon which Balkan co-operation could grow.³⁸ The final meeting of the Conference was held on October 13, in the theatre at Delphi which had been the scene of the Amphictyonic League in classical times; the choice of such a historic spot for the last session no doubt reflected the hopes and wishes of those who wanted to see the creation of a genuine confederation.

But, from the start, the visionary ideal foundered on the

37. Bulgarian National Group, Bulgaria and the Balkan Problems, Sofia, 1934, p. 40.

38. For proceedings, see Ière Conférence balkanique, Athènes, 5-12, octobre 1930, Documents officiels, Athens 1931. For a summary, see Kerner and Howard, op. cit., pp. 30-41, and Padelford, op. cit., pp. 11-22.

practical problem of national minorities. Only a week before the Conference opened, the Bulgarian delegation announced that since the minorities' problem was not on the agenda, they would not attend. Papanastassiou pointed out that the Conference was dealing with no more than the general principles of organization. He added that, although the question of minorities might be discussed "in principle", the Conference "must be prudent and await the creation of a friendly spirit" before entering upon such dangerous ground. His reply did not altogether satisfy the Bulgarian delegation but, on the eve of the Conference, they decided to attend.³⁹

Nevertheless, the damage was done. In both the 1930 and 1931 Conferences, the Bulgarians demanded that the meeting should consider the status and rights of the Macedonian Slavs, despite the fact that the Conferences were never intended to solve acknowledged differences, but rather to develop common grounds for agreement. One of the Yugoslav delegation, M. Topalović, realized that if the long-standing Yugoslav-Bulgarian controversy was going to be brought up at these meetings, the whole idea of Balkan federation would be destroyed. M. Topalović addressed some strong words to the Bulgarian delegation:

"Let us say frankly to Bulgarian public opinion that only through political understanding and collaboration can they win the sympathy which will help them out of their present difficulties." He concluded by urging his Bulgarian friends "to participate loyally and without reservation in the concert of the Balkan peoples."⁴⁰

King Boris, however, had no desire to reach a settlement with his Balkan neighbours. Either by coincidence or design, his betrothal to Princess Giovanna di Savoia of Italy, which had been discussed in the world press for almost two years, was officially announced in Rome on the eve of the opening meeting

39. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., loc. cit.

40. Ibid., loc. cit.

of the First Balkan Conference.⁴¹ Three weeks later, the couple were married at Assisi, and returned to Bulgaria on October 31. Their return aroused great enthusiasm and a leading article in Naroden Glas, declared:

"We believe that our Queen will bring about peace and prosperity to our country and also freedom to our co-nationals under foreign yoke."⁴²

It was reasonably suspected that King Boris might have entered into a secret alliance with Italy, thus making Bulgaria as much an Italian protectorate as Albania.⁴³ These apprehensions were given credence by the utterances of high Bulgarian dignitaries. An example was given in Zora:

"The Bulgarian National Church is praying to Almighty God to consolidate the native dynasty as a precious pledge for our national unification."⁴⁴

But no alliance was made. King Boris's biographer, writing with

41. T.I. Geshkoff, Balkan Union. A Road to Peace in South-Eastern Europe, New York, 1940, p. 204. Cf. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi, Uppsala, 1952, p. 56 which denies that the choice of date had any political motivation.

42. Naroden Glas, November 21, 1930. Quoted by Geshkoff, op. cit., loc. cit.

43. Suspicions had been raised by Italy's being given free access to the port of Varna in March 1930 and also the complete monopoly in the motor market, which was conceded in May.

Italy's domination of Albania had begun with the signing of a financial agreement on March 15, 1925. On November 27, 1926, the Treaty of Tirana converted the country into an Italian protectorate. On November 22, 1927, a 20 year defensive military alliance was signed, and, on December 1, 1928, Albania became a Kingdom though still under Italian protection.

Similar developments in Bulgaria seemed more than likely.

44. Archbishop Neophyte in Zora, November 2, 1930. Quoted by Geshkoff, op. cit., loc. cit.

the benefit of hindsight, stated that the King

"had no intention whatsoever of steering his barge in the wake of the Italian ship of state. He told both his father-in-law and Mussolini that he would not welcome Italian influence in the Balkans."⁴⁵

Another of King Boris's acquaintances has said that even in the early thirties, his ideal was to make Bulgaria a Balkan Switzerland.⁴⁶ The veracity of such a remark is open to considerable doubt for the same writer adds:

"The three Balkan Kings worked wisely for a rapprochement which was desirable and advantageous to their peoples. In this, Boris III took the initiative."⁴⁷
In this era of the Conferences, there is no evidence whatsoever to show that King Boris had any desire to come to an agreement with his neighbours. He maintained his pro-Italian policy, he tolerated a government unrepresentative of the majority of his people and protected men like Volkov, under whose tutelage, the Macedonian Organization continued to flourish.

Shortly after the royal marriage, a new society was formed in Sofia. It was called Revizija (Revision) and the manifesto issued by the society, made their object quite clear:

"Revision of the peace treaties will be conceded but it must be demanded. Germany and Hungary have begun a peaceful campaign for revision of treaties. We must do the same. Traitors to their own country are those Bulgarians who are keeping mute. Let us demand and impose revisionism."⁴⁸

This resolute demand did not make the task of the Bulgarian delegation at the Conferences any easier. At the Council Meeting held in Salonika in January 1931, M. Kirov demanded that the minority problem be brought up once more. Papanastassiou, anxious to avoid overt controversy, suggested that the minorities'

45. Nikolaev, op. cit., loc. cit. 46. Ibid., p. 58.

47. Ibid., loc. cit. 48. Geshkoff, op. cit., p. 190.

problem should be discussed in connection with the study on the application of treaties. M. Kirov agreed to this but government opinion in Sofia felt he had been too conciliatory and M. Sakazov was appointed as the new leader of the Bulgarian delegation.⁴⁹

This stern attitude on the part of the Sofia government was largely influenced by internal events within Bulgaria. Through the winter months of 1930-1, the Prime Minister, Andrew Liapchev, fought a losing battle to maintain political power. Eventually he conceded defeat and, on April 20, handed his resignation to the King. Boris invited Malinov, the Opposition leader, to form a coalition government but Malinov could not meet the demands of Liapchev, Tsankov and Bourov. He therefore suggested a Democrat-Agrarian coalition or a restoration of the Liapchev government. King Boris had no desire to see the return of the Agrarians and recalled Liapchev. The latter strengthened his government by including Radoslavov and other veteran politicians, who represented the most extreme nationalists within Bulgaria.⁵⁰ Malinov joined forces with the Agrarian and Liberal deputies and forced the government into elections on June 21, 1931. The elections resulted in a crushing defeat for Liapchev and a sizeable majority for Malinov, who now became Prime Minister.⁵¹

The change of government in Bulgaria evoked a certain optimism in Belgrade, for the Agrarian party, which had traditionally favoured strong links with Yugoslavia, now formed

49. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., pp. 45-48. For proceedings of the Council Meeting, see Padelford, op. cit., pp. 23-27.

50. See above, chapter 2, note 10. Shortly after the war, Radoslavov was tried ("in contumaciam") for his actions in the war. He was condemned to lifelong imprisonment (in his absence) but was allowed to return to Bulgaria in 1929 and resume a full political life.

51. Swire, op. cit., pp. 241-42.

a substantial part of the government party.⁵² M. Topalović, who had spoken so forcibly to the Bulgarian delegation at the First Balkan Conference, felt that the new government in Sofia should make a clean break with the past and establish the closest of relations with Yugoslavia. He wrote:

"There is no other road for the Bulgarian people but to renounce every racial blindness and to proceed towards the realization of two great new purposes: the formation of an integral Yugoslavian Union and then the formation of a Union with the other Balkan people. Only in this way could all the conflicts be eliminated and all the true interests be satisfied.

"The Union of the Yugoslav races is a great revolutionary act. It is not yet finished. It still finds itself in the process of its development. It will only end when the Bulgarians join up with Yugoslavia..... No conferences on minorities, no solutions from International Forums could change the present situation. If, however, the Bulgarians want to be satisfied in respect to their territorial aspirations, as well as in their national aspirations, there is only one road open to them - to join the Yugoslavian Union. There mainly lies the great meaning of this Union. Only this could definitely erase and liquidate all our old disputes and dry up the blood shedded in the past."⁵³

Had M. Topalović been addressing the parliamentary deputies

52. The result of the 1931 elections was as follows:-

National Bloc	Agrarians 72.	Liapchev 67.
(Malinov)	Democrats 43.	ILP (Communists) 31.
	Liberals 30.	Radoslavovists 11.
	<u>Radicals 7.</u>	Macedonians 8.
	<u>Total 152.</u>	Socialists 5.

53. A. Toshev, The Bulgarian-Serbian Dispute, Sofia, 1932, pp. 83-85. Toshev's book was written as a reply to Topalović's book "For the Balkan Agreement", Zagreb, 1931, whence the quotation.

of 1922-23, he would no doubt have found whole-hearted agreement with his views. But the Agrarian party of 1931 bore little resemblance to the party which Stamboliski had led. Soon after their electoral victory, two Agrarian leaders, Gitchev, and his nephew, Virgil Dimov, met Mihailov at the Rila monastery and negotiated a secret understanding with him.⁵⁴ Mihailov had been greatly perturbed by the collapse of the Liapchev government which had protected the Macedonian Organization since 1926. When the elections were called, he travelled to Rome to confer with Volkov and Italian leaders as to what steps he should take.⁵⁵ On his return, he made this secret understanding with Gitchev and Dimov and later consolidated this in a formal agreement. The terms of this agreement, which were scrupulously observed by both sides, can be summed up as follows:

"The Agrarian leaders would oppose entente with Yugoslavia so long as Supremist claims were unrealized; they would follow Italy in foreign policy, demand treaty revision, defend Mihailov's organization and uphold its authority in the Petrich department. In return, Mihailov's men would protect the Agrarian leaders; Mihailov's Macedonian deputies would support them; they would receive subsidies from a "foreign power" and former Agrarian leaders would be prevented from challenging the leadership of the Agrarian party."⁵⁶

54. Swire, op. cit., pp. 242-43. 55. Ibid., loc. cit.

56. Ibid., loc. cit. Swire states that this agreement, of which he gives a summary, was made public in 1933 and was confirmed by experienced observers. Up to this point, the rank and file Agrarians had been unaware of its existence. Todorov, still living in exile in Belgrade, could not adhere even to the proclaimed principles of the Agrarian party and founded his own 'Alexander Stamboliski Peasant Union' to keep true to Stamboliski's policies. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand. The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, p. 241.

Apart from this secret agreement, the possibility of any rapprochement with Yugoslavia was rendered highly unlikely by the presence of the former Minister of War and Chief of Staff, who were retained, upon the advice of King Boris.⁵⁷

Feeling that the change of government made little or no difference to the position of the Macedonian Organization and confident of Agrarian support in the Cabinet, Mihailov resumed terrorist activities. There had been a lull in operations since October 1930, but now the outrages increased rapidly in number. During July, there was a spate of incidents in the West Frontier Territory,⁵⁸ where, it was said, the Yugoslavs had killed 274 Bulgarians since 1921.⁵⁹ Later in the month, Sofia newspapers announced that the bridges on the railway line between Niš and Skopje had been destroyed. But such reports were premature for the terrorists sent to destroy them were killed before they reached their destination. The Yugoslav government decided that it had a chance of proving that the comitadjis came from Bulgaria and were not, as was constantly claimed, "oppressed Macedonians". The Yugoslav legation in Sofia showed Malinov evidence found on the dead men, which proved they had come from Bulgaria, and demanded that he should take steps to suppress Mihailov's Organization. But Malinov had neither the courage nor the power to act. On October 12, 1931, after only four months as Prime Minister, he resigned from office "for reasons of health". He was succeeded by Mushanov, who had always been amongst the most Italophile of Bulgarian politicians.⁶⁰

57. Swire, op. cit., loc. cit. 58. See above, note 19.

59. Swire, op. cit., p. 252. Operations in the West Frontier Territory were directed by a former teacher in Tsaribrod, Ivan Gioshev. Gioshev had left Tsaribrod in 1919 and was put in charge of these operations in 1931. This section of IMRO had a special newspaper, Vrtop, to tell of its exploits.

60. Ibid., p. 253.

This increase in terrorism was one of the subjects brought up at the Second Balkan Conference which met at Istanbul between October 20 and 26, 1931. At the very first plenary session of the Conference, the question of minorities was raised. Both Albania and Bulgaria demanded a fuller examination of the problem and Andrei Toshev, one of the Bulgarian delegation, claimed that "the first great obstacle which obstructs our roads is the question of minorities..... Without having settled it first, we do not see how we can go further."⁶¹ In reply, M. Georgević, of the Yugoslav group, stated that his delegation did not believe it was possible to reach any political understanding as long as any state, either by itself or through organizations which it tolerated, interfered in the "internal life of neighbour states for the purpose of preventing their consolidation." M. Georgević added that it was impossible to build a Union as long as some states were allied with "extra-Balkan states having designs of conquest or tendencies towards colonization in the Balkan countries and whose own territory or whose own forces and institutions were to be utilized against one or several Balkan states."⁶² This outspoken summary of Yugoslav fears with regard to Italy and Bulgaria caused violent controversy at the Conference and most of the other problems before the meeting were shelved to the various committees for consideration at the Third Conference to be held in October 1932.⁶³

Two Balkan Conferences had now been held, one in Athens, the other in Istanbul. The meetings' remained within the realm of private initiative and, though the governments looked with

61. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., p. 52. 62. Ibid., loc. cit.

63. For proceedings at Istanbul, see IIème Conférence balkanique (Istanbul-Ankara, 19-26, octobre 1931), Documents officiels, première partie, (Istanbul, 1932). For a summary, see Kerner and Howard, op. cit., pp. 50-64 and Padelford, op. cit., pp. 28-35.

apparent benevolence on the idealistic labours of their nationals, they did almost nothing towards giving the resolutions of the Conferences the force of law. In Bulgaria, the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Neuilly - always a time for organized demonstrations and mourning borders upon edges of the newspapers - was the occasion of even more violent agitation for treaty revision, which included the stoning of the Yugoslav legation in Sofia.⁶⁴ At the same time, the Albanian Conference Group officially recognized the existence of a Bulgarian minority in eastern Albania, thereby implying that the Slavs living between the Albanian and Bulgarian frontiers were also Bulgars.⁶⁵ In November, Mushanov visited Italy. On his return, he was reported to have said that Bulgaria "supported by Italy, will continue her peaceful policy."⁶⁶

On April 17, Mihailov held his Eighth Revolutionary Congress near Kustendil. At the Congress, the idea of Balkan Federation was repudiated and further comitadji operations in Southern Serbia were proposed. The delegates at the Congress declaimed all responsibility for any international complications which might ensue, maintaining that the Great Powers had never "liberated" Macedonia.⁶⁷ Such an excuse did not commend itself to the Belgrade government, which faced an unending series of outrages and border incidents. Despite the existence of the Mixed Commission, set up under the Pirot Convention, the Bulgarian Premier, Mushanov, usually found some plausible excuse to prevent the Commission investigating them. In October 1932, Yugoslav delegates at Geneva sought the support of Britain and France for the project of a démarche against Bulgaria at the League of Nations. They believed that the now proven existence of IMRO on Bulgarian soil would enable them to appeal on the basis of Articles 11 and 12 of the League Covenant. Britain and France gave the Yugoslav delegation no encouragement and

64. Swire, op. cit., p. 254.

66. Ibid., loc. cit.

65. Ibid., p. 253.

67. Ibid., p. 249.

when the project was officially announced, they notified Belgrade that they had no intention of raising so delicate a subject which would only embitter international relations.⁶⁸ Mushanov, for his part, declared publicly that since Bulgaria "has taken and will continue to take the most energetic measures and in view of her goodwill and incontestable loyalty recourse to Geneva would not promote Bulgarian-Yugoslav friendship."⁶⁹ Confronted by this Anglo-French rebuff, Yugoslavia renounced the projected démarche and merely withdrew certain railway concessions which Bulgarian exporters had long enjoyed.

It is perhaps hardly surprising that from the point of view of Balkan co-operation, the Third Conference,⁷⁰ held in Bucharest between October 22 and 29, 1932, should have been a failure. At the preliminary Council meeting, held on October 21, the Bulgarian delegation presented a letter, announcing with regret that Bulgaria must withdraw from the Conference. The reason for this was that the problem of minorities and juridical equality of states, which the Bulgarian group had placed at the forefront of questions to be considered, had not been solved in the interval since the last meeting. They asserted the old argument that a "minorities" settlement should precede any talk about federation.⁷¹ During the two opening days of the Conference, when the draft of a Balkan Pact was being discussed, the Bulgarian delegation attempted to seek an adjournment of the whole Conference until the following spring.⁷² They did not

68. Londres, op. cit., p. 180. The projected démarche followed a memorandum sent by the Yugoslav government to Mushanov, early in October 1932, listing no fewer than 11 outrages by terrorists from Bulgaria in a single month. Mushanov denied that Bulgaria was responsible. 69. Swire, op. cit., p. 254.

70. For proceedings at Bucharest, see IIIème Conférence balkanique (Bucarest, 22-29, octobre 1932) Documents officiels, Bucharest, 1933. For a summary, see Kerner and Howard, op. cit., pp. 73-90 and Padelford, op. cit., pp. 42-65.

71. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., p. 76. 72. Ibid., loc. cit.

succeed. The delegates,,who were anxious to see the Pact become a political reality, suggested that the contentious minority question be settled by direct bi-lateral negotiations between the national groups themselves.⁷³ Having seen the Conference reject their proposal, and having received a telephone call, ostensibly from the Bulgarian National Committee, the Bulgarian delegates left Bucharest and returned home.⁷⁴

After their departure, the Conference proceeded to discuss the proposed Balkan Pact and finally adopted the draft settlement. For the first time in Balkan history, representatives of the Balkan peoples - though not official government representatives - had adopted a political agreement which was to govern the Balkan states in their mutual relations. Although this appeared to be a great achievement, it was really a hollow victory. Bulgaria had deliberately withdrawn from the Conferences in a bitter and resentful mood; her leaders had no desire to associate themselves with a Balkan Pact and the division between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, which had lasted since 1923, remained unresolved.

73. Stavrianos, op. cit., pp. 235-36. Also Papanastassiou, op. cit., p. 102.

74. Geshkoff, op. cit., p. 102, states that the telephone call did in fact come from the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and not the National Committee.

Chapter 7.

Balkan Entente or

Bulgarian Isolation ?.

The era of the Conferences marked a clear turning-point in the troubled world of Balkan politics. It had shown that, despite all the bitterness and rancour which continued to surround Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, the common need for security and co-operation could bring both nations together within a single international gathering. Now the peoples of the peninsula were faced with the question: "Could or would the Balkan states resolve their differences and work for a genuine Entente? Or would they prefer isolation?" Once again, the eyes of Balkan statesmen turned to Bulgaria.

Within Bulgaria there had been further political unrest, and Mushanov, hoping to divide and defeat his opponents, granted an amnesty to the Agrarians exiled abroad - including Todorov, Obov and Stoyanov.¹ This was on January 6, 1933, but Todorov did not return until March 5 because he had doubts about the sincerity of the Bulgarian government. The return of the exiles occasioned wild demonstrations against the "Serbian spies", for Todorov and Obov were widely regarded as paid agents of Yugoslavia bent on selling their country's freedom. Mushanov's hopes were realized, for Todorov promptly launched an energetic campaign against the government and succeeded in dividing the loyalties of the Agrarian party. The newspapers of which he became editor promised foreign loans for the peasants and urged the necessity for an alliance with Yugoslavia.² The Macedonian Organization was particularly incensed by Todorov's campaign and he was described as a "Trojan horse

1. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, p. 238.

2. A. Londres, Terror in the Balkans, London, 1935, pp. 205-06.

sent by King Alexander to seize Bulgaria from within."³

Earlier in the year, on February 12, 1933, the Macedonian Organization, under the auspices of the Immigrants' Conference, held a Congress at Gorna Djoumaia which was attended by delegates from all over Bulgaria. The gathering was condoned by the government who gave the delegates 75% reduction on their railway fares and state officials holidays with pay!⁴ Ten thousand were present at the Conference, including Swire, Reuter's correspondent in Sofia. It was opened by a service conducted by the Bishop of Nevrokop and attended by thirty-six priests. After this, a message from Mihailov was read to the delegates: "Against the Yugoslav government, we can speak only in the language of rifles and bombs. The struggle will continue with fire and blood." Following this message, Marko Došen, a Croat member of the Ustaše, expelled from Yugoslavia in 1929, read a message from Dr. Pavelić, the leader of the Ustaše, urging the break-up of the "Yugoslav mosaic". In conclusion, Dr. Tatarchev read the substance of a petition he had lodged at Geneva concerning Yugoslav misdeeds. During the banquet which rounded off the Conference, Kondov, the chairman of the Bulgarian National Committee, declared that the Bulgarian Army was "ready to liberate Macedonia for the third time" when the opportunity arose. His remark, Swire noted, was greeted with loud applause.⁵

Certain Sofia newspapers began a violent revisionist agitation timed to co-incide with the Conference, and the National Committee placarded the capital with notices urging the immigrants to prepare themselves for Yugoslavia's disintegration, for the hour of liberation was at hand. At the same

3. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand, The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, p. 243. Todorov's campaign was supported by the Protogerovists under Shandanov.

4. P. Pipinelis, Caitiff Bulgaria, London, 1944, p. 57.

5. Swire, op. cit., pp. 264-65.

time, certain IMRO leaders (but not Mihailov) announced that if Macedonia was not "liberated" within two years, they would provoke another European war.⁶

In Belgrade, there was sudden panic. Rumours were abroad that Bulgaria and Italy were about to launch a joint attack on Yugoslavia.⁷ On February 16, in answer to Bulgarian and German revanchism, the Little Entente reorganized itself⁸ and, on February 27, the Belgrade government warned Bulgaria that, since the state authorities had shown such incontrovertible solidarity with the revolutionaries at Gorna Djoumaia and openly applauded war-like acts, the Sofia government would be held responsible for any future outrages.⁹

After this stern warning, the situation quietened down and, in April 1933, friendly gestures were made by both sides. The most important of these was the visit of Nikola Velimirović, the Bishop of Ohrid, and the Yugoslav section of the "Union for Peace and Friendship through the Churches." The visit was designed to show the Bulgarian people that conditions in Yugoslav Macedonia were by no means as bad as they were believed to be, and, in the course of their visit, they held out the hope that an exchange visit could be made so that each side could see what the other was really like. The Bishop's visit was vitiated by the discovery of an IMRO attempt to blow up the Skupština, and further developments in the relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, prevented the return visit ever being made.¹⁰

6. Ibid., loc. cit.

7. Ibid., loc. cit.

8. N.J. Padelford, Peace in the Balkans, New York, 1935, pp. 190-93.

9. Swire, op. cit., p. 266. Along with this warning, an unofficial hint was dropped that, if Mushanov could not control the terrorists himself, Yugoslavia and her allies would willingly place their own troops at King Boris's disposal.

10. Londres, op. cit., pp. 209-12. The serious attempt to blow up the Skupština was discovered early in May 1933.

Seen in a wider context, the month of April heralded the first preparations for a Balkan alliance. Todorov went to Rumania and saw Radulescu who told him that negotiations for an alliance were already taking place and direct consultations with the Bulgarian government would take place at "the proper time".¹¹ From Bucharest, Todorov went to Yugoslavia where he had talks with King Alexander. He reported that the King had said to him:

"I've already begun talks with Roumania, Turkey and Greece but a Balkan alliance without Bulgaria is worthless. Both strategically and for the quality of her soldiers, Bulgaria is essential for a powerful Balkan alliance."

"Why don't you try to meet King Boris?" asked Todorov.

"He doesn't trust me," replied the King. "He thinks I'm his enemy."

Todorov told him that he was sure that in one conversation, Alexander could convince Boris that his fears were groundless.¹²

These negotiations for an alliance reflect the growing desire, in the spring of 1933, for Balkan solidarity and the desire to see Bulgaria brought within the framework of an Entente. Even at this stage, the issue was clearly one of Entente or Isolation for a four-power pact was signed by France, Britain, Italy and Germany on June 7. In Sofia, there were fears that a Franco-Italian rapprochement would deprive Bulgaria of her only trustworthy ally.

These apprehensions had a salutary effect upon Bulgarian opinion. It was noticeable that, during 1933, the scale of terrorism against Yugoslavia was considerably diminished.¹³ By contrast, terrorism in Bulgaria increased as IMRO tried to stem the rising tide in favour of friendship with Yugoslavia.

11. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 250-51. 12. Ibid., loc. cit.

13. Swire, op. cit., p. 255.

Whereas, in 1932, there had been 45 murderous attacks (mainly in Sofia) resulting in 36 deaths, during the first six months of 1933 there were no fewer than 58 attacks, resulting in the deaths of 49 people. On June 22, a member of the Officers' League went to King Boris and told him that he was morally responsible for the assassinations. His declaration made King Boris and Mushanov suspect that a coup d'état was being prepared. So, on June 23, the Sobranje passed legislation to reduce the scale of terrorism. As a consequence, on the night of June 24-5, troops made a house-to-house search through Sofia. This was 'designed' to purge the capital of terrorists and confiscate any arms found to be in illegal possession. As a demonstration of military efficiency and thoroughness it was faultless, but it was quite unproductive, for the majority of the terrorists had been warned beforehand and had taken temporary leave of the city!¹⁴

If the Macedonian Organization was unpopular at home, it was an even greater liability abroad. On May 24, 1933, the Soviet Union published details of the pacts of non-aggression it was soon to make with Rumania, Turkey and Yugoslavia.¹⁵ Within these pacts, the definition of an aggressor resembled the definition contained in the "Convention defining the Aggressor", signed in London on July 3, 1933. In the Convention, Article 5 ran as follows:

"Aid to armed bands formed on the territory of a state and invading the territory of another state or the refusal, despite the demands on the part of the state submitted to attack, to take all possible measures on its own territory to deprive the said bands of any aid or protection."¹⁶

14. Ibid., pp. 268-70. See also L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass., 1944, p. 238.

15. Stavrianos, ibid., p. 237.

This, of course, applied directly to Bulgaria., and since the Convention of July 3 was signed by Rumania, Greece, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, it was clear that Bulgaria was completely isolated and alone in her revisionist aims in the Balkan peninsula. She was surrounded by a large number of powerful countries actively determined to resist her intentions. Many Bulgarians urged Mushanov to sign the Convention too but he made a number of excuses and went for a brief holiday with the Italian Minister in Sofia.¹⁷ Italy was naturally reluctant to see any change in the Bulgarian attitude and Italian decorations were lavishly conferred upon cabinet ministers and other dignitaries. A Politis reporter observed that the Italian Minister in Sofia was almost always in the company of Prime Minister Mushanov.¹⁸

But even if the Prime Minister remained unmoved by Bulgaria's growing isolation, King Boris was aware of its dangers. On the same day as the Convention was signed in London, he unexpectedly went abroad. Bulgaria's official journal announced on July 4 that he had departed for an "unknown destination", but it was in fact an extended tour of the capitals of Western Europe.¹⁹ After a brief holiday in Geneva where he had conversations with several high dignitaries at the League of Nations,²⁰ he moved to Stuttgart. A few days later, Malinov, now President of the Sobranje, told the Press: "The time has arrived for a definite

16. R.J.Kerner and H.N. Howard, The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente 1930-35, Berkeley, California, 1936, pp. 117-9.

17. Swire, op. cit., p. 273.

18. Politis, May 24, 1933. Quoted by T.I. Geshkoff, Balkan Union. A Road to Peace in South-Eastern Europe, New York, 1940, p. 207.

19. Geshkoff, ibid., loc. cit.

20. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi, Uppsala, 1952, pp. 64-65.

orientation of Bulgaria's foreign policy..... Bulgaria should now see which were her friends and which her protectors..... The King, when abroad, would find, as always, the means of being useful to his people."²¹

It was a curious release to the Press but, in the circumstances, understandably optimistic. King Boris made great efforts to be "useful to his people" but no one, not even Italy (now preparing secretly for her Abyssinian campaign), was willing to support Bulgarian adventures. As the summer months passed, Boris realized that he would have to yield to the growing movement for friendship with Yugoslavia. Moreover, he was worried lest the Officers' League should effect a coup d'état in his absence and place Damian Velchev in power (rumours to this effect had reached him from Sofia).²² So, after fruitless visits to Rome, Geneva, Paris, London and Berlin,²³ he became finally convinced that his country's policy of "splendid isolation" was both dangerous and wrong. On his way home, he arranged for his train to stop at Belgrade and at the station there, he had an informal meeting with King Alexander of Yugoslavia.

This meeting was of the greatest significance, for Boris had shunned all personal contact, had not attended Alexander's marriage and had even suspected that his neighbour might be plotting his death.²⁴ This meeting, which took place on September 17, 1933, marked an abrupt change in official relations between the two countries. It was very much a personal decision by King Boris for his meeting was quite unexpected and caused

21. Near East and India, XLII, (1933), p. 659.

22. Swire, op. cit., p. 273.

23. Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, Series C, London 1949cc (hereafter referred to as G.D.), II, no. 22. Rümelin, German Minister in Sofia, reports Boris's visit to the European capitals and the reception he received therein; see also Geshkoff, op. cit., p. 209.

24. Todorov, op. cit., p. 232.

consternation in the Bulgarian press which had already prepared indignant diatribes concerning Yugoslav discourtesy.²⁵

As the time for the annual Balkan Conference drew nearer, there were hurried last-minute efforts to secure some measure of rapprochement. The matter was discussed at the Little Entente Conference, held at Sinaia in the latter part of September.²⁶ King Alexander attended the Conference and, after spending some time with King Carol, he sailed from Constanza to Varna in the Yugoslav destroyer "Dubrovnik".²⁷ Here he was welcomed by King Boris, Queen Ioanna and members of the Bulgarian government.

Like the meeting at Belgrade station less than three weeks before, this meeting at the Euxinograd Palace on October 3 was an extremely important moment in relations between the two South Slav nations. "That, it seemed to me," said Todorov later, "was the turning-point in the post-war history of the Balkans."²⁸ Even Mushanov, whose sincerity on this occasion must be doubted, declared to the press: "We must consider that this visit will advance the desired rapprochement between the two Slav peoples."²⁹

But, although it was an important event, when the whole period of bitterness and rancour could have been swept away and the foundations of Balkan solidarity laid, it proved quite ineffectual as can be seen from the report of a conversation which Todorov had with the Yugoslav King shortly after his return from Euxinograd:

"Alexander told me that he had offered King Boris the prospects of an alliance with Bulgaria.

'Unfortunately,' Boris had replied, 'the Macedonians are very strong in my country. They'll kill anyone who makes

25. Londres, op. cit., p. 216.

26. Swire, op. cit., p. 275.

27. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., p. 121.

28. Todorov, op. cit., p. 251.

29. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., loc. cit.

an alliance with Yugoslavia."

'I warned him,' continued Alexander, 'that Roumania and Turkey were insisting on the immediate conclusion of a Balkan Pact and that I didn't want to sign it until I'd done ^everything possible to bring in Bulgaria.'

'That's nothing,' Boris had told Alexander. 'If it's necessary, sign the Pact.' Apparently, Boris reconsidered his view and a few minutes later said, 'Yes, you'd better wait.'

Todorov then asked Alexander, 'What about the results of your talk?'

'So far, none,' the King replied - and then added sadly, 'I'm afraid we shall just have to conclude the Pact without Bulgaria.'³⁰

Nevertheless, Titulescu made another visit - this time on behalf of Rumania - on October 12-13. He reported: "Bulgaria refuses to join the Pact because she still does not accept the Treaty of Neuilly or recognize the status quo."³¹

Some of the revisionist states were made rather anxious by the attention lavished on Bulgaria by her neighbours and by the prospects of a Yugoslav-Bulgarian detente. On October 26, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Gombos, and his Foreign Minister, de Kanya, descended on Sofia where they received an enthusiastic welcome.³² Their visit was the occasion of torchlight demonstrations of bellicosity towards Yugoslavia, and Mushanov publicly spoke of "our legitimate rights - minority rights."³³ The Near East magazine reported:

"Considerable alarm was aroused in those circles in Belgrade where the prospect of Bulgarian friendship is welcomed, when it was seen what a warm welcome the Hungarian

30. Todorov, op. cit., p. 252. Cf. also Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 3.

31. Stavrianos, op. cit., pp. 238-39.

32. Geshkoff, op. cit., p. 210.

33. Swire, op. cit., p. 275.

politicians received in Sofia..... It is felt in Yugoslavia that the Hungarians are holding out such glowing offers to tempt Bulgaria away from friendship with Yugoslavia and Roumania, and win her again to the Italo-Hungarian bloc of revisionists."³⁴

On October 31, in a final effort to secure Bulgaria's adhesion to a Balkan alliance, Boris and King Carol, accompanied by their ministers, met at Rustchuk on the River Danube. Titulescu again proposed that Bulgaria join a Balkan Pact. Mushanov refused but suggested a pact of non-aggression between their two countries. If such a bilateral agreement had been effected, it would have thwarted the "mutual guarantee" clause of the Pact which was the foundation stone of the whole Entente.³⁵

Shortly after this, King Alexander called Todorov to Miš. Todorov reports that he found the King in a considerable state of agitation:

"France," he said, "demands a Balkan Pact at once. Titulescu also insists. The Turks and Greeks are in a hurry. I'm holding it up but that breeds distrust, especially amongst the Greeks and Roumanians, who are already disturbed by my meeting with King Boris. They're afraid I might make an alliance with Bulgaria which might be directed against the Greeks. I can't wait any longer."

Knowing that a Balkan Pact without Bulgaria might easily turn into a Balkan Pact against Bulgaria, I remarked, "It would be a pity if the conclusion of a Pact now were to cut short progress towards a Yugoslav-Bulgarian understanding."

"I myself would prefer an alliance with Bulgaria to any kind of Balkan Pact," said Alexander, "but I can't hold them any longer."

I suggested that Alexander might gain time by imitating

34. Near East and India, XLII, (1933), p. 926.

35. Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 3.

the Greeks' recent attempt to come to an understanding with the Italians. I continued, "If you made one of the conditions of the Balkan Pact that all signatories should recognize the solidarity of the Balkan states against any great power which might attack any of them. Since this condition could be primarily directed against Italy, Greece would be reluctant to sign. Yet without it, the Balkan Pact would count for very little."

"You are right," said the King.

"Why don't you use the normal diplomatic channels for this matter?"

"Because I want no documents on this," said the King. "My proposal is oral. In the event of an alliance, I am prepared to return Tsaribrod and Bosilgrad to Bulgaria."

"May I tell that to the Bulgarian envoy?" I asked.

After a pause - "Yes," said Alexander, "unofficially."³⁶

When he returned to Belgrade, Todorov went straight to the Bulgarian Legation and told Kiosseivanov, then the Bulgarian envoy, of his talk with Alexander and asked him to advise Sofia, in the strictest confidence, of the Yugoslav proposal. Kiosseivanov promised to do so, declaring that he believed deeply in a Bulgaro-Yugoslav alliance. Todorov also told Penchev who, in turn referred it to Mushanov. Penchev did not hold out much chance of success. "It's no use," he told Todorov; "That man (Mushanov) refuses to take anything seriously."³⁷

After all the events of the summer, the Fourth Balkan Conference³⁸ was somewhat of an anti-climax. The Balkan Pact, proposed

36. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 252-53. This offer to return Tsaribrod and Bosilgrad was confirmed in the New York Times, October 11, 1934, p. 3.

37. Ibid., Loc cit.

38. For proceedings, see IVème Conférence balkanique (Salonique, 5-12 novembre 1933) Documents officiels, Athens 1934. For a summary, see Kerner and Howard, op. cit., pp. 97-113 and Padelford, op. cit., pp. 78-89.

at the last Conference³⁹ had now been taken up by the governments themselves and the whole question of Balkan co-operation and unity had become a matter for statesmen rather than for the independent initiative of Conference delegates. Scheduled to meet in Belgrade in September 1933, it had been postponed until November and the venue changed to Salonika.⁴⁰ The Bulgarian delegation had not mellowed since the last Conference and M. Sakazov declared that his delegation had only returned ",.... on the condition that all differences which prevent rapprochement among the Balkan peoples be examined."⁴¹ Following the now customary re-statement of the Bulgarian position, he touched upon Mushanov's Rustchuk proposals, stating his government's preference for bilateral pacts because "in certain respects, all the Balkan states are not equal. So long as this is true, we cannot adhere to the Balkan Pact."⁴²

The year of 1933 was more than usually free from terrorist activity but, in the late summer and autumn, the Yugoslav patrols reported that they had frustrated fifteen attempts to cross the frontier. There was a bomb attack on the Orient Express, two incidents of bombs in cafés at Gevgheli and railway track blown up. Over the frontier at Tsaribrod, a bell tolled daily to remind "Bulgarians beyond the frontier that the day of their freedom approaches."⁴³

So, despite Boris's limited efforts to secure a rapprochement, it was clear that the Italophiles and IMRO sympathizers still occupied positions of power. Swire suggests that Boris knew that Mussolini's Abyssinian plans precluded any military venture in the Balkans.⁴⁴ Thus his policy was designed to thwart

39. For the details of the advance draft of the Balkan Pact adopted at the Third Conference, see Padelford, op. cit., Appendix 1, pp. 155-65.

40. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., p. 95.

41. Ibid., p. 97.

43. Swire, op. cit., pp. 273-5.

42. Ibid., p. 101.

44. Ibid., loc. cit.

the Pact whilst forestalling a Bulgarian revolt (such as the Zveno group might organize against the pro-Italians) by personally leading a reconciliatory policy with Bulgaria's neighbours. However, he was careful to keep friendship for Yugoslavia within the bounds of "correct" relations.

Still acting within the bounds of correct relations, Boris visited Belgrade on December 10, 1933, accompanied by his Queen and Mushanov. At a banquet given for him during his three-day state visit, Alexander, giving the toast, declared:

"It is only a policy of peace and consolidation of the existing situation which can truly ensure the complete security and better future for our peoples."

Boris, in his reply, endorsed the "policy of peace" but significantly omitted any reference to the "existing situation".⁴⁵ After the visit was over, Todorov asked the Yugoslav King how the encounter had gone. Alexander replied that "while the meeting was cordial, no agreement had been reached."⁴⁶

So there was disappointment in Belgrade. In Rome, too, there was concern. Not because Bulgaria had rejected the chance of joining a Balkan alliance - this was predictable - but because Boris's visit to Belgrade (and a subsequent visit to Rumania in January 1934) might herald a long-term re-alignment in his foreign policy. But it was now patently clear that Bulgaria - at least under Mushanov's government - had chosen the path of isolation. In February 1934, the Italian Press publicly informed the Bulgarian people that they "could count on continued Italian support."⁴⁷ Late in 1933, Mussolini permitted Dr. Pavelić to send two Ustaše terrorists to kill King Alexander whilst he was in Zagreb. The conspirators were so overwhelmed by the reception accorded to the King and Queen, that they made no move.

45. L'echo de Belgrade, December 20, 1933. Quoted by Geshkoff, op. cit., p. 211. Cf. also Kerner and Howard, op. cit., pp. 123-4.

46. Todorov, op. cit., p. 253.

47. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 237.

Later, the plot was discovered and they were arrested. When Alexander heard of it, he commented: "It's clear that Mussolini wants to kill me and will stop at nothing."⁴⁸ There could scarcely have been a more tragically prophetic utterance.

the Balkan Pact,⁴⁹ which was drawn up in Belgrade and signed five days later in Athens on February 9, 1934, provided for a mutual guarantee of frontiers by the four signatories - Greece, Turkey, Rumania and Yugoslavia. The Pact was not intended as an offensive weapon but merely as an instrument of collective security for the Balkan states, upon which a more stable and unitary federation could be built. Two points stood out; one was that the signatories would settle their differences diplomatically, and the other was the assumption that Balkan frontiers would remain unchanged. This ruled out any chance of treaty revision and was one of the three objections which Bulgaria raised against the treaty. The other two were the provision of clauses relating to non-aggression (irrelevant, they believed, because the Balkan states had signed the Briand-Kellogg Pact of August 1928) and the agreement whereby disputes would go before the Permanent Conciliatory Balkan Committee, whose impartiality Bulgaria doubted.⁵⁰ In an official Bulgarian publication, it was stated:

"(We) accept, in principle, the Balkan Pact under the reservation that, to Bulgaria, will be recognized the right of equality in her relations with the remaining Balkan states and that the clauses for the minorities, provided by the treaties, be applied in respect of the

49. Stavrianos, op. cit., pp. 239-41. Also Padelford, op. cit., pp. 90-137 and 186-87. Details of diplomacy culminating in the Balkan Entente are given in Geshkoff, op. cit., pp. 203-22 and Kerner and Howard, op. cit., pp. 116-38.

50. Bulgarian National Group, Bulgaria and the Balkan Problems, Sofia, 1934, pp. 43-53.

Bulgarian minorities;"⁵¹

and added that only when clauses, guaranteeing the Bulgarian minorities a complete judicial, moral and cultural protection, were recognized, could Bulgaria become an element for peace and cultural co-operation.⁵²

On the eve of the initialling of the Pact, the four Balkan states sent identical letters to Kiosseivanov, proposing a non-aggression pact with each of the four signatories.⁵³ But no official reply was ever received to these letters and Mushanov, speaking to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sobranje, said that Bulgaria could never adhere to the Pact because it violated the provisions of Article 19 of the League Covenant.⁵⁴

But the spark of hope that some rapprochement might be achieved never died. Early in April 1934, Jevtić, Yugoslavia's Foreign Minister had a private meeting with Mushanov who was passing through Belgrade. Mushanov had met Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, and promised him that, although Bulgaria would never sign the Pact, everything would be done to bring about the establishment of friendly relations with Yugoslavia.⁵⁵ Later in the month, Jevtić called in at Sofia, on his return from Ankara, and told the journalists that "all questions between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria can be settled. For this purpose, only goodwill is necessary."⁵⁶ On May 7, Jevtić made an official visit to Sofia "to have conversations relative to the settlement of Yugoslav-Bulgarian differences."⁵⁷ In the event, only minor items such as passport controls were discussed and Jevtić's

51. Ibid., pp. 41-42.

53. Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 6.

52. Ibid., p. 55.

54. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., p. 131.

55. Ibid., pp. 158-59. Cf. also G.D., II, no. 291. King Boris to von Neurath, Berlin, February 28, 1934. Boris outlining his views on the Balkan Pact, stated his desire to "avoid the impression that Bulgaria wanted to remain the eternal trouble-maker in the Balkans" and expressed his willingness to effect a gradual reconciliation with Yugoslavia.

56. Ibid., loc. cit.

57. Ibid., loc. cit.

renewed proposal of a non-aggression pact was ignored. Nevertheless, great efforts were made to present a favourable impression. Streets were decked with flags and a special reception held. However, during the reception, the electricity was cut and the banquet plunged into darkness for 45 minutes. Although the power failure was blamed on an itinerant cat, it seems that it was due to some small measure of human intervention, for the cut occurred punctually at the stroke of midnight. Jevtić assured Swire that if relations improved, IMRO would disappear.⁵⁸

Its end was near. Ever since February 1, when Mihailov threatened to resume "the campaign for the liberation of Macedonia in bondage, in the only possible way", there had been a number of frontier incidents and several terrorists were shot by Yugoslav patrols.⁵⁹ But it was the swan-song of the Organization. Stojan Christowe, who was visiting Sofia at about the same time as Jevtić, had an audience with King Boris on May 9:

"I took occasion to touch upon the subject of the rapprochement with Yugoslavia by merely remarking how pleasant it was to hear the Slav speech upon crossing into Yugoslavia after traversing Germany and Austria..... Boris's cheeks and brows almost touched in forming his characteristic smile as he expressed his earnest hope that soon an understanding might be reached with Yugoslavia. I could see the writing on the wall for the Macedonians."⁶⁰

Five days later, Mushanov, who had visited Berlin earlier in the month and arranged for General Goering to visit Sofia, offered his resignation. The continuing wave of terrorism had caused considerable political unrest and the Bulgarian capital was rife with rumours and counter-rumours. Mushanov had even tried to get Todorov to join the government but Todorov demanded

58. Swire, op. cit., pp.276-77

59. Ibid., p. 277.

60. S. Christowe, Heroes and Assassins, London, 1935, p. 270.

economic reforms and an alliance with Yugoslavia and these Mushanov would never accept.⁶¹ In response to a personal request of King Boris, he soldiered on, trying to form a new cabinet until, on the night of May 19, 1934, the coup d'état took place.

The coup d'état was engineered by Kimon Gheorgiev and Damian Velchev, members of the Zveno group. Participants in the 1923 coup, the Zvenars had deserted Tsankov because of the reign of terror and his pro-Italian policy. They were opposed to IMRO and wanted a rapprochement with Yugoslavia. One of the first acts of the new government was to recall M. Constantin Bačalou, the Minister in Paris, and appoint him Foreign Minister.⁶² This was seen as an encouraging sign in Belgrade and by May 24 a commercial treaty had been signed between the two countries.⁶³

The coup d'état was bloodless and the Mayor of Paris, who was in Sofia at the time, described it as the most "elegant coup d'état he had ever known."⁶⁴ But it was an enormous humiliation for King Boris,⁶⁵ whom many Zvenars believed responsible for the internal unrest and the mismanagement of the country's foreign policy. The new government set up an authoritarian régime, suspended the Constitution, proscribed the political parties and outlawed IMRO. Todorov was opposed to this suppression of civic liberties, attacked the Zvenars in his newspapers and was again expelled from Bulgaria.⁶⁶ He returned to Belgrade.

Shortly after his arrival, he was received in audience by King Alexander who asked him about recent developments:

"Can the new government be trusted with regard to an alliance?" he asked.

61. For the domestic unrest in Bulgaria prior to the coup see Swire, op. cit., p. 278 and Todorov, p. 255.

62. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., p. 139.

63. Ibid., loc. cit.

64. Swire, op. cit., p. 282.

65. Nikolaev, op. cit., pp. 72-74.

66. Todorov, op. cit., p. 255.

"Completely," I replied. "They're honest men. However, they can't last very long."

"Why?" asked the King.

"Because they have the support of neither the King nor the people. Only part of the Army is with them. It's possible to be with the King against the people or with the people and against the King but not against both whilst the King remains in power."

Alexander frowned. "What about the King's position? I shouldn't like anything to happen to him especially since the Gheorgiev government has announced its desire for an understanding with us. King Boris might think me a party to some move against him."⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Gheorgiev government was proceeding with its outlawing of IMRO, both for the sake of internal peace and in order to create a better understanding with Yugoslavia. Christowe, a sympathizer of IMRO, noted that, whereas in 1928 it had been an honour to be on intimate terms with the Macedonians, now the people sneeringly referred to them as "chicagski gangsteri".⁶⁸ At the time of the coup, Christowe was in the Petrich district and described the measures taken by the new government to destroy the Organization:

"Immediately upon receipt of the news of the happenings in Sofia, the comitadjis went into hiding..... I remained there for nearly a month..... By the middle of June, when I left, the little Macedonian "empire" had been ransacked by the Army. IMRO put up no resistance, The Army made a thorough job of it. It hauled out from the villages cartloads of rifles, cartridges, machine guns and sub-machine guns, bombs, revolvers, flintlocks and even 'buzdugans' and other ancient firearms from Turkish times. From an old graveyard, I saw the troops cart out three loads of

67. Ibid., pp. 255-56.

68. Christowe, op. cit., p. 266.

carbines and several cases of cartridges dug out from what were supposed to be graves."⁶⁹

In all, 10,938 rifles, 7,767 grenades, 47 machine guns and 701,388 rounds of ammunition were seized and 300 terrorists interned.⁷⁰ In August, all members of the Bulgarian National Committee were interned - the police claiming possession of compromising documents proving "once again" that the Committee was "controlled by the dissolved and illegal organization."⁷¹

There were a number of reasons why IMRO collapsed so suddenly and completely. Firstly, the Organization had lost its original appeal; instead of being a patriotic society working for Macedonian autonomy or even for annexation to Bulgaria, it had become a terrorist organization, causing more terror and fear within Bulgaria than abroad. Because of this, the previously monolithic Organization had become divided into warring factions whose feuding aroused public contempt. For the first time since 1923, Bulgaria had a government which was determined to suppress IMRO and restore order within the Petrich department. Like all bullies, when faced with determined opposition, the Organization made no resistance and allowed itself to be completely disarmed. So, within three months, the redoubtable IMRO, which had intimidated Bulgarian politicians and terrorized Yugoslavia for fifteen years, collapsed without even a whimper, and the way was open for a Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement.

The Gheorgiev government never entertained the notion of South Slav federation. Neither country was ready for it but friendship brought the possibility nearer. Velchev himself believed that a rapprochement between the two countries would close the Balkans to any intrigue by the Great Powers.⁷² As a friendly gesture, M. Dimo Kazazov, another 1923 conspirator and

69. Ibid., pp. 273-75.

71. Ibid., loc. cit.

70. Swire, op. cit., p. 286.

72. Ibid., p. 295.

for long the President of the Bulgaro-Yugoslav Association in Sofia, was appointed to Belgrade.⁷³ On September 17, 1934, King Alexander and Queen Marie visited Sofia accompanied by Jevtić. The Yugoslav King received a great welcome. IMRO no longer existed, several thousand extremists had been expelled from the city and the Gheorgiev government was eager for an alliance. Alexander, whose visit had generated a real enthusiasm, returned to Belgrade in high spirits. It was his last triumph. Within three weeks he was dead.

Following his successful visit to Bulgaria, Alexander travelled to France to complete the final link of the alliance for which he had been working. Before he left Belgrade, he told Todorov: "I look forward to much good from my trip to Paris in the way of stabilizing the European situation."⁷⁴ On October 9, 1934, shortly after his arrival at Marseilles, Alexander and the French Foreign Minister, Barthou, who was with him, were shot. Following his attack, the assassin shot himself.

It has been the considered view of some writers to attribute the assassination of Alexander and Barthou to the Italian and Hungarian governments' sponsorship of the Ustase organization. This view is indisputable but it would be unjust to exonerate Bulgaria.⁷⁵ In 1932, "Freedom or Death", the official publication of IMRO, declared that Alexander was " a bloodthirsty assassin whose death was not far off."⁷⁶ Besides, the actual assassin was a Bulgarian.

Kalemen, the first name of the assassin to be published, was in fact a cover name for Vlado Chernozemsky, which was itself an alias for his real name - Veliko Dimitrov.⁷⁷ Since historians

73. Londres, op. cit. pp. 236-37. 74. Todorov, op. cit., p. 257.

75. Cf. Lord Avon, The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators, London, 1962, pp. 108-11. Lord Avon discusses Italian and Hungarian responsibility but makes no mention of Bulgaria at all.

76. Swire, op. cit., p. 286.

77. Ibid., pp. 33-37.

have normally referred to him as Chernozemsky, it will be convenient to continue their practice. He was born in 1899 and had been an agent of the Bulgarian War Office. During the First World War, he had served the Bulgarians extremely well during their occupation of Southern Serbia and when he fled to Sofia at the end of the war, he came under the influence of Mihailov.⁷⁸ In September 1924, he murdered Dimov, a Communist deputy, and in December 1930, he killed Tomalevski, a veteran supporter of the Macedonian Organization.⁷⁹ For these offences, Chernozemsky was sentenced to death yet, each time, it was his alias that died and he was released. Todorov feels that for Chernozemsky to have been released, he must have found protection in some powerful official quarter in Bulgaria and he states that he has it on the authority of a high official in the Zveno police force that the two releases were made on the personal orders of King Boris. Now this seems questionable, particularly if we consider the source of the information, but it is a fact that after his second release, Chernozemsky became King Boris's chauffeur for a short while.⁸⁰ Todorov states that when, on July 15, 1932, he left Bulgaria to work with Dr. Pavelić and the Ustaše, he must have had the consent of King Boris. And, if so, Boris must have had some idea of his intentions.⁸¹

This accusation is interesting, for the peace makers at Geneva (and particularly Sir Anthony Eden) were anxious to prevent a war between Yugoslavia and Italy-Hungary. Bulgaria, because of her pro-Yugoslav Zveno government, was almost totally absolved of responsibility and the Ustaše, with their training camps at Yanka Pusta and Borgotaro, were regarded as the bête

78. Christowe, op. cit., p. 218. 79. Ibid., pp. 217-8.

80. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 261-62. One of his nicknames was "Vlado the Chauffeur".

81. Ibid., loc. cit.

82. Eden Memoirs, op. cit., pp. 108-120.

noire of the affair.⁸² However, the connections between the Ustaše and IMRO, between Italy and the Mushanov government, and between Italy-Hungary and Dr. Pavelić lead one to believe that there were some in Bulgaria who were by no means exempt from responsibility for the assassination.⁸³ Certainly, King Boris took advantage of Alexander's death. Within six months, the Gheorgiev government was overthrown (a royal nominee becoming Prime Minister), the old bitterness returned and a huge memorial service was held in Sofia for Chernozemsky. The service was attended by 500 of his admirers.⁸⁴

It appears that Yugoslavia was cognizant of the background of the assassination, for Jevtić told Swire that Velchev's coup d'état had undoubtedly averted a European war:

"Had Gheorgiev's government not suppressed the terrorists in Bulgaria before Alexander's death, nothing would have restrained the infuriated Yugoslav army from marching on Sofia in retribution."⁸⁵

Clearly, the old cause of enmity had been removed; but what of the future? Laird Archer, an unofficial American observer in the Balkans, spoke to a Serbian officer at Niš:

"He told me that the Army is convinced that the assassination was arranged by Germany because the Conference which the King was on his way to attend, would have forged a ring of steel about the growing power of the Reich."⁸⁶

Whether Germany was or was not involved in the assassination is an extremely complex question but the opinion of the Serbian officer was indicative of what the next stage in Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations was to be. Once Alexander had been assassinated, Bulgarian isolationism returned and German influence reigned supreme.

83. Pavelić's agent in the U.S.A. publicly prophesied the King's death 2 days before the event; Swire, op. cit., p. 291.

84. Ibid., p. 292.

85. Ibid., p. 37.

86. L. Archer, Balkan Journal, New York, 1944, p. 16.

Chapter 8.

The Influence of Germany.

In the death of King Alexander, the Balkans lost a ruler of strong character and a statesman of great ability. Alexander had seen the need for Balkan solidarity, not only as an obstacle to German expansion¹ but also as the key to the future well-being of the peoples of the peninsula. Although he had been one of the major architects of the Balkan Pact, he would have preferred to secure a much closer understanding with Bulgaria, whose isolation represented a dangerous vacuum at the very heart of Balkan affairs. To this end, he had been prepared to make substantial concessions including some of the territorial gains acquired by his country at the Treaty of Neuilly. In the final months of his life, Alexander jeopardized the whole future of Balkan solidarity by forcing the Entente powers to postpone the Fifth Balkan Conference indefinitely² whilst he tried to secure a stronger personal rapport with King Boris. But his efforts were in vain.

Peter, Alexander's son and heir, was still a minor and the direction of Yugoslav affairs passed into the hands of a Regency, headed by the late King's cousin, Prince Paul. Prince Paul, regarding himself as a trustee of the Crown until the King came of age,³ did not feel able to make any territorial concessions to Bulgaria although he was convinced of the

1. The attempted German coup in Austria, which led to the death of Dr. Dollfuss, took place on July 25, 1934.

2. R.J. Kerner and H.N. Howard, The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente 1930-35, Berkeley, California, 1936, pp. 134-8 and 157. 3. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-45, Series D, London, 1949, cc. (hereafter referred to as G.D.), VI, no. 673.

importance of including Bulgaria in any movement for Balkan unity.⁴ Furthermore, he had great doubts about King Boris's sincerity and regarded him as quite untrustworthy.⁵ Prince Paul, therefore, made no fresh initiatives to increase South Slav amity and King Boris, for his part, felt no desire or obligation to continue with the policy of rapprochement which Alexander had promoted during the previous year.

King Boris, it was clear, was hostile to any closer understanding with Yugoslavia. During the visit of the Yugoslav Sokols to Sofia in July 1935 - a quite unpolitical occasion which aroused great public enthusiasm in the capital - King Boris avoided the ceremonies altogether, although he was the head of the equivalent Bulgarian movement. The scenes which attended the visit showed that at a popular level there was a great warmth of feeling between the two South Slav peoples; but the King wished fraternization to be restrained and the daily papers gave a pale and diluted account of the event.⁶

The leaders of the pro-Yugoslav movement in Bulgaria were the Zveno government which had been in power since the coup d'état of May 1934. Gheorgiev and Velchev were opposed to any kind of federation but were wholehearted supporters of increased friendship between the two countries. This was emphasized by the Yugoslav Pravda which wrote that the Yugoslav spirit, for so long suppressed, was now "raising to first place Yugo-Slav nationality instead of Bulgarian nationalism."⁷ Once Alexander was dead, this feature of the Zveno government proved intolerable to King Boris. He had never liked Gheorgiev and Velchev and, since the latter was clearly determined to

4. Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, Third Series, London, 1949cc (hereafter referred to as B.D.), VI, no. 534.

5. Ibid., no. 393.

6. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, pp. 23-24.

7. Ibid., p. 293.

8. Ibid., pp. 297-302.

curb and reduce royal power,⁸ the Bulgarian King decided to seek the destruction of the Zvenars and replace them with a premier and policy of his own choice.

Even before the assassination of King Alexander upon the streets of Marseilles, the future of the pro-Yugoslav Zveno government was in jeopardy. In Belgrade, Swire was told on good authority that when King Alexander visited Sofia in September 1934, King Boris pointed out Velchev during a reception and whispered "Here comes our Apis" - referring to the illustrious Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević who had been executed at Salonika in 1917.⁹ On the next day, Boris suddenly asked Alexander:

"How did you get rid of your Apis?"

Alexander replied that not he but a responsible government had repressed Dimitrijević and his friends. Alexander afterwards told his friends: "King Boris asked me for a formula whereby he could get rid of Velchev. Velchev had better beware!"¹⁰

On January 22, 1935, a royal coup d'état occurred in Bulgaria and the government of Gheorgiev and Velchev was supplanted by that of a royal nominee, General Zlatev. Many factors contributed to this coup but the most prominent reasons for the change were the Zveno policy of friendship with Yugoslavia and the so-called "republican scare" which had

9. Dimitrijević (Apis) was the organizer of the 1903 Regicide and the guiding light behind the Ujedinjenje ili Smrt (Union or Death) movement. Known to later generations as the "Black Hand", the movement was responsible for the death of Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo and was suspected of intrigues against Prince Alexander and the Serbian government-in-exile in 1916. Dimitrijević died protesting his innocence. At a re-hearing of the trial in 1953, he was held to have been unjustly executed.

10. Swire, op. cit., p. 296.

been raised by Gheorgiev's plan to model the new Bulgarian constitution on Portugese lines, taking power from the King and giving it to a ministerial council.¹¹ Although it was clear that a royal dictatorship had been established, the restoration of royal power in government and foreign policy was not immediately apparent. Nor was there any overnight change in Bulgarian policy towards Yugoslavia. In a carefully prepared report describing the background to the coup, broadcast by the radio services of both countries on February 24, Zlatev made favourable references to "our brother Yugoslav nation."¹²

But General Zlatev did not remain long in office. On April 18, 1935, he was dismissed by King Boris and his place was taken by Andrei Toshev, a septuagenarian and formerly one of King Ferdinand's closest advisers. He was known to be pro-German in outlook and prior to the outbreak of the First World War, he had been Bulgarian Minister in Vienna. Since 1918, he had been closely associated with the National Committee and had proved to be one of the most intransigent members of the Bulgarian delegation at the Balkan Conferences.¹³ His appointment came at a time when Professor Tsankov - now leader of the nascent Bulgarian National Socialist Party - was issuing fiery proclamations and threatening to overthrow the Zlatev government with a view to taking power himself.¹⁴ The choice of Toshev was clearly a blow to all hopes of a rapprochement between the two countries for, in 1932, he had written a violently anti-Yugoslav book in English¹⁵ and his policy inevitably

11. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand. The Autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, p. 264.

12. Swire, op. cit., p. 303.

13. Ibid., pp. 306-07. Cf. also Todorov, op. cit., p. 265.

14. Ibid., pp. 304-05.

15. A. Toshev, The Bulgarian-Serbian Dispute, Sofia, 1932.

favoured a pro-German orientation. His Foreign Minister was Kiosseivanov, formerly Bulgarian envoy in Belgrade.¹⁶

No sooner had the new government taken office than Goering arrived from Germany for a three day stay. His visit, lasting from May 25-28 1935 was nominally part of the honeymoon which followed his marriage to Emmy Sonnemann in April, but since he was accompanied by Prince Philip of Hesse and a number of high-ranking officials, it was clearly a visit of some significance. During his stay, Goering had long talks with King Boris, his brother, Cyril, and the new Prime Minister. In the course of these discussions - conducted in the privacy of the royal hunting lodge - Goering made a categorical declaration that "Germany would never demand Bulgaria's participation in any war whatsoever."¹⁷ In exchange for this, Bulgaria stated her willingness to order arms from Germany and in June 1935, Dr. Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, visited Sofia to discuss future economic relations between their two countries.

The growth of economic collaboration with Germany led to a decline of Italian influence in Bulgaria. It was noticed that Bulgaria joined with Yugoslavia and the other Balkan states in applying the League sanctions against Italy.¹⁸ (What was not immediately discovered was that Hungary bought up the sanctioned exports and resold them to Italy).¹⁹ Over the whole peninsula, the export-import restrictions upon trade with Italy presented an open invitation to commercial interests in Berlin. The Balkan nations, possessing similar products, sold

16. His appointment to Belgrade was prior to the coup of May 1934, when he was recalled.

17. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi, Uppsala, 1952, p. 165. See also pp. 80-81.

18. L. Archer, Balkan Journal, New York, 1944, p. 28.

19. Swire, op. cit., p. 329.

little to each other²⁰ and the Western countries had no great need for Yugoslav or Bulgarian exports. Consequently, the market was wide open for Germany, who proceeded to take a large percentage of Yugoslav exports (mainly cereals and wheat) in exchange for a high quota of German imports (chemical products, machinery and medical supplies). By 1936, almost 50% of Yugoslavia's external commerce was with Germany. Bulgaria, too, although a much poorer country, soon found that some 42% of her external trade was going the same way.²¹ By the beginning of 1938, this percentage had risen to 60%.²²

The appointment of Toshev as Prime Minister was followed by internal changes within Bulgaria itself. In Sofia, the houses of those known to be "anti-Mihailovist" were searched and many of Mihailov's supporters were set free. The Petrich department, dismantled in June 1934, was allowed to recover its former status and Volkov returned to Bulgaria from Italy and was officially received by King Boris. In the meantime, there was a purge of Velchev's followers and a Supremist Macedonian, Simon Radev, was sent to be Bulgarian Minister in London.²³ On June 29, King Boris passed a decree-law, banning all "political parties, groups, currents, movements, circles and cells." Velchev, who was rumoured to be planning a political alliance between the Liberal and Agrarian parties, was advised to leave the country and departed for Belgrade with his government's consent. Whilst abroad, he was a guest of Colonel Panic, the Vice-President of the Bulgaro-Yugoslav association and a close

20. Kerner and Howard, op. cit., p. 23, give the following rough estimates off Balkan trade:

	<u>Inter-Balkan</u>	<u>To Central Europe</u>	<u>To W. Europe.</u>
Bulgaria.	12%	45.6%	30%
Yugoslavia.	8%	56%	26.8%

21. M. Padev, Escape from the Balkans, London, 1943, pp. 97-8.

22. G.D., V, no. 167.

23. Swire, op. cit., p. 309.

friend of Dr, Maček, the Croatian leader.²⁴

These actions in Bulgaria provoked growing unrest. Elections which were due to be held, were postponed till "early next year" and there was mounting dissatisfaction with the Prime Minister. During September, General Zaimov, Inspector of Artillery and President of the Military League, began to negotiate for the formation of a popular National Bloc representing all moderate political elements, with a view to forming a genuinely representative government. But, because of the June decree-law banning all political activities, Zaimov found himself in a difficult position, especially since there was a possibility that the Military League itself would be divided on the issue. By the end of September, the situation had sufficiently deteriorated with the result that Velchev's friends urged him to return, hoping this would unite the League and give it a chance of success. The invitation coincided with renewed talk of republicanism and Toshev let it be known that he was thinking of asking the Yugoslav government to intern Velchev in their country.²⁵ Within Bulgaria, martial law was proclaimed and all army leave was cancelled.

On October 2, Velchev returned to Bulgaria and was arrested at Slivnitsa. His capture was accompanied by widespread arrests - the official figure being put at 215. It was widely reported that Velchev had collaborated with Kosta Todorov and members of the Yugoslav government and had drawn up a plot which involved plans for the murder of King Boris, Queen Ioanna, the government ministers and a number of officers and leading civilians. One of those arrested at this time was told that "Velchev has crossed the frontier with Kosta Todorov and 50,000 Serbian dinars."²⁶ The implication of complicity with Velchev in such a plot so angered the Yugoslav government that

24. Ibid., pp. 310-11

25. Ibid., pp. 314-15. Cf. with Nikolaev, op. cit., pp. 81-2 for the royalist viewpoint.

26. Ibid., p. 316.

the Bulgarian government was obliged to deny the allegation. A Western diplomat observed to Swire: "Toshev wishes to revert to the old policy of the Mihailovists to whom he belonged."²⁷

The trial of Velchev, which lasted two months, began in Sofia on December 18, 1935. The proceedings were held 'in camera' and among the prosecution and defence witnesses were to be found many leading Bulgarian figures - including Tsankov, Zlatev and Gheorgiev. With the exception of a piece of hearsay from one witness, that Velchev had wanted an "Integral Yugoslavia under King Peter"²⁸ - a statement which amounted to no more than a personal opinion - no evidence whatsoever was published to prove the guilt of the accused or to confirm the existence of an anti-royalist conspiracy hatched by Velchev in Belgrade. This connection with Yugoslavia and Velchev's well-known desire to establish better relations between the two countries, made the outcome of his trial a delicate diplomatic problem. For, although the German government, King Boris and Toshev were all anxious to get rid of Velchev, it was feared that the removal of so prominent a figure would seriously endanger the policy of bilateral amity between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, by which Germany hoped to undermine Balkan solidarity in the peninsula. However, the problem was easily solved. Stojadinović, the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, who was equally interested in promoting better relations with Germany, suppressed all details of the trial and its proceedings in the Yugoslav newspapers. Following this encouraging sign, King Boris paid an unexpected three-day visit to Belgrade²⁹ and reached an understanding with Stojadinović that even if Velchev were condemned to death, the rapprochement which Germany wished to see between the two kingdoms would continue. Three days later, on February

27. Ibid., p. 314.

28. Ibid., p. 322. This hearsay was presented by Kojoukharov (deputy leader of the Bulgarian National Socialist Party).

29. February 16-19, 1936.

22, 1936, Velchev was sentenced to death by hanging, a verdict which was postponed after vigorous opposition in England, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria itself. On March 20, the Bulgarian Public Prosecutor admitted that there had been grave irregularities at the trial but four days later, King Boris confirmed the verdict and said that Velchev would be executed within twenty-four hours. His announcement evoked widespread disapproval and, on March 28, "for reasons of state", the sentence was commuted to one of life-long imprisonment.³⁰ One result of the serious political crisis which had surrounded Velchev's arrest and trial was the resignation of Toshev on November 23, 1935. His successor was Kiosseivanov who, like his predecessor, was a royal nominee. Raskolnikov, the Soviet representative in Bulgaria, described him as "a soft pillow on which King Boris finds it convenient to sleep."³¹ When he became Prime Minister, Kiosseivanov retained the portfolio for foreign affairs and remained in royal favour until February 1940.

From the time of the Velchev trial, when the first inroads were being made, the scope of German influence and German political activity in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia swiftly increased. During a tour of Austria in 1936, Todorov met one of his Bulgarian acquaintances named Stoyilov. He reported that Stoyilov asked him:

"Are you still in favour of an alliance between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia?"

"As always," Todorov had replied.

"Well," declared Stoyilov triumphantly, "so is Germany. Goebbels told me so. You can continue to work for the alliance and direct propaganda in both countries, in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia."³²

30. Swire, op. cit., pp. 316-24, describes the trial and the extent of the public outcry against Velchev's sentence.

31. Todorov, op. cit., p. 274.

32. Ibid., p. 273.

Stoyilov even agreed to arrange for Todorov's expulsion to be lifted for this purpose. But Todorov refused and when he returned to Yugoslavia, he travelled around the country delivering a lecture, "Hitler and the Slavs". He continued doing this until Stojadinović forbade him to conduct any further political activity in Yugoslavia.³³

Dr. Milan Stojadinović, whom King Boris regarded as "the ablest statesman in Yugoslavia",³⁴ was Prime Minister from June 1935 until February 1939. He had close financial ties with Germany³⁵ and responded warmly to the German initiative for a rapprochement. Stojadinović realized that Yugoslavia's chief danger was Italy and felt that a resumption of Italian intrigue in the Balkans upon the conclusion of hostilities in Abyssinia was a very real possibility. But he was also aware that the Balkan Entente made no provision for Yugoslavia's defence in the event of an Italian attack. He believed that Yugoslavia had to make other arrangements and for this reason he welcomed the support of Germany and was willing to seek a closer understanding with Bulgaria. Inevitably, the power of the Entente was weakened, and the New York Times noted the diminishing value of the 1934 Pact:

"Yugoslavia's interest in the Pact in the future will be small, for the reservations now made, abandon her to Italian aggression. As the Pact stands, it is little more than an alliance against Bulgaria. The movement for a rapprochement between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria is constantly growing in this country." (i.e. Yugoslavia)³⁶

33. Ibid., loc. cit.

34. G.D., VI, no. 673.

35. Todorov, op. cit., p. 271. Before his Premiership, Stojadinović had been a banker in Belgrade and also Minister of Finance. In both these roles, he had acquired wide-ranging international connections.

36. New York Times, May 7, 1936.

Dr. Stojadinović recognized the failings of the Pact and, at the price of sacrificing Balkan solidarity and in the face of strong opposition, abandoned the traditional pro-French policy which had been pursued by King Alexander and decided to come to terms with Bulgaria - and Italy.³⁷

In December 1936, Stojadinović informed the Balkan Entente that his country was going to sign a separate pact with Bulgaria. His decision was a major blow to the Entente for the text of the 1934 Pact stated that none of the signatories should open negotiations with other nations without the knowledge and consent of their co-signatories.³⁸ Stojadinović's plan evoked a lively opposition from the other three states but such was the weakness of the Entente that they could do nothing at all to stop him.

On January 24, 1937, a Pact of "Eternal Friendship and Inviolable Peace" was signed between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in Belgrade. The terms of the treaty - surely one of the shortest ever made - ran thus:

"Article 1. There shall be inviolable peace and sincere and eternal friendship between the Yugoslav Kingdom and the Bulgarian Kingdom.

Article 2. The present treaty shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification exchanged as soon as possible."³⁹

Sir Edward Boyle, commenting on the Pact, observed:

37. L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation. A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass., 1944, p. 246.

38. P. Pipinelis, Caitiff Bulgaria, London, 1944, p. 4.

39. Royal Institute of International Affairs, South Eastern Europe. A Political and Economic Survey, London, 1939, p. 40. The instruments of ratification were exchanged at the Bulgarian legation on the following day.

"In the treaty there is no mention of Macedonia, or of what Dr. Stojadinović has called 'Bulgarian minorities'..... But because the question is not referred to in the Treaty, it would be ridiculous to infer that it was not very much in the minds of the negotiators on either side..... As to Macedonia, the Press, like the Treaty itself, remains silent."⁴⁰

There can be no doubt that, whatever its failings, the Pact of January 1937 was popular and was warmly welcomed in both Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. One writer declared that "even hospitable Belgrade surpassed itself in the welcome it gave to the Bulgarian Premier,"⁴¹ and another hoped that it might

"open a new chapter not merely for the two powers primarily concerned but for all the Balkan peoples. In both countries the Treaty has been received with immense enthusiasm, though it is right to remember that in no Balkan state is there at present free expression of opinion. For all that, nobody can read the reports of the ceremony which attended the signature of the treaty and the scenes in the streets, both in Belgrade and Sofia, without being convinced that the treaty has behind it in both countries an enormous mass of popular approval."⁴²

Whatever the popularity accorded to the treaty, the cost was considerable. Not only did it mark the first fundamental rift in the Balkan Entente but it also broke the barrier of collective security in the Balkans.⁴³ It ignored the crucial question of Bulgaria's frontiers and ignored her relationship to the Balkan Entente. This meant that while Yugoslavia expressed a willingness to live peacefully with Bulgaria, King Boris's government could

40. Sir Edward Boyle, "Towards Balkan Unity," Contemporary Review CLI (April 1937), pp. 406-7.

41. H.D. Harrison, The Soul of Yugoslavia, London, 1941, p. 242.

42. Boyle, op. cit., p. 405.

43. G.D., V, no. 158.

continue to work for an overthrow of the status quo and retain their revisionist hopes. Above all, it represented a great success for German diplomacy, under whose aegis it had been initiated.⁴⁴ As such, it was warmly welcomed by Germany, Hungary and the pro-Axis press.⁴⁵

Having severely weakened the power of the Entente,⁴⁶ the Germans concentrated their main political activity in the Balkans upon Bulgaria. Todorov, who was officially permitted to return to Bulgaria in December 1936, met Stoyilov in Sofia early in 1937. He asked him:

"Are the Germans spending a lot of money in Bulgaria?"

"Enormous sums," replied Stoyilov. "Nearly all the large newspapers are in their hands. Zora, Utro and Dnevnik get their newsprint free from Germany and several million leva a year go to the managers of those papers for their personal expenses. German agents are in every political organization, paid according to their importance."⁴⁷

Todorov later discovered that the cost of maintaining the German propaganda campaign came from the payment for Bulgarian imports from Germany, 10% of each payment being paid in local currency to a German agency in Sofia. As has been noted, the value of Bulgaro-German trade steadily increased in the period 1935-39 and the funds at the disposal of the propaganda agency amounted to some 150-200 million leva a year.⁴⁸

During the period following the conclusion of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian Pact, great emphasis was placed upon Bulgaria's desire for peace and her determination to remain neutral. A

44. Royal Institute of International Affairs, op. cit., loc. cit.

45. Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 5.

46. The power of the Entente was further weakened by the Italo-Yugoslav Pact of Friendship which was signed on March 25, 1937.

47. Todorov, op. cit., pp. 275-76.

48. Ibid., loc. cit. (£6-8 millions at 1938-9 values).

picture of this period is given by Laird Archer who reported from Sofia that there was

"not much feeling of approaching war here. I understand that the 'land army' by which Bulgaria has kept up the training of her youth in substitute for the former conscription forbidden by the 'peace treaty', is drilling all over the country, using spades and pitchforks for weapons. The Minister of War is negotiating with Hitler for German armaments."⁴⁹

However, Swire's experience of Bulgaria's military position was somewhat different. Shortly before his expulsion from Bulgaria, he was awoken by 40 tanks rumbling through the streets of Sofia by night - this although Bulgaria was not supposed to possess any tanks!⁵⁰ In June 1937, Baron von Neurath, the then German Foreign Minister, visited Sofia and assured the Bulgarian government "that Germany would respect Bulgaria's legitimate desires, in whatever circumstances presented themselves."⁵¹ This assurance was repeated by Goering to Gounev, the Bulgarian financial agent in Berlin, in October 1937, when the latter told Goering that his country intended to remain neutral in the event of any future conflict.⁵²

And yet the question must be asked: "How genuine was this neutrality?" King Boris, who exerted a permanent influence on the direction of Bulgarian foreign policy, told Clodius, the Deputy Director of the German Economic Policy Department, that:

"he knew that Bulgaria must always remain at Germany's side and that Bulgaria's national hopes could only be fulfilled, if indeed at all, with the aid of Germany and the Führer. He would also not forget that the liberation of Bulgaria from the military shackles

49. L. Archer, Balkan Journal, New York, 1944, p. 51.

50. Swire, op. cit., p. 308.

51. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 165.

52. Ibid.; loc. cit.

of the Treaty of Neuilly would not have been possible without the successes achieved by the Führer....."⁵³

There can be no doubt that this collaboration with Germany was motivated simply by expediency. It was a policy of greedy opportunism. The Germans knew this and took advantage of it.⁵⁴

* A later writer, for two years Sofia correspondent of "The Times", summed up the attitude of the Bulgarian King in a more succinct and humorous fashion:

"Boris is in no way pro-British. Neither has he ever been pro-German in any sense but tactically. And when his hopes of retaining his throne depend on it, he will again pose as pro-British. He has always been and only been 'pro-Boris'!"⁵⁵

It was in this spirit that Bulgaria conducted her pre-war policy of neutrality. On his return from a visit to London in November 1937, he called in to see a friend in Switzerland who recalled that

"the King was pale, thin, tired and very nervous. He told me of the conversations he had had with the English and French political leaders. He had made an all-out effort to persuade them of Bulgaria's good intentions,, of their simple desire to live at peace, in a sincere neutrality, without attaching themselves to any Axis (alliance).

"In his journeys through Europe, the King of Bulgaria did not neglect Germany; indeed he could not neglect it. Assuredly, he nourished not the slightest sympathy for Hitler, but he was too intelligent not to see that the Reich was rapidly becoming a power with which one had to reckon, which could furnish, in the near future, a support and source of help to Bulgaria, about which the Western

53. G.D., VI, no. 673.

54. G.D., V, no. 274.

55. Padev, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

statesmen cared little, although they showed themselves favourable towards its King."⁵⁶

But although Boris may have "nourished not the slightest sympathy for Hitler", there appears to be ample justification for believing that there was a direct complicity between the two men. Todorov reported that King Boris paid several visits to Berlin on the pretext of visiting his father, ex-King Ferdinand, but on each occasion had met Hitler quietly, without pomp or official notice. Ten days before the Anschluss, Boris transferred his favourite minister, Parvan Draganov, from Vienna to Berlin, replacing him with Peter Neikov, a diplomat he was known to dislike heartily. "To anyone who knew the King's character," stated Todorov, "this was evidence that Boris was forewarned of Austria's impending annexation."⁵⁷ It is also significant that Boris was in Berlin on September 24, 1938 during the Munich negotiations over Czechoslovakia⁵⁸ and again in March 1939, just before the rump state was incorporated into the Third Reich.⁵⁹

During the spring of 1938, the Bulgarian government entered into armament negotiations with Germany. On February 1, Clodius reported that the King had privately informed Goering of his government's intention to embark upon a large arms programme as soon as possible.⁶⁰ Although the military clauses of Neuilly were still in existence, the Bulgarian government sought the immediate delivery of a number of heavy weapons. The cost of this re-armament was beyond Bulgaria's immediate resources and much of the negotiations centred upon how long it would be before

56. Nikolaev, op. cit., pp. 82-84.

57. Todorov, op. cit., p. 288.

58. G.D., VI, no. 320. Whilst in Berlin, he had talks with Ribbentrop.

59. G.D. V, no. 312.

60. Ibid., no. 167. Bulgaria hoped for a programme costing £100 million RM (£8½ millions at 1938-9 values) with repayment over 10-15 years.

the credit could be repaid. The German agencies interested in the economic aspect of the transaction, as well as Goering himself, felt that a transaction of this scale was out of the question on purely financial grounds⁶¹ but Clodius declared that "it would be politically indefensible to allow the negotiations to collapse."⁶² On March 12, on the eve of the Anschluss, a secret arms protocol between Germany and Bulgaria was signed in Berlin.⁶³ In this protocol, signed as German troops were crossing into Austria, the Germans agreed to provide Bulgaria with war matériel to the value of 30 million RM⁶⁴ in exchange for which they received substantial mining concessions in Bulgaria.

By the end of May 1938, Rümelin, the German Minister in Sofia, was able to report: "Bulgaria's attitude can be considered entirely friendly towards us." In his memorandum, he noted that in the May crisis over Czechoslovakia, Germany's political ascendancy had awakened strong sympathies and admiration. He also believed that German military strength had left a deep impression upon Bulgaria and that this in turn had revived hopes of treaty revision in the Balkans.⁶⁵

Although at this time relations between the two South Slav states remained good,⁶⁶ - with official speeches describing their friendship as "cordial and eager"⁶⁷ and Boris stating that there was every reason for supporting Stojadinović,⁶⁸ - the other Balkan states were becoming alarmed by the example Germany was setting in Central Europe. They feared that once force was seen

61. Ibid., loc. cit.

62. G.D., V, no. 175.

63. Ibid., no. 181.

64. £2½ millions (at 1938-9 values).

65. G.D., V, no. 206.

66. Ibid., no. 162.

67. Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 7.

68. G.D., V, no. 210.

to be the prelude to treaty revision, Bulgaria would embark upon a similar policy.⁶⁹ This led to talks between Bulgaria and the Balkan Entente. Following these, General Metaxas as President of the Entente Council signed a Treaty of Friendship and Non-aggression with Bulgaria at Salonika, on July 31, 1938. In the Salonika Pact, Bulgaria promised not to change her existing boundaries by force but to submit all disputes with her neighbours to arbitration and a judicial settlement. In exchange for this promise, the Entente Powers agreed that Bulgaria should be allowed to re-arm and decided that the clauses of the Convention of Lausanne providing for the de-militarization of Bulgaria's frontiers should lapse.⁷⁰ Stojadinović, who had been the first to weaken the Balkan Entente by his Yugoslav-Bulgarian Treaty of 1937, claimed that the Salonika Pact was in fact his own personal achievement.⁷¹

The Munich crisis and the bloodless partition of Czechoslovakia had a profound effect upon the Balkan states. Sir Anthony Eden has observed that the argument for Chamberlain's Munich policy "rests on the dangerous assumptions that demands for self-determination, whatever their source, should override accepted international boundaries and that the threat of force should excuse a failure to fulfil international engagements."⁷² The policy of French and British leaders at Munich gave a carte blanche to all those other states with irredentist ambitions. In Bulgaria, the pro-German enthusiasm aroused by the May crisis returned, and with it, a vigorous revival in

69. Stavrianos, op. cit., p. 249. At about this time, Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Commissar, urged Bulgaria to join the Balkan Entente. His suggestion evoked no response. Cf. G.D., V, no. 206.

70. Documents on International Affairs, Pre-war Series I, London, 1938, pp. 287-88. 71. G. D., V, no. 216.

72. Earl of Avon, The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning, London, 1965, p. 30.

revisionist agitation. In Sofia, there were wild rumours of immediate territorial concessions to induce Bulgaria to enter the Balkan Entente,⁷³ and even Kiosseivanov's policy of moderation and neutrality came under heavy attack.⁷⁴ On October 31, 1938, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries met at Niš to discuss the possibility of frontier changes but the Yugoslavs were not, at that moment, prepared to make the slightest concession.⁷⁵

Four days later, Draganov, now Bulgarian Minister in Berlin, brought up the question of "Bulgarian aspirations in the Dobrudja and also vis-à-vis Yugoslavia."⁷⁶ Although he stated that his government was "intent only upon receiving adequate protection for her minorities", Draganov went on to speculate about the most opportune moment to put forward Bulgaria's revisionist claims. Weizsäcker, the German State Secretary to whom he spoke, remarked that the season for war was now over for that year. Draganov promptly declared that, despite the contagious effects of the Czechoslovak incident, his country had no intention of forcing her revisionist claims but was merely wishing to talk over the problem with her friends.⁷⁷

73. Sir Edward Boyle, "Bulgaria 1939", Contemporary Review, CLV (April 1939) pp. 413-4.

74. New York Times, November 29, 1938. The rumours and threat to Kiosseivanov's position coincided with revisionist speculation in the Sofia Press. Cf. G.D., V, no. 251.

75. During the summer, there had been a great demand for a return to a democratic constitution. As in Bulgaria, elections were due and in the Yugoslav elections of December 1938, Stojadinović's party, the J.R.Z., secured a narrow victory, gaining 54.4% of the poll. Serbian dissatisfaction figured prominently in the election.

76. Memorandum by Weizsäcker, November 3, 1938. G.D., V, no. 240.

77. Ibid., loc. cit.

Draganov's conversation with Weizsäcker, coming so soon after the Munich Agreement, makes it clear that Bulgaria hoped to profit from Germany's diplomatic victory, and secure German support to resolve her own "legitimate grievances." It is significant these demands were repeated by Draganov on September 11, 1939, March 23, 1940 and June 18, 1940 - on each occasion when the German diplomatic and military position seemed strong.⁷⁸

Thus the Munich autumn drew to a close. German influence, which at the time of King Alexander's death had been negligible, was now all-pervading. Yugoslavia, under the increasingly doubtful leadership of Stojadinović, no longer looked to the Western democracies for guidance and followed an ever more pro-Axis policy. Bulgaria, sensing that the initiative now lay with Hitler, confidently looked forward to territorial changes which would destroy the iniquities of Neuilly. Europe waited. The Balkans waited. And Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, which for five years had enjoyed an uneasy peace, hovered uncertainly upon events which were not of their own making.

78. Cf. Memorandum by Weizsäcker, June 18, 1940. G.D., IX, no. 478.

Chapter 9.

The Destruction of Relations.

Early in 1939, there were political changes in Yugoslavia. Stojadinović, who had done so much to bring his country closer to Italy and Germany but who was suspected of designs against the Crown, was dismissed and his place taken by the former Minister of Social Security - Dragiša Cvetković.¹ Stojadinović's dismissal naturally came as a great disappointment to Hitler, Mussolini - and King Boris.² But Cincar-Marković, who became the new Foreign Minister, had been Yugoslavia's ambassador in Berlin since Hitler came to power and was on good terms with most of the German leaders. Upon his appointment, he hastened to assure Yugoslavia's neighbours that although there had been a change of Prime Minister, there would be no change in his country's foreign policy.

Throughout the winter months of 1938-39, there had been negotiations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria with a view to achieving a genuine border settlement, but the discussions came to nothing and Kiosseivanov lost prestige at home, particularly since he had been to Yugoslavia twice but the former Yugoslav Prime Minister had never made his "frequently announced return visit to Sofia."³ Thus there was complete stalemate.

1. The choice of Cvetković was determined by internal considerations. He was in favour of a solution to the protracted Serb-Croat problem and was in close contact with Dr. Maček, the Croat leader.

2. Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, Series D, London 1949cc (Hereafter referred to as G.D.), VI, no. 673. Cf also, Ciano's Diaries, 1939-43, London, 1947, pp. 22-24.

3. G.D., V, no. 274.

Following the Italian attack on Albania in April 1939, the British government made a serious attempt to construct a Balkan bloc capable of resisting further Axis intrusions. The British Minister, Sir Hugh Knatchbull-Hugessen, urged the Turkish government to bring Bulgaria into the Balkan Entente. He believed that they could do this by getting Rumania to reconsider the Dobrudja question. Although this appeal held some promise, Gafencu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister, would do no more than consult with Belgrade. If Yugoslavia refused to give up territory to Bulgaria, he pointed out, there would be little value in Rumania's doing so alone.⁴ Rumania's inquiries met with little success. During Gafencu's visit to London from April 23-6, he reported that Prince Paul had stated that "Bulgaria was unsafe." He had also added that he saw no reason to change his opinion of King Boris's lack of sincerity and was astonished that His Majesty's Government should pin their faith on King Boris after their experience of 1914.⁵ The British government took no fresh initiative but, late in 1939, Mr. Rendel, the British Minister in Sofia, suggested a Balkan Neutrality Pact. But his suggestion met with little response.⁶

Following the events of April 1939, there was renewed agitation for treaty revision in Bulgaria. In a report to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sobranje, Kiosseivanov, for the first time, declared openly and unambiguously that Bulgaria aspired to the restoration of the frontiers of 1913. This declaration was repeated a little later in even more cogent form in an interview given by Kiosseivanov to the "Paris-Soir".⁷ At the same time, there were fresh pleas to Germany to support

4. Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, Third Series, London, 1949cc (hereafter referred to as B.D.), V, nos. 62, 63, 278 and 297.

5. Ibid., no. 285.

6. Sir George Rendel, The Sword and the Olive, Recollections of Diplomacy and the Foreign Service 1913-54, London, 1957, pp 165-6.

7. P. Pipinelis, Such are the Bulgars, London, 1942, p. 5.

Bulgarian national demands⁸ and the former German Minister, Rümelin, was replaced by von Richthofen.

The cause of this resurgence in Bulgarian hopes⁹ was undoubtedly the secret Bulgarian-German arms protocol which was signed in Berlin on April 21, 1939. During the previous autumn, the Bulgarian government had made it clear that they would like to purchase further war-matériel - mainly ammunition - costing some 45 million RM.¹⁰ The April protocol agreed to this.¹¹ On June 24 1939, another secret protocol, regulating the supply of aircraft and of ex-Czechoslovak (and ex-Austrian) munitions to Bulgaria, was signed by Draganov and Clodius in Berlin. The cost of this protocol (the third since May 1938) was 39 million RM.¹² By now, the granting of credit had ceased to be dependent upon Bulgaria's ability to pay,¹³ although Germany received valuable mineral concessions from the country. It was a political question and the delivery of supplies was held to be conditional upon "Bulgaria not wavering but unequivocally defining her position vis-a-vis the Axis powers."¹⁴

At this time, Yugoslavia was also obtaining arms from Germany and a miniature arms-race was building up in the peninsula.¹⁵ Cincar-Marković had a meeting with Hitler and Ribbentrop on April 26 and was promised generous treatment in the question of arms supplies.¹⁶ However, the Germans took their time over the negotiations, and credit and delivery were also made cond-

8. G.D., VI, no. 67.

9. Ibid., nos. 320 and 415.

10. £3¼ millions (at 1938-9 values). For autumn proposals see G.D., V, no. 250.

11. G.D., VI, no. 243.

12. £3¼ millions (at 1938-9 values). Ibid., no. 566. Clodius was the deputy Director of the Economic Policy Department of the German Foreign Ministry. See supra p. 174.

13. G.D., V, no. 250.

15. Ibid., no. 245.

14. G.D., VI, no. 476.

16. Ibid., no. 271.

itional upon Yugoslavia's political attitude.¹⁷

Early in June, Prince Paul visited Berlin, where it was suggested that he should withdraw his country from the Balkan Pact.¹⁸ This suggestion preceded a month of determined Axis diplomacy to wean Yugoslavia from the Balkan Entente.¹⁹ This pressure did not achieve the desired results. Yugoslavia continued to adhere to the Pact and insisted that her membership of the Entente provided the best guarantee for her independence and neutrality and was a factor for peace in the Balkans.²⁰

On July 4, Cincar-Marković and Kiosseivanov met in Bled to discuss future relations between their two countries, in view of the continued existence of the Balkan Pact and what would happen if it came to an end. Kiosseivanov later told Richthofen, the new German Minister, that

"Yugoslavia had explained her refusal to denounce the Balkan Pact by saying that it was better to be in than out of the Pact in order to keep watch on, and, if need be, direct its development."²¹

The Bled discussions also touched on the possibility of a joint policy of neutrality in the event of pressure, by either the Axis bloc or the Western democracies. They also considered how long the two countries could maintain their neutrality against outside pressure. The two men expressed the hope that if the two countries were obliged to give way, they would both enter the war upon the same side. Kiosseivanov declared that Bulgaria would enter the war upon the side chosen by Yugoslavia. In conclusion, they also discussed the possibility of further political, economic and military co-operation between them -

17. Ibid., no. 279.

18. The state visit lasted from June 1-5, 1939. Ibid., no. 675.

19. Cf. Weizsäcker to Heeren, Minister in Belgrade, July 1, 1939, ibid., no. 598.

20. Ibid., no. 637.

21. Ibid., no. 689.

even to the point of a military alliance.²² In the words of the communiqué:

"The two states agreed on a policy of economic co-operation and agreed that a policy of independence and neutrality served both the interests of the two countries and peace in the Balkans and that it was necessary that both governments continue a policy of good and friendly relations toward all their neighbours."²³

The sincerity of the Bulgarian Prime Minister at these talks is open to grave doubt for when he saw Hitler on the following day:

"Kiosseivanov corroborated the Führer's view that Bulgaria would not accept indefinitely the injustices of the Peace Treaties. But Bulgaria was weak, and without force or the threat of force, nothing could be achieved."²⁴

In the course of these discussions, Kiosseivanov demanded the immediate loan of 2,000 machine guns, the prompt delivery of 30-40 tanks which had belonged to Czechoslovakia and a considerable reduction in the period before which Bulgaria would get the artillery which she had ordered.²⁵ On his return from Berlin on July 9, Kiosseivanov again visited Bled, this time to see Prince Paul. When one examines Kiosseivanov's attitude in Bled and his attitude in Berlin, and the apparent inconsistency between them, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Bulgarian Prime Minister was a man, who was conscious

22. J. B. Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-41, Columbia, 1962, p. 163, quotes Documenti o Jugoslavije, Paris, 1956, no. 8. The italics are mine.

23. Hoptner, op. cit., loc. cit., quotes Politika (Belgrade), July 11, 1939.

24. G.D., VI, no. 617.

25. Ibid., no. 659. In addition to Kiosseivanov's demands and at the Führer's special wish, Bulgaria was also given some of the most modern German howitzers. Ibid., no. 618.

that he was following two contrary policies - one motivated by the traditional Bulgarian desire for treaty revision and the other for an amicable settlement with Yugoslavia . This, for him, was a real dilemma.

The same cannot be said for King Boris. As at the time of the Anschluss, the Munich Agreement and the final annexation of Czechoslovakia in March, King Boris appears to have had prior knowledge of Hitler's attack on Poland on September 1, 1939. Speaking to Nikolaev on August 28, he said:

"Our situation is such that it does not depend upon us to determine our conduct in the course of events, which are going to follow. Our aim will be to hold ourselves on the sidelines of the conflict and if possible to profit from it by improving our very bad situation. But being moderate in our aspirations, we must think first of all, how to 'pass the bridge guarded by the Devil' - that is to say, how to safeguard our neutrality."²⁶

Although Bulgaria's sympathies were mainly directed towards Italy and Germany, neutrality was the only course which Boris could adopt at that time. Only two days before, he had received a report that Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador in Berlin, had told Madame Draganov, the wife of the Bulgarian Minister, that if Bulgaria repeated the mistake she had made in the World War, she would be annihilated.²⁷ Besides, there was no full agreement in Sofia itself. King Boris was reported to have declared:

"My generals are Germanophiles, my diplomats, Anglo-philés; the Queen is Italophile and my people Russophile; I alone am neutral in Bulgaria."²⁸

26. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi, Uppsala, 1952, p. 166. The reference to 'the bridge guarded by the Devil' is from an old Russian proverb.

27. G.D., VII, no. 314.

28. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 169.

Unlike Yugoslavia, which declared her strict but benevolent neutrality on September 1,²⁹ Bulgaria waited until September 18 before committing herself to a similar policy.³⁰ On the previous day, Russian troops had entered Poland from the East and were moving to the demarcation line agreed to in the secret annexe to the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact. In Bulgarian eyes, Hitler had triumphed once again; Poland was defeated and France and Britain, despite their declaration of war, had not raised a finger to help.

The policy which prevailed in the Balkans in these difficult times was not just neutrality, but armed neutrality. Yugoslavia's military machine, built up by King Alexander, was in fairly good shape but Bulgaria, which had perforce been restricted up to the time of the Salonika Pact, was now making great efforts to achieve parity with her Balkan neighbours. Throughout 1939, the construction of new aerodromes was carried out on an extraordinary large scale, in obvious disproportion to the potentialities of Bulgarian aviation.³¹ The equipping of these airfields with German machines was pushed forward in a vigorous manner and the budget of the Bulgarian Air Ministry increased with astonishing rapidity for so poor a country.³² During August, telegrams passed back and forth between Sofia and Berlin, and Bulgaria made urgent demands for the despatch of 1,000 heavy and 500 light machine guns.³³ The transportation of these weapons and other munitions agreed to under the June 24 protocol, encountered difficulties. On August 26, the

29. G.D., VII, no. 532.

30. G.D., VIII, no. 92.

31. Pipinelis, *op. cit.*, p.7.

32. P. Pipinelis, *Caitiff Bulgaria*, London, 1944, p. 12.

The budget for the Bulgarian Air Ministry was as follows:-

1936 - 78 million leva	(£3 millions)
1939 - 304 "	" (£12 millions)
1940 - 397 "	" (£15½ millions)

33. Cf. G.D., VII, nos. 1, 11 and 78.

Bulgarian General Staff learnt that the Yugoslav government had detained two ammunition trains bound for Bulgaria and their release was only achieved only by pressure from Berlin.³⁴ A fortnight later, there were reports that the war matériel transported through Yugoslavia had been sabotaged en route, and King Boris intervened to suggest that future arms consignments should be re-routed through Rumania.³⁵ The Bulgarian King was in a particularly strong position at that moment, for Russia had proposed a mutual assistance pact (or failing that a non-aggression pact) between their two countries,³⁶ and King Boris was able to say that if the difficulties in transporting arms to Bulgaria were not overcome, his government would be compelled to obtain supplies from Russia. Such a step was not likely to commend itself in Berlin.³⁷

Bulgaria's neighbours, as ever, viewed these developments with alarm and their alarm led to a sudden revival in the importance of the Balkan Entente. On September 19, Cincar-Marković and Gafencu met to discuss ways of re-inforcing the Entente and to work out a solution to the Bulgarian problem. In these eleventh-hour discussions, they drew up three conditions to govern Bulgaria's territorial claims:

1) Bulgaria must first become part of the Balkan Entente and assume all the commitments and responsibilities of a member state.

2) Each member state of the Entente must contribute territory to the Balkan community, with which to satisfy Bulgaria's demands.

3) The Bulgarian government must put down all agitators who would increase tensions among the states of the Entente.³⁸

The four states did not get down to specific points - in the

34. Ibid., no. 314.

36. Ibid., no. 247.

35. G.D., VIII, no. 229.

37. Ibid., no. 229.

38. G. Gafencu, Prelude to the Russian Campaign, London, 1945, p. 260.

question of territorial changes - until February 1940, when the Council of the Balkan Entente met in Belgrade. There they decided to support a policy of peace, to remain on good terms with their neighbours, to conclude agreements with the remaining Balkan countries, particularly commercial agreements, and to extend the life of the Pact for seven more years.³⁹

After the debilitating policy of the previous four years, this was an encouraging development. The Bulgarian government was kept acquainted with the decisions of the Entente Council and also with the proposal to grant them territorial concessions. Kiosseivanov, who although a royal nominee and deeply committed to his country's pro-German policy, had never entirely rejected the possibility of friendship with Yugoslavia. He realized that if the Balkan countries were to retain their independence, they must present a united and friendly front.⁴⁰ To this end, he took advantage of the third anniversary of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian Pact to make renewed declarations of friendship and peace.⁴¹ Turkish leaders visited Sofia in January 1940 and through them, and through channels in Belgrade, he made it clear that even at this late juncture, Bulgaria was prepared to drop her policy of isolation and work for Balkan solidarity.⁴² On February 14, Kiosseivanov had an audience with his King and - in great spirits, it is reported - outlined his plans for Balkan co-operation. On the following day, under the pretext of a purely domestic issue, he was dismissed from office and hopes of Balkan solidarity receded once more.⁴³

39. Hoptner, op. cit., p. 165, quotes Politika, (Belgrade) February 5, 1940.

40. M. Padev, Escape from the Balkans, London, 1943, pp. 76-77.

41. G.D., VIII, no. 564.

42. P. Pipinelis, Caitiff Bulgaria, London, 1944, p. 5.

43. Padev, op. cit., loc. cit. The domestic issue was the dismissal of the unpopular Minister of the Interior on the previous day. On February 14, Kiosseivanov presented the King with a pro-forma resignation and submitted a new list of ministers.

The responsibility for Kiosseivanov's dismissal and the collapse of a new and imaginative policy must be laid squarely upon King Boris. A writer sympathetic to the King, stated that the causes of the dismissal "are still obscure", since no reason was ever given, either in the Sobranje or in the Sofia Press.⁴⁴ But it seems quite clear that the Prime Minister's policy clashed with the views of King Boris, who wished to have no dealings with any member of the Entente. Kiosseivanov had been an able exponent of royal policy for five years and whilst he was content to be the instrument of royal power, he had been defended in his position - even in the face of German disapproval.⁴⁵ But the moment he began to question this policy and venture upon a course contrary to that of the King, he was promptly dismissed. The event shows that King Boris had no real desire for territorial concessions, particularly if this involved membership of the Balkan Entente. King Boris was intent upon a neutral policy that should become a pro-German policy at the most favourable opportunity. Then and only then would Bulgaria's "legitimate grievances" be resolved and her territorial aspirations fulfilled. It is significant that whereas Kiosseivanov had retained control of foreign affairs during his Premiership, the King, after his dismissal, once more introduced the separate post of Foreign Minister. Kiosseivanov's successor was Bogdan Filov, a Professor of Archaeology who had little knowledge or experience of foreign affairs.⁴⁶ His Foreign Minister, Ivan Popov, was content to be a royal pawn

(continued from the previous page).

Boris, however, informed him that he would accept his resignation and would in future dispense with his services. This was the same technique as had been used for the dismissal of Stojadinović in Yugoslavia. Kiosseivanov became Bulgarian Minister in Berne.

44. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 225.

45. G.D., V, no. 274.

46. Filov was an authority on Bulgarian antiquities, including early Biblical manuscripts.

and was soon assuring the German Minister that "Bulgaria would continue to resist wooing by the Balkan League."⁴⁷

Clodius and Richthofen, who had a two-hour meeting with King Boris after these political changes had been made, observed:

"In Bulgaria too, developments tend more and more toward the King alone making decisions, at any rate on matters of foreign policy; it is in the last resort only his opinion which counts. The King proceeds from the assumption that now, as ever, Bulgaria can realize her aspirations only on Germany's side. Bulgaria is, however, so weak militarily that she should remain neutral as long as possible."⁴⁸

The defeat of France and the Russian occupation of Bessarabia⁴⁹ both brought fresh anxiety to the Entente powers but renewed hopes to the Filov government in Sofia. Later, on September 7, Rumania was obliged to surrender the Dobrudja to Bulgaria.⁵⁰ Although Cincar-Marković was alarmed lest Germany should force his country to make similar concessions, King Boris regarded Yugoslavia's policy as dangerous and ambiguous and suspected that they were encouraging Russian intervention in the Balkans as a counterweight to German influence in Bulgaria.⁵¹ But whatever the uncertainties of the period, Bulgaria did not hesitate to profit from the misfortunes of others. On June 18, Draganov presented himself at the German Foreign Office with "blunt revisionist demands by his government" and expressed his hope that the familiar slight rectifications of the Bulgarian-

47. Popov to von Richthofen, May 4, 1940. G.D., IX, no. 198.

48. Ibid., loc. cit. 49. On June 22 and 27 respectively.

50. This was done within the framework of a diplomatic agreement, which also included population transfers. The agreement was made at German instigation. On September 24, Kalfov, the former Bulgarian Foreign Minister, told the Sobranje that they "should not rest on the laurels of Dobrudja" but "struggle to regain what historically belongs to (them)". Obviously Macedonia. Quoted by Pipinelis, op. cit., p. 9. 51. G.D., X, no. 53.

-Yugoslavian frontier would be conceded to Bulgaria.⁵² Both Weizsäcker and Ribbentrop counselled patience and Popov promised that "Bulgaria would avoid anything that might disturb German policy."⁵³

At a meeting at Fuschl on July 27, 1940, Hitler assured Filov and Popov that Germany would "most energetically support the demands of her Bulgarian companions-in-arms" and promised that now France had been defeated, increasing stocks of war matériel would be available and would be supplied.⁵⁴ Although at the time of the Fuschl meeting, a joint German-Yugoslav committee was working to promote closer economic ties between the two countries,⁵⁵ it is clear that Hitler had decided that the time had come to encourage Bulgarian hopes.

Throughout the summer, as German policy seemed everywhere victorious and the defeat of Britain merely a matter of time, Bulgaria abandoned her caution. German specialists, estimated to number 10,000, poured into Bulgaria under the guise of tourists and took up key posts in the economic and administrative life of the country. Closer trade links were established with Germany⁵⁶ and a large proportion of Bulgaria's agricultural produce went there too.⁵⁷ A German Institute was set up in Sofia and its opening was the occasion of a strong German attack upon the Treaty of Neuilly. A new and vigorous propaganda campaign was launched from Sofia and provoked anger in Belgrade.⁵⁸ Heeren, the German Minister, reported adversely upon

52. G.D., IX, no. 478.

54. Ibid., no. 245.

53. G.D., X, no. 70.

55. G.D., IX, no. 442.

56. Pipinelis, op. cit., pp.8-9. In September, M. Zangoroff, a Bulgarian Minister, went to see Funk, the Economics Minister, in Berlin. Later in the same month, the Reichsmark became the official clearing currency in Bulgaria.

57. "Why Bulgaria went over?" New Statesman and Nation, XXI, March 8, 1941, pp. 231-3, states that by March 1941, 80% of this produce went to Germany. 58. G.D., XI, no. 397.

"the provocative debate in the Sobranje which is causing the old, deep distrust of Bulgaria to flare up once more..... the determination to resist, if necessary by force of arms, any threat from Italy and Bulgaria to vital Yugoslav interests has increased to an extraordinary degree among the Serbian people and in the Army."⁵⁹

On September 27, 1940, Germany, Italy and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact of political, diplomatic and military collaboration. King Boris was invited to sign it but, in a personal letter to Hitler, he stated that although he wished to be "as useful as possible to my country and to her friend, Greater Germany," he feared the reaction of Bulgaria's neighbours particularly since his kingdom's military standing was still very poor.⁶⁰ However, in November, Boris accompanied by his Foreign Minister, Popov, went to discuss the Tripartite Pact with Hitler in Berlin.⁶¹ No record of that conversation exists but, three days later, King Boris told von Papen that

"by his quiet and unobtrusive collaboration up to now, he had made the Bulgarian people pro-German without being aware of it and without arousing the opposition. That had not been possible even during the World War. The military situation probably would not require his official accession to the Tripartite Pact until next spring."⁶²

59. Yugoslav fears were raised by the Italo-Greek conflict which broke out on October 28, 1940. Ibid., loc. cit.

60. Boris to Hitler, October 22, 1940, G.D., XI, no. 217.

61. November 18, 1940. Whether Boris was summoned to Berlin or went of his own volition has been disputed. Padev, op. cit., p. 93, favours the former; L. Archer, Balkan Journal, New York, 1944, p. 140, favours the latter.

62. Boris to Papen, November 21, 1940, G.D., XI, no. 378. Von Papen, German Minister in Ankara, was one of King Boris's closest friends.

This view was repeated by the Bulgarian Minister in Berlin.⁶³ He made it clear that the delay was not caused by any change in his government's policy:

"Bulgaria had always stood by Germany and worked long for the idea of German-Bulgarian collaboration. This desire did not date from yesterday. In this war, Bulgaria had not remained neutral. Only a few days ago visas were issued to 300 Germans who were commissioned to construct 15 air observation stations in Bulgaria. For a year now, three or four German radio stations have been operating in Bulgaria."⁶⁴

Although Bulgaria hesitated to join the Pact - not least because of recent troop concentrations along the Bulgarian frontier - Draganov was anxious lest Germany should come to some arrangement with Yugoslavia, which would extinguish all Bulgaria's revisionist hopes in Macedonia. After reminding the German leaders of the Macedonian Question and the "1½ million Bulgarians who could not simply be left there", he declared that "if Germany now arrived at an accord with Yugoslavia, this would undoubtedly arouse an unpleasant reaction in Bulgaria and he was afraid that feeling against Germany might ensue." Hitler was unwilling to enter into the delicate question of minority problems and closed the discussion, emphasizing that it was in Bulgaria's best interests to join the Tripartite Pact.⁶⁵

Draganov's fears were not altogether unfounded. German economic ties with Yugoslavia were considerable and Hitler, Ribbentrop and Cincar-Marković had had discussions in Berlin on November 28. In the course of conversation, the Yugoslav Minister had shown himself friendly towards Germany and agreed

63. Conversation between Hitler and Draganov, November 23, 1940. Ibid., no. 384

64. Ibid., loc. cit. The italics are mine.

65. Conversation between Hitler and Draganov, December 3, 1940. Ibid., no. 438.

that "certain Bulgarian demands had to be satisfied."⁶⁶ Hitler, who was unwilling to accept responsibility for renewed Bulgarian revisionism, pointed out that the well-known Bulgarian demands were in fact being encouraged by Russia.⁶⁷ This was a clever manoeuvre and Hitler's view was not entirely without foundation, since the promise of the San Stefano boundaries and support for all demands against Rumania, Greece and Yugoslavia had recently been made to the Bulgarian Minister in Moscow.⁶⁸ Upon the same day as Boris visited Hitler, Molotov had told Stamenov that

"the fate of Bulgaria was of historic interest to the Soviet Government which, in view of historic obligations, desired a strong Bulgaria. In the opinion of the Soviet Government, Bulgaria must achieve her national goals against Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece. The Soviet Government was prepared to make available to Bulgaria any kind of national assistance."⁶⁹

Thus both Germany and the Soviet Union were prepared to destroy the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, providing that Bulgaria would give her allegiance to one or other of these two great states.

In Sofia, the Russian initiative - for it was thought that the Soviet Union was proposing a mutual assistance pact - was welcomed by all those who opposed the ever-increasing German influence. Resolutions were passed by numerous political groups and many of the deputies in the Sobranje handed in petitions urging immediate acceptance of the Soviet proposals.⁷⁰ But the Bulgarian government resisted these Russian blandishments. They had agreed in principle to adhere to the Tripartite Pact⁷¹

66. Ibid., no. 417.

67. Ibid., loc. cit.

68. Ibid., no. 378. The Minister in Moscow was Stamenov.

69. Ibid., no. 379. Cf. also later proposal, G.D., XII, no. 48.

70. Padev, op. cit., pp. 130-31.

71. G.D., XI, no. 430.

and Alexander Sobolev, the Russian representative, was told that Bulgaria had no desire to become involved in conflicts between the great powers.⁷²

In December 1940, German military vehicles moved into Bulgaria from Rumania. The "technicians" were dressed in blue overalls and the wagons camouflaged as civilian lorries. Once inside Bulgaria, the vehicles moved into the mountains across the frontier from Yugoslavia - ostensibly to organize anti-aircraft dispositions there.⁷³ Other staff of the "Reconnaissance Staff Sofia" were sent by the Wehrmacht to prepare fuel and supply depots, survey road and operational conditions and undertake bridge-building.⁷⁴ The Yugoslav reaction to this steady influx of "technicians" and advisers was hostile. Some 145,000 Yugoslav troops were deployed along the frontier⁷⁵ and the customary exchange of greetings between the two armies at the New Year did not take place.⁷⁶

Further discussions about Bulgaria's adhesion to the Tripartite Pact were held between Hitler and Filov at the Obersalzberg on January 4, 1941. Filov still showed himself reluctant to sign the Pact, even though Hitler assured him that there was now no danger to be feared from Yugoslavia, who was willing to enter into closer co-operation with the Reich and would probably sign the Pact too. Such a prospect was unpal-

72. Nikolaev, op. cit., p. 169. When the Russian proposals were published by the Bulgarian government in January 1941, they had a valuable propaganda effect, since they deterred Yugoslavia and other Balkan states from making any approach to the Soviet Union. They also conveyed the impression that Bulgaria sought no territorial gains at the expense of her neighbours.

73. Padev, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

74. G.D., XI, no. 556. It includes the High Command's "German Military Preparations in the Balkans" - issued on December 21, 1940.

75. Ibid., no. 713.

76. Ibid., no. 649.

atable to royal nominees such as Filov and Draganov, who wished to secure German support for Bulgaria's territorial aspirations in exchange for her adhesion to the Pact.⁷⁷ Some three weeks later, the Bulgarian General Staff suggested that accession to the Pact should be postponed till the start of military operations.⁷⁸

On March 1, 1941, with very little heartsearching, Bulgaria signed the Tripartite Pact. Early the following morning, the German XII Army crossed the border and moved into positions across the frontier from Yugoslavia. The entry of German troops provoked no public reaction. Yet an English periodical commented:

"so far as we understand Bulgarian sentiment, it is broadly Russophile; there is no enthusiasm for Germany or for Nazi ways of thought save among the officers of the Army and a small section of the wealthier middle class It is fairly certain that the minority in the Sobranje of one deputy in seven which did dare to vote openly against adherence to the Axis represented a much larger mass of the electorate."⁷⁹

Encompassed on three sides by Axis troops, the Yugoslav government faced a diplomatic dilemma. Cvetković and Cincar-Marković, who had visited Hitler in Salzburg on February 14, had been urged to join the Pact but had temporized. Now, on March 4, Prince Paul himself went to Berchtesgaden to re-state the Yugoslav predicament. Hitler magnanimously agreed to waive the military clauses in exchange for Yugoslavia's diplomatic support. After lengthy talks with his Crown Council and despite appeals by Eden⁸⁰ and Churchill,⁸¹ the Prince Regent decided to

77. Ibid., nos. 594 and 606. 78. Ibid., no. 704.

79. "Why Bulgaria went over", op. cit., p. 231.

80. Earl of Avon, The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning, London, 1965, pp. 222-23

81. W.S. Churchill, The Second World War, III, The Grand Alliance, London, 1950, pp. 141-2.

give way. On March 25, 1941, at Vienna, to Hitler's great satisfaction, Yugoslavia joined Bulgaria as a fellow-member of the Tripartite Pact.⁸² Two days later, there occurred the famous coup d'état in Belgrade.

The overthrow of the Regency had been contemplated for some time but the officers responsible for the coup - Brigadier-General Bora Mirković, Commander of the Yugoslav Air Force, and General Dušan Simović of the General Staff - had decided to wait until the government actually capitulated to Germany before making any move. Their conspiracy reflected the mood of the Yugoslav people. A bad harvest, food rationing and industrial bitterness had caused widespread unrest during 1940. In October, various restrictions had been placed on the Jewish community and the German economic stranglehold increased. During the opening months of 1941 many military figures had been down-graded or dismissed and the political motivation of all this was perfectly clear to those in Belgrade. The Yugoslavians are a proud nation and this erosion of sovereignty was keenly felt. When news of the signing of the Pact became public knowledge, students, peasants, war veterans and religious leaders demonstrated in the streets, petitions and protests flooded the royal palace and sinister threats of assassination appeared on public notices on the streets of Belgrade. Because it had wholehearted public support, because it was carefully planned and executed, by a handful of experts, because it had military approval and because national honour was at stake, the coup succeeded. The Cvetković government was overthrown, the Regency abolished and there was a widespread outburst of national exuberance.⁸³

Hitler was astounded by the news but did not hesitate to act. On the same day, March 27, he ordered that Yugoslavia

82. G.D., XII, no. 208.

83. The best account of the coup is given by Hoptner, op. cit., pp. 221-265.

should be destroyed militarily and also as a national unit. Later in the day, he saw Draganov and told him that "this had settled the question of Macedonia."⁸⁴ Later, in Directive No. 26, signed by the Führer on April 3, it was stated that

"Bulgaria should get back Macedonia and is therefore to be interested in an attack in this direction but without particular pressure being exerted from the German side. Furthermore, the Bulgarians will be supported by a German armoured unit which will provide the rear cover against Turkey."⁸⁵

The attack on Yugoslavia, which was conducted by the XII Army Command in Sofia, began in the early hours of April 6 with a massive German air bombardment of Belgrade. Strategically, Bulgaria was of great importance to the German campaign. With the benefit of such short supply lines, General List was able to strike across central Yugoslavia from his bases in Bulgaria and encircle the Yugoslav armies in the north. On the second day of the attack, panzer divisions from south-east Bulgaria reached Skopje, controlling the Vardar valley. This advance cut the only Yugoslav links with Greece and blocked the southern line of retreat to Salonika. It is true that even without the advantage of bases in Bulgaria, the Germans, with 31 divisions and 2 brigades, would still have inflicted a heavy defeat on Yugoslavia, but had it not been for Bulgaria's willing complicity to allow German forces to occupy and attack from her territory, the Yugoslavs would have been able to resist for considerably longer and perhaps even have been able to retreat to Salonika, preserving the most valuable part of their army intact. As it was, the campaign was brief and on April 17, 1941, the Yugoslav forces surrendered to the German High Command.⁸⁶

The question of whether Bulgarian troops took part in the attack on Yugoslavia is still open to doubt. Von Papen, the

84. Ibid., no. 216.

85. Ibid., no. 256.

86. Ibid., no. 364.

German Minister in Ankara, has stated that they did participate⁸⁷ but, in a speech to the Sobranje on April 8 and again in a reply to the Turkish government on April 10, it was officially declared that no Bulgarian forces had taken part in the German operations against Yugoslavia.⁸⁸

It seems likely that the official statements were correct. On April 9, Richthofen reported that Filov had offered him three Bulgarian divisions to take part in the campaign⁸⁹ but, on April 11, Draganov was still discussing the matter in Berlin.⁹⁰ Ribbentrop suggested that their use might be delayed for a few days⁹¹ and official circles in Sofia, on learning this, suspected that Italian influence might be behind the delay.⁹² The suspicion became a certainty on April 16, when it was reported that Italian troops had entered Ohrid. The town was regarded in Bulgaria as a national shrine and the news induced great bitterness, some of the public blaming King Boris and his government for not pressing Bulgaria's claims with sufficient energy.⁹³ Later in the same day, in response to a standing invitation from Hitler, King Boris contacted the German Foreign Ministry and arranged for a private discussion between himself and Hitler on April 19.⁹⁴ In the meantime, Bulgaria broke off diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia (April 16),⁹⁵ the armistice was signed and Bulgarian

87. F. von Papen, Memoirs, London, 1952, p. 473.

88. G.D., XII, no. 302. For the Turks, the question was of more than technical interest for, if the Bulgarians had attacked Yugoslavia, the Turks were bound by the 1934 Pact to come to her aid. The Turkish Foreign Minister is reported to have said that although he was convinced of the sincerity of the Bulgarian statements, he was no longer sure that they were masters of the situation or of their decisions.

89. Ibid., no. 312

92. Ibid., no. 357.

90. Ibid., loc. cit.

93. Ibid., loc. cit.

91. Ibid., no. 302

94. Ibid., no. 362.

95. Ibid., no. 312.

troops were given permission to occupy Macedonia as far as the Pirot-Vranje-Skopje line and from there down the east side of the Vardar to the Greek border.⁹⁶

No official record exists of King Boris's talk with Hitler on April 19,⁹⁷ but von Papen, who was present, remembers that "the King had come to present his demands to Hitler."⁹⁸ King Boris had been chiefly interested in the fate of Macedonia and much of the discussion had centred upon certain chromium deposits which were to be found in the Ohrid district. It appears that whilst Bulgaria was interested in Ohrid for purposes of national expansion, Italy - or rather, Count Ciano - had a financial investment at stake.⁹⁹ The matter was settled three days later in Vienna, when Ciano and Ribbentrop met to apportion out the spoils to each of the interested parties.¹⁰⁰

The haggling over the extent of Bulgaria's gains continued for some time.¹⁰¹ Clodius, who saw Boris after his return from Hitler, reported:

"In a conversation lasting two hours, the King very candidly presented his position regarding all political and territorial questions arising from the collapse of Yugoslavia.... I would like to emphasize that the King is primarily concerned with the question of determining the frontier between Albania and Bulgarian Macedonia. He is anxious that Ohrid, Struga, Gostivar and above all, Tetovo should go to Bulgaria for ethnographic and geographic reasons."¹⁰²

Within two days, Germany had stated her willingness to accede

96. Ibid., no. 367.

97. No record exists of any of the conversations between Hitler and King Boris.

98. von Papen, op. cit., loc. cit. 99. Ibid., loc. cit.

100. G.D., XII, no. 385.

101. Ibid., nos. 367 and

385. 102. Clodius and Rihthofen to Foreign Ministry, April 24, 1941, ibid., no. 393.

to Boris's wishes.¹⁰³ Further discussions centred upon the northern boundary to the south-east of Niš, the region around Bitolj and Bulgarian claims in Western Thrace.¹⁰⁴ In this connection, and by way of contrast, it is worth remembering that in July 1939, King Boris had told Clodius that he did not intend to put forward any territorial claims against Yugoslavia in the future.¹⁰⁵

How then had the change taken place? On November 19, 1941, Filov told the Sobranje of the way in which Bulgaria had achieved her goal:

"The policy of peace and neutrality which has been followed since the outbreak of war has been dictated by our national interests..... and accords with the interests of the Axis powers. Bulgaria is only a small power, yet her plan of action has undoubtedly thwarted the plan of a Balkan bloc which was much discussed at one time. It was because of Bulgaria's firm policy that this bloc never materialized and the project of concentrating 100 divisions to fight the Germans was foiled. These events emphasize that Bulgaria pursued this policy in order to be in harmony with the Axis powers."¹⁰⁶

Mushanov, the former Prime Minister, related this final episode of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations in the inter-war years to the broader canvas of Bulgarian policy, in a speech he delivered to the Sobranje. In reply to the address from the throne, he recalled that

"Bulgaria had not forgotten Article 19 of the Treaty (of Neuilly), nor had she agreed to accept the boundaries stipulated therein - a settlement so eagerly desired by

103. Ribbentrop to Clodius, April 26, 1941, *ibid.*, no. 405.

104. Ribbentrop to Clodius, May 4, 1941, *ibid.*, nos. 450 and 534.

105. Memorandum by Clodius on conversation with King Boris, July 11, 1939, *G.D.*, VI, no. 673.

106. *Zora*, November 20, 1941.

the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente. Today, the Bulgarian people rejoiced at the annexation of the enslaved Bulgarian territories; this had been achieved through the help given by the great German people, and as a result of the revisionary policy which Bulgaria had always pursued. That part of the King's speech which gave expression to the people's gratitude towards the Nation which had shed its blood for their liberation, sprang from the heart of a people witnessing the end of an injustice."¹⁰⁷

As has been shown - even in the period 1939-41 - there was ample opportunity for this "injustice" to be remedied. Yugoslavia and the other Balkan states were willing to concede land which Bulgaria believed to be rightfully hers, the only precondition being that Bulgaria should join the Balkan Entente, where her interests and future lay. The fact that Bulgaria chose to remain isolated and worked actively to destroy the Yugoslav state, places the responsibility for the destruction of relations squarely upon the Sofia government and, most particularly, upon the Bulgarian King. It is perhaps hardly surprising that, after the destruction of Yugoslavia, Bulgarian propaganda should describe King Boris as "the granite foundation stone of the Balkan New Order."¹⁰⁸ Few could have had a more legitimate right to such a claim.

107. Zora, November, 15, 1941.

108. Padev, op. cit., p.73.

Chapter 10.

Conclusion.

It would be satisfying to end this study of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations upon a note of consolidation and hope; to show that a second world war and Communist dictatorship had succeeded where the Treaty of Neuilly and monarchy had failed. But, unfortunately, this cannot be done. Since 1941, relations between the two countries have continued to reflect the pattern of the inter-war years. The personalities are different; the motives are different; but the problem has remained the same.

From 1941 to 1944, Bulgaria administered the annexed region of Macedonia and also occupied those areas of Serbia which had been agreed with German leaders. The return of the Bulgarians to Macedonia was at first greeted with enthusiasm¹ but this swiftly gave way to disappointment. Michael Padev, a former correspondent for "The Times" in Sofia, visited Macedonia illegally in June 1941:

"Once we reached Macedonia, what struck us most was the ease and zest with which the Macedonian underground battled against the Bulgarian occupying authorities. There was a curfew in Skopje from seven in the evening. We stayed there a week and not a night went by without fighting in the streets. It was the same in Bitolj which the Bulgarian nationalists claim as 'the most Bulgarian of all Macedonian towns.' We found the people there as anti-Bulgarian as they are everywhere in Macedonia. They had organized several groups which at intervals retired into the mountains for

1. H. Seton-Watson, The East European Revolution, London, 1950, p. 123.

'training'. They were extremely well organized and in contact with all the guerillas in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece. In July 1941, while we were in Skopje, the Bulgarian Court Martial sentenced to death twenty-six soldiers from the Bulgarian army of occupation who had given their arms and ammunition to these guerillas."²

The number of Bulgarian troops employed in the former area of Yugoslavia grew as the scale of war increased and German troops were transferred to other fronts. 100,000 men were available and during the big campaigns against the Yugoslav partisans, twenty Bulgarian divisions were used in an attempt to crush resistance.³

Despite the obvious advantages, partisan activity in Macedonia was a cause of disagreement between the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist parties. The argument was quite simple; which party should have responsibility for the partisans in Macedonia?⁴ The Yugoslav leaders had ordered the Secretary of the Macedonian party to provoke a general uprising against the invaders - ie. the Bulgarians - but the Central Committee of the Bulgarian party maintained that since Macedonia was now part of Bulgaria, the direction of partisan activity should be under their leadership. The matter was referred to Moscow.⁵ Initially, the Kremlin favoured the Bulgarian claim but once the Yugoslav partisans had achieved such striking successes in the rest of their country, the Russians entrusted Macedonia to them. Late in 1942, Vukmanović, one of Tito's chief colleagues, went to Macedonia and, overcoming the friction and resentment which had been caused, took command of military and political operations.

2. M. Padev, Escape from the Balkans, London, 1943, p. 164.

3. F. Maclean, Disputed Barricade, London, 1957, p. 248.

4. V. Dediđer, Tito Speaks, London, 1953, p. 171.

5. M. Djilas, Conversations with Stalin, London, 1962, pp 36-7.

6. S. Clissold, Whirlwind, London, 1949, p. 135. Cf also E. Barker, Macedonia, London, 1950, pp. 83-109.

These differences over Macedonia led many communists to think that the simplest post-war solution would be a federal South Slav state in which Macedonia would be an autonomous unit. These idea had been canvassed many times before, but the Communists believed that their common ideology would overcome many of the difficulties encountered by the pre-war politicians. Dr. Smodlaka, foreign commissar for the National Liberation Front, said:

"Our first aim would be to free federal Yugoslavia. But that is not enough to ensure peace in the Balkans. We must have a Balkan federation, and the first step would be a union of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia..... I believe that the best solution to the problem would be to give Macedonia full autonomy within the federal state. This would end the Yugoslav-Bulgarian dispute."⁷

His sentiment is echoed by another writer:

"They (the National Liberation Front) talk of bringing Bulgaria into a South-Slavic federation, depending on the will of the Bulgarian people. They know that for a long time many Bulgarians have considered themselves Yugoslavs The idea of a still wider Balkan federation or confederation or union intrigues a great many Balkanites. It might begin with Greece and Yugoslavia, then take in Albania, Bulgaria (if not already in a new South-Slavic combination) and probably Rumania."⁸

In London, the Yugoslavian royal government-in-exile was also looking ahead to post-war developments. On January 15, 1942, representatives of the Greek and Yugoslav governments-in-exile signed an agreement concerning the Constitution of a Balkan

7. L.S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation: A History of the Movement towards Balkan Unity in Modern Times, Northampton, Mass., 1944, p. 272.

8. L. Adamić, My Native Land, London, 1944, pp. 446-47.

union.⁹ They saw the agreement as

"the foundation for the great constructive work which awaits Greece and Yugoslavia after the war. The Agreement is made so that other Balkan states can collaborate with Greece and Yugoslavia in this constructive work."¹⁰

Since the royal Yugoslav government had "neither people, nor army, nor territory", nothing came of their initiative but it is significant for it shows that during the war the general trend of political events was towards the foundation of a Balkan union.¹²

Events in Bulgaria speeded the process. Unlike their Yugoslav counterparts, Dimitrov and the leaders of the Bulgarian Communist Party remained in Moscow throughout the war, so contact between the leadership and the actual resistance remained remote. Nevertheless, a "Fatherland Front", embracing the Zveno group and the Agrarian and Communist parties, was set up and in its first broadcast, put out on July 17, 1942,¹³ the Front stated its intention of destroying the Bulgarian alliance with Germany and promised "immediately to withdraw the Bulgarian troops sent to crush the struggle of the brotherly Serbian people against the German and Italian invasion."¹⁴

The first Bulgarian partisans were formed in July 1941, but it was not until 1943 that good and useful relations were

9. Yugoslav Information Department, Yugoslavia at War; Yugoslav Documents No. 2, A Collection of Official Statements, London, 1942, no. XII, pp. 22-25.

10. Ibid., no. XIII, pp. 26-27.

11. Dediđer, op. cit., p. 223.

12. Padev, op. cit., p. 72.

13. From Moscow where the Christo Botev Broadcasting station was situated.

14. S.G. Evans, A Short History of Bulgaria, London, 1960, pp.178-79. The use of the word "serbian" is interesting.

established between them, and the Yugoslav partisans. Evidence shows that the scale and achievements of the Bulgarian resistance were slight when compared with the overt war which was being waged between Tito and the Germans in Yugoslavia.¹⁵ The Bulgarian Partisan movement never became a highly organized national or military force. It numbered less than 20,000 and was split into small groups which undertook local attacks, mostly against Bulgarian pro-Nazi authorities.¹⁶ Nevertheless, in so far as they were holding down enemy forces, they were of value to the Allied war effort and liaison was established with them in the summer of 1943.¹⁷ The extent of Yugoslav aid to the Bulgarian partisan movement and their co-operation with Tito's forces has been outlined by an official Yugoslav report:

"The Liberation Movement of the Yugoslav peoples enabled and fully contributed to the formation of Bulgarian partisan battalions, detachments and brigades on Yugoslav territory. In the liberated territory of Serbia and Macedonia the following Bulgarian partisan detachments were formed: the Georgi Dimitrov Brigade and the Christo Botev Battalion. It is well known that these Bulgarian partisan units, formed on Yugoslav territory, played a significant role in the development of partisan detachments in Bulgaria before the end of the war. The leadership of the National Liberation Movement of the peoples of Yugoslavia offered full political and material aid and support to the Bulgarian partisan detachments."¹⁸

15. Ibid., pp. 180-81, for statistics of resistance action.

16. H. McNeil, How did the Sattelites happen?, London, 1952, p 215.

17. F. Thompson, There is a spirit in Europe, London, 1947, gives insight to the Bulgarian partisan movement. Major Thompson, the British liaison officer, died in Bulgaria.

18. Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The White Book on Aggressive Activities by the Governments of the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Albania towards Yugoslavia, Belgrade, 1951, pp. 153-54.

In Yugoslavia, the tide of military events had brought supreme control over the destiny of Yugoslavia to Tito and the National Liberation Movement. On November 29, 1943, the second A.V.N.O.,J. Assembly at Jajce set up a provisional government, promised the creation of a federal Yugoslavia and forbade the return of King Peter and the royal government. The resolutions of the Jajce Assembly were accepted by Šubašić, the royal Prime Minister, in an agreement signed with Tito on June 16, 1944.

In Bulgaria too, the power of the monarchy had weakened. King Boris, who had retained full control of Bulgarian policy despite powerful German influence, died on August 28, 1943, eleven days after returning from a stormy meeting with Hitler. It has been suggested that the King, seeing the war turning against Germany, had decided, like Italy, to come to an agreement with the Allies.¹⁹ His death left a power vacuum in Bulgaria which his successor, Crown Prince Simeon, still a minor, was unable to fill. A Regency led by the late King's brother, Cyril, was set up. The Filov government fell in May 1944 and was replaced by a new administration under Bagrianov, a former Agrarian. On August 22, 1944, it was announced that all Bulgarian troops would be withdrawn from Serbian territory and on the following day, Bulgaria declared that she had "officially withdrawn from the war."²⁰ On September 2, the Regency set up a new government led by the right-wing politician, Muraviev. It represented those parties who opposed the pro-German policy but were unwilling to renounce their country's gains in Macedonia.

19. N.P. Nikolaev, La destinée tragique d'un roi, Uppsala, 1952, p. 186, would seem to indicate that a change of political orientation was imminent at the time of Boris's death. For the connection between the two, see ibid., pp. 93-5 and 186-96. Cf. also Padev, op. cit., pp. 77-78 and F. von Papen, Memoirs, London, 1952, pp. 501-2.

20. M.Padev, Dimitrov wastes no bullets, London, 1948, pp. 34-5.

The formation of this government led the Soviet Union to declare war on Bulgaria on September 5, Four days later, in a coup d'état timed to coincide with the arrival of the Red Army, the Fatherland Front seized power, Kimon Gheorgiev once more became Prime Minister and an armistice was signed between Bulgaria and the Allies on October 28, 1944. According to the post-war government in Belgrade:

"The Yugoslav government allowed and rendered possible a certain amount of participation by the Bulgarian Army in the final operations against the German troops in Yugoslavia, despite the heavy wounds inflicted by the Bulgarian Fascist invaders of Yugoslav territory."²¹

Through its direction of military operations and its dominating influence in the National Liberation Front, the Communist Party was soon in full control of Yugoslavia. Marshal Tito, who was Prime Minister of the new republic, outlined Yugoslavia's future policy with Bulgaria in a speech at Mladenovac on July 9, 1945:

"Yugoslavia has close, comradely relations of kinship with Bulgaria. Those barriers which were created, not by the Bulgarian peasantry or workers, not by Yugoslav workers or peasants, but by Yugoslav and Bulgarian reactionaries and foreign imperialists, are down. The fence is down. Today, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria are on the road towards complete unity against any who may dare to assail their liberty and independence."²²

This view was echoed by Kolarov, one of the leading Communists and Dimitrov's successor, on November 29, 1945. Later in his speech, Kolarov declared:

"The Bulgarian people sincerely welcome the formation

21. Yugoslav White Book, op. cit., p. 154.

22. Yugoslav Embassy Office, Review of Policy. Speech by Marshal Tito, Belgrade, 1945.

of the Macedonian federal unit within the frontiers of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia."²³

On October 9, 1946, the Bulgarian Vice-Premier also admitted that Macedonia was no longer a source of friction between the two countries:

"Tito's Yugoslavia and the Bulgaria of the Fatherland Front are ready to support with all their might the union of the Macedonian people in its own people's republic of Macedonia within the framework of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia."²⁴

After the war, to prove that there was now no ill-will between the two countries, Yugoslavia undertook a whole series of measures to "normalize" her relations with Bulgaria. Reparation claims to the value of 25 million dollars for damage done by the Bulgarian Army on Yugoslav territory were waived, as was a claim for restitution of part of the goods which Bulgarian troops had removed to their country.²⁵ Both these generous acts were acknowledged by the Bulgarian government, in the Sobranje, on August 25, 1947.²⁶

Such actions led to a speedy rapprochement and there were hopes of some kind of confederation between the two countries. The question of Balkan federation and in particular of a federative union between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria had been under discussion since November 1944 when Kardelj, one of the leading figures in the National Liberation Front, went to Sofia to talk it over with Bulgarian leaders.²⁷ At that time, although both parties were agreed that it was in principle desirable, no progress had been possible. This was due to two factors. One was the unfavourable attitude of the Western Allies, the other, the difficulty of deciding on what terms federation

23. Yugoslav White Book, op. cit., p. 158.

24. Ibid., loc. cit. 25. Dediđer, op. cit., p. 313.

26. Yugoslav White Book, op. cit., pp. 155-56.

27. Dediđer, op. cit., loc. cit.

should take place. The Bulgarians wished for a union between the two countries on equal terms, whilst the Yugoslav attitude, as summarized by Dedijer, was as follows. They maintained that

"Yugoslavia consists of six separate republics which are equal members of the Yugoslav federation; that some of these republics, like Serbia and Montenegro for example, had been independent states long before Bulgaria and that a federation could only be created if Bulgaria became one of the seven South Slav states in the new federation."²⁸

Nevertheless, this difference of opinion was regarded as a matter of practical detail and not a genuine obstacle to the federative idea.

From 1945-7, Russian interest in Eastern Europe was still primarily strategic and economic. As long as these countries could be controlled by teams of Soviet administrators and experts, and the Red Army maintain its dominating military position in the area, the ideological considerations remained of minor importance. But by 1947, there was a movement among Communist leaders towards a federal or quasi-federal bloc between their countries which was liable to present Soviet Russia with the fait accompli of a Balkan or East European kind of third force.

In June 1947, Tito said in public for the first time - and, significantly enough, to Western correspondents - that the "free Balkan peoples" should form "a strong monolithic entity."²⁹ At the end of July, a Bulgarian delegation, led by Dimitrov, visited Yugoslavia and had a top-level conference with Yugoslav leaders at Bled. At the Conference, the draft text of a treaty between the two countries was approved and several agreements governing customs facilities and economic co-operation were signed. At the end of the Conference, Dimitrov said: "We are happy to note that all questions were settled in

28. Ibid., p. 314.

29. G. Ionescu, The Break-up of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe, London, 1965, p. 30.

full unanimity between the two government delegations."³⁰

A Yugoslav government delegation headed by Marshal Tito, paid a return visit to Bulgaria in November 1947. The visit was made the occasion for the signing of the Treaty which had been approved at the Bled Conference.

The Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance, signed on November 27, 1947, pledged the two countries to "co-operate closely and fully for the benefit of both countries on all questions relating to the future of their peoples and their mutual relations."³¹ At the time, the Russians had no objection to the Treaty. Before it was signed, a draft copy had been sent to Moscow. The only point which the Russians had questioned concerned the duration of the Treaty. They suggested that the time limit should be twenty years and not "for ever" as had been originally proposed.³² There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Bulgarian leaders at this time. Dimitrov was speaking the truth when he called the Treaty

"a sincere expression of the sovereign will of our peoples to live in peace and brotherly relations, to help each other in a fraternal manner, to work together side by side for prosperity, to defend ourselves together against all enemies, to work together in the stabilization of a lasting peace in the Balkans, in South-East Europe and the whole world."³³

Tito himself told the crowds in Sofia that "we shall establish co-operation so general and so close that the question of federation will be a mere formality."³⁴ A fortnight later, Kostov, then Bulgarian Vice-Premier, who was later to be killed during the Stalinist purge, said confidently that events would

30. Yugoslav White Book, op. cit., loc. cit.

31. Ibid., loc. cit.

32. Dedijer, op. cit., p. 328.

33. Yugoslav White Book, op. cit., loc. cit.

34. Maclean, op. cit., p. 360

lead "in the near future to a union of all South Slavs and to the creation of a common Slav country."³⁵

Stalin regarded these moves with some alarm. On January 28, 1948, Pravda published a scathing condemnation of the whole idea. The paper declared: "These countries need no questionable or fabricated federation or confederation or customs union"³⁶ and, soon after, telegrams were sent to Sofia and Belgrade ordering that they promptly send delegations to Moscow.³⁷ According to Djilas, one of the Yugoslav representatives who was present, the two delegations met Stalin in a bitter and stormy encounter at the Kremlin on February 10. Early in the meeting, Molotov is reported to have stated that the Yugoslav-Bulgarian Treaty had been signed not only without the knowledge of, but contrary to the wishes of, the Soviet Government, who wished Bulgaria to make no political alliances before a definitive peace treaty had been signed.³⁸ Later, Stalin said that he had nothing against a federation between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria - in fact they could create one immediately.³⁹ The atmosphere of the meeting and the harsh attitude of the Russian leader made a bad impression upon the Yugoslav delegation:

"When the Yugoslav delegates went back to their Embassy, their unanimous opinion was that Stalin had demanded an immediate federation between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in order to break up the unity of Yugoslavia. Therefore the Yugoslav delegates came to the conclusion that they should not hurry the federation with Bulgaria."⁴⁰

A month later, Molotov and Stalin began to attack the Yugoslav leaders in a series of letters. Dedijer has said that:

"the threat of Tito's popularity coupled with the prospect of a South Slav federation, to all intents and purposes independent of the Soviet Union and free from the

35. Ionescu, op. cit., loc. cit. 38. Djilas, op. cit., p. 157.

36. Dedijer, op. cit., pp. 323-4. 39. Ibid., p. 160.

37. Ibid., loc. cit.

40. Dedijer, op. cit., p. 332.

direction of the Kremlin, were the major factors in precipitating the 1948 crisis with the Soviet Union."⁴¹

On June 28, 1948, Yugoslavia was expelled from the "family of fraternal Communist parties." This excommunication shattered the most recent hopes of a settlement between the two countries. Although the Bulgarian government hastened to say that the Cominform resolution would in no way affect the friendly relations between them, contact between them deteriorated and, after a few months, a Bulgarian spokesman on foreign affairs was forced to admit that it was impossible to separate party issues from those of the State.⁴² The expulsion also heralded the return of the armed comitadjis⁴³ and the recurrence of frontier incidents reminiscent of pre-war days.⁴⁴ Yugoslav officials were expelled,⁴⁵ and there were reports of attacks against Yugoslav citizens in Bulgaria.⁴⁶ The Yugoslav authorities saw this new Bulgarian policy as

"an attempt to break the ground for the forcible detachment of the Peoples' Republic of Macedonia from Yugoslavia, which is an expression of the Greater Bulgarian policy of the present Bulgarian state and Party leaders. The latter will not and do not want to reconcile themselves to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Macedonian people won their national liberation on the basis of the right of self-determination, through the foundation of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia."⁴⁷

41. Ibid., p. 314.

42. Yugoslav White Book, p. 17. Documents nos. 23-24, pp. 78-79.

43. Ibid., p. 41. See also document nos. 254-60, pp. 393-401

44. Ibid., document nos. 270-75, pp. 417-24.

45. Ibid., document no. 73, pp. 195-96. Between June 1949-January 1950, Bulgaria expelled 10 Yugoslav officials.

46. Ibid., document nos. 78 (p. 206) and 80 (p. 209).

47. Ibid., p. 41. See also document nos. 254-60, pp. 393-401.

In fact, Bulgaria and the Macedonian issue were once more being used as pawns by an external power opposed to Yugoslavia. In the past, it had been Italy and Germany; now it was Russia. On October 1, 1949, after a mere two years, the Bulgarian government officially renounced the 1947 Treaty of Friendship.⁴⁸ Shortly after this, the military strength of Bulgaria was raised from the 65,000, permitted under the Peace Treaty, to 220,000 and eight Bulgarian divisions were assembled on the Yugoslav frontier.⁴⁹ This manoeuvre came at a time when there was already great tension between Russia and the Western nations. Yugoslavia, which had refused to accept the Marshall Plan, now found herself in a difficult position. Having been expelled from the Soviet bloc, Yugoslavia was now isolated and a prey to external military intervention. Such a threat to Yugoslavia's hard-won independence - and a repetition of the events of April 1941 was by no means out of the question⁵⁰ - brought to an end all prospect of friendly relations between the two countries and the rapprochement of the post-war era, which of all attempts to unite the South Slav peoples probably had the greatest chance of success, came to nought.

Thus the problem remained the same. Despite repeated efforts to bring them together, these two South Slav states of Yugoslavia

48. Ibid., document no. 57, pp. 153-61. The Bulgarians broke three other treaties at this time. The Agreement on Facilitating Crossing of the Frontier (signed on August 27, 1947) was abrogated on October 3, 1949; the Protocol on Postal and Telecommunication services (signed on February 7, 1945) was renounced on March 1, 1950, and the Agreement on the utilization of properties cut by the Yugoslav-Bulgarian frontier line (signed on August 25, 1947) was cancelled by official note on June 30, 1950.

49. Ibid., p. 46.

50. Maclean, op. cit., p. 400.

and Bulgaria remain independent and divided. Everything - language, race, religion, economics, history and, above all, political experience - demonstrates that they should be one. Yet each attempt to promote closer relations between them has ended in estrangement and renewed bitterness. Before the First World War, from 1918-41, and after the Second World War, the pattern has been repeated again and again. On no fewer than seven occasions,⁵¹ there were hopes that the work of dedicated men would be crowned with success. On no fewer than seven occasions, these hopes were dashed.⁵² No single person, party or country can be held responsible and there is no single factor which can explain this sad inability to create unity, stability and friendship between them.

Twenty-three years, the period from 1918-41, is by historical standards a sizeable span of time; it amounts to the passing of a generation. It is a period which tended to crystallize the experience and disillusionment of a century of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations. In these years between the wars, there are certain fixed points in the political firmament. There are Yugoslavia's leaders and Bulgaria's leaders, the Yugoslav people and the Bulgarian people. The supporters of Balkan Federation are there also and the Macedonian "nationalists". Finally, outside the Balkans but deeply involved in their affairs, there are the Great Powers; Italy and Germany, Russia, Britain and France.

Yugoslavia emerged from the First World War as the most powerful and influential nation in the Balkans. It had strong military forces and close connections with the West. The dynasty, drawn from Serbian and Montenegrin royal families, was firmly established and went back to the days of the liberation from the Turks. Above all, it had been victorious in war - in three successive wars, which had liberated the remaining Slavs under

51. In 1867, 1904, 1912, 1923, 1934, 1937 and 1947.

52. In 1885, 1913, 1915, 1923, 1934, 1941 and 1949.

foreign rule and united them into a single Yugoslav state. For a century, Serbia had regarded herself as the torch-bearer of the Yugo-Slav movement. Whether her mission was motivated by nationalism or "Serbian Imperialism", the task of uniting the Slav peoples of South-East Europe was accomplished and the Triune Kingdom represented the triumph of the Yugo-Slav movement. Despite their bitter internal quarrels and rivalries, the aim of Yugoslavian statesmen in the period 1918-41, was to consolidate their Kingdom and to maintain the status quo. King Alexander, Pašić, Stojadinović and even Radić, subscribed to this view. Thus, although Yugoslavia was sincere in her desire to show friendship towards, and seek closer relations with, Bulgaria, she was determined to avoid any alteration to the status quo and reacted bitterly to any Bulgarian attempt to undermine the Kingdom.

To preserve the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and give the Kingdom the necessary time to solve its internal difficulties, the country needed peace. As in the Balkans, so in the wider field of European diplomacy, Yugoslavia was a determined supporter of the Peace Settlement. In pursuing this policy, she found common cause with the other Succession states - Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Greece. With them, Yugoslavia worked for an area-wide consolidation of Eastern Europe, first through the Little Entente, then in the Balkan Conferences, later in the Balkan Entente and ultimately, it was hoped, in a Balkan union. Such a union or confederation would establish a lasting peace in the Balkans and present a united front in the event of any future European conflict. The Balkans, then, would constitute a solid third force in European affairs and no longer be a happy hunting ground for external powers anxious to provoke war or seek cheap territorial gains.

Bulgaria, however, did not see the situation in the same light. Her country had been liberated by Russia at a great expense in money and human life. After her liberation and

by the Treaty of San Stefano, the proposed "Big Bulgaria" was a huge Kingdom stretching right across the Balkan peninsula. Even when the Great Powers blocked this proposal at the Congress of Berlin, the Turkish government continued to recognize the Bulgarian Exarchate Church as the official Orthodox body in Turkish Macedonia. The Russian intention and the Turkish recognition were seen by Bulgarian leaders to be an open admission of Bulgaria's right to Macedonia. Yet, on each occasion upon which she attempted to recover what she believed to be rightfully hers - in 1912, 1913 and 1915, she met resistance from other Balkan states, notably Serbia and Greece. Whether her aims were governed by national greed or "legitimate rights", Bulgaria sustained a sense of thwarted greatness. One writer has said:

"It is because Bulgaria has a pre-capitalist economy, is free from any marked social divisions, or religious or ideological problems, that, by reason of her remote position from the main currents of ideas and economic developments, it is natural that political life should turn principally to sentimental questions of national policy..... Schools, tradition, religion and Press have hammered home, from 1914-44, the legend of San Stefano. For this reason, Bulgaria's psychological structure bears the indelible marks of a happiness unfulfilled."⁵³

By 1918, the Bulgarian people must have realized the misfortunes which this quest for greatness entailed. As a people, they did not renounce what they believed to be historically theirs but, like Stamboliski, they looked to a solution of the problem through a policy of closer friendship with Yugoslavia. On a purely personal level, the attitude of the Bulgarian people towards the Yugoslavs in the inter-war period, was friendly. Stamboliski's government of 1919-23 and the Fatherland Front of 1944-47 were probably the governments most

53. P. Pipinelis, Caitiff Bulgaria, London, 1944, pp. 57-8.

representative of popular feeling since the First World War. Both these governments were interested in the fate of Macedonia, but both showed a desire to shelve the past and work towards a genuine South Slav rapprochement.

Such a policy was opposed by a powerful minority in Bulgaria. In any country there are those who may be labelled "reactionaries" and in Bulgaria, those who found themselves unable to renounce their country's right to greatness (and to Macedonia) resolutely refused to accept the Peace Settlement as binding upon their nation. Embittered by the country's poverty, inflamed by defeat, devoured by hatred and revenge, they were unscrupulous in their attempts to secure a revision of the Treaty of Neuilly. The political capital of Bulgaria, Sofia, contained many of the most ardent Macedonian nationalists and because of their propensity for violence and murder, they obtained a power and authority out of all proportion to their numbers. Using as their weapons, violence, murder and intimidation, they secured support for their anti-Yugoslav policy and official tolerance for their comitadji raids against Yugoslavia. The governments of 1923-34 and 1935-44, and the Bulgarian leaders of these years, represented not the Bulgarian people but this more extreme and powerful minority.

In this difficult political situation, the position of the King was all-important. Unfortunately for Bulgaria, the First World War had seriously weakened the power of the monarchy, and King Boris - as his most trenchant critic has pointed out - was not a Bulgarian:

"These Coburgs, an alien dynasty, feared that South Slav friendship would lead to South Slav federation, and federation implies a dual Bulgaro-Yugoslav monarchy in which the native Slav, Karadjordjević dynasty, reigning already over the greater Kingdom would be preferred. It has also been said that fear of a South Slav Federation was one of the prime motives in King Ferdinand's decision to attack

Serbia in 1915 - for had the two countries emerged from the World War as friends or allies, the movement for federation might well have been irresistible."⁵⁴

Thus during the greater part of the period from 1918-41, Bulgaria was led by men opposed to all that Yugoslavia was, and to all that she hoped to achieve. Royal approval for their policies endowed their hostile actions with a certain respectability. There is ample evidence to show that King Boris exercised full control over his country's foreign policy and this policy was instrumental in destroying all attempts at Balkan unity or co-operation. Without Bulgarian participation, the schemes and policies of Yugoslavia, Rumania and Greece inevitably appeared to be directed 'against' Bulgaria and this, in addition to the bitterness and resentments which already existed, created a potent and dangerous source of dissatisfaction at the very heart of the Balkan peninsula.

Having this attitude towards Yugoslavia and her Balkan neighbours, Bulgaria's natural allies were the Central Powers and those who were equally interested in destroying the "Yugoslav mosaic". For this reason, Bulgaria proved susceptible to Italian influence. More significant however, is the connection with Germany. In the event of any continental war, Bulgaria stood to gain by a German victory. Neither Russia nor the Western powers were in a position to offer Bulgaria territorial gains at the expense of her neighbours - although they have on occasions sought to do so. But the Central Powers, who almost invariably found themselves opposed to Serbia-Yugoslavia, were in a position to aid Bulgarian expansion. Furthermore, the geographical link of the Danube, and the financial ties with bankers in Vienna and Berlin were also contributory factors. In the inter-war years, both Bulgaria and Germany had a vested interest in treaty revision and both these interests involved the partition of Yugoslavia. When King Ferdinand fled from

54. J. Swire, Bulgarian Conspiracy, London, 1939, p. 23.

his country in 1918, he said on his arrival in Vienna:

"For thirty years, I tried to unite Bulgaria with Austria-Hungary and Germany. I did not succeed. My mission is ended."⁵⁵ For dynastic reasons and also because the pro-German policy was consonant with the views of the most powerful political elements in Bulgaria, King Boris adopted the policy of his father. He conducted it in a more subtle and cautious manner, but the object was the same.

These then were the principal obstacles in the path of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations in the period 1918-41. Despite the great efforts which were made, the powers of disunity, animosity and strife prevailed. Post-war developments have shown that the problems of the inter-war years were by no means an isolated episode. Although the Second World War brought an end to the jealousy and rivalry between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, it led to external interference by the Soviet Union. Had it not been for this Russian intrusion, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria might well have reached the stage where the question of federation would indeed have been a mere formality. But ever since the declining power of Ottoman rule gave way to independent nation states, the Balkans have been a prey to external intrusion, either diplomatic or military. In the course of a century, five great nations - Austria, Italy, Germany, Russia and now China - have established a political foothold in the Balkan peninsula. Perhaps it is just because the Eastern Question was solved on national rather than imperial lines that these tensions have occurred. With the South Slav peoples divided - and from time to time actively hostile towards each other - the peninsula has continued to present an open invitation to Great Power intrigue. Through their inability to resolve their own differences, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria have incurred a legacy of hate

55. K. Todorov, Balkan Firebrand. An autobiography of a Rebel, Soldier and Statesman, Chicago, 1943, p. 103.

and distrust which only time can heal. Yet, as long as the ~~day~~ division lasts, external and hostile forces can still inflame historical prejudice, foster jealousy and fan the fires of strife. In the years from 1918-41, we have seen the most active period in the history of relations between the two countries. We have seen the greatest efforts for unity and also the greatest failure and despair. Whilst Belgrade and Sofia remain politically divided, there can be no sure foundation for peace and stability in the Balkans. For the South Slavs form the majority of the population and the territories they occupy are strategically the most important. The axis - Belgrade-Sofia - is a genuine axis along which the destiny of the Balkans revolves. And this is why the future of Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations will remain the last and most perplexing aspect of the Eastern Question.

Appendices.

Appendix A.The April Protocol of 1867.

"Whereas the present circumstances call upon all oppressed nations in Turkey to take measures necessary for their liberation, we, the Bulgarians living in Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia, are assembled to deliberate upon and discover means for the liberation of our dear fatherland, in order that we might join the ranks of the free nations and manifest to the world that we exist.

In order to attain this desirable end, it is necessary to select a neighbouring nation which, for our mutual benefit, will aid us to attain our liberation and for such a nation we can prefer no other than the Serbian, which in its nationality, its faith and its geographic position, has been near us for centuries; our interests therefore are identical, and hence only with their close brotherhood we can and will become an independent nation.

As a basis for such fraternal rapprochement, we propose, in accordance with existing conditions, to adopt the following twelve points.

- 1) A fraternal union should be effected between the Serbs and the Bulgars under the name of the Yugoslav Kingdom.
- 2) The Yugoslav Kingdom shall consist of Serbia and Bulgaria (the Bulgarian lands to include Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia).
- 3) The head of the new government shall be the present

Prince of Serbia, Michael Obrenović with the right of succession.

- 4) The Kingdom shall have one national flag, composed of the insignia of the two races. The same shall hold for the future coinage.
- 5) Each country shall retain its own dialect for official use, hence the officials will be required to belong to that nationality among which they serve and to speak the dialect of that country.
- 6) The Serbian laws in force today are accepted by us and shall be translated into the Bulgar dialect, All the decrees of the Yugoslav kingdom shall be published simultaneously, without exception, in the two dialects, Serbian and Bulgarian.
- 7) The State religion shall be Orthodoxy but all confessions will be free.
- 8) Religious matters shall be governed by an independent synod, composed of both races. This synod shall consist of a Metropolitan Primate and the bishops of the dioceses according to the dialect of the population. These nominations must be confirmed in every case by the governing authority.
- 9) The Head of State shall select the members of the ministerial cabinet from the two races.
- 10) The national representation shall be made up in proportion to the population of the state and in accordance with the form existing in Serbia today for this purpose.
- 11) The capital of the Yugoslav kingdom shall be selected by the national representatives.
- 12) The head of the clergy and the synod shall always reside in the capital.

However, in order to bring into execution the common desire, we find it judicious to choose a committee of seven persons, residing at present in Bucharest who will occupy themselves, as best they can in the circumstances, in the accomplishment of our national desire.

The members of this committee (named), subject to the convention of the future Yugoslav kingdom, will act in the spirit of the two following conditions:-

- 1) The accord will come into force on the day when it is signed by the Serbian government.
- 2) The Serbian government considers itself bound by this convention to lend all material and moral aid for the accomplishment of this desire, conforming to the decisions of the committee.

May God protect us and help us in our sacred decision.

April 5, 1867.

Appendix B.

Official Statistics of the Bulgarian
Statistical Department 1926.

The statistics give the numbers of those born beyond Bulgarian frontiers as follows:-

From territory now Greek, (108,648)	Macedonia 69,449. Thrace 38,572. <u>Elsewhere 627.</u>
From territory now Yugoslav (52,311)	South Serbia 51,695. W. Frontier 14,770. <u>Elsewhere 5,846.</u>
From territory now Rumanian (29,846)	Dobrudja 23,334. <u>Elsewhere 6,512.</u>
From territory now Turkish (85,658)	In Europe 69,734. <u>In Asia 15,924.</u> <u>276,463.</u>

Of all these, 234,768 were officially described as Bulgarians. Of them, 221,191 emigrated between 1912-25. These statistics show that only 101,144 Macedonian immigrants

were in Bulgaria, of whom two-thirds came from Greek territory.

These statistics flatly condemn Supremist propaganda which claimed that the National Committee represented 700,000 refugees from Yugoslav oppression. It is also to be noted that the National Committee claimed to speak for "700,000 unliberated Bulgarians" in Yugoslavia - whereas Yugoslav figures for 1931 show the total Orthodox Slav population as only 321,000 in the areas ceded to Yugoslavia under and subsequent to the 1912 Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty (ie. in unliberated Turkish territory where the Bulgarian Exarchate Church had been the official church.

Appendix C.

Minorities within Bulgaria.

The official Bulgarian statistics show that, whilst Bulgarian nationalists bewailed the existence of "Bulgarian minorities" abroad, there was a sizeable proportion of alien minorities within Bulgaria itself. These statistics on the Bulgarian population in 1926 are given by G. Guenov, Das Schicksal Bulgariens, Berlin, 1940, p. 128. Guenov was a Professor of Sofia University and his statistics relate to a population of 4,557,706, where 20% belong to minority groups:-

Turks	588,105.
Tziganes	134,844.
Rumanians	70,631.
Jews	46,558.
Armenians	27,322.
Greeks	10,564.
Others	<u>43,011.</u>
	<u>921,035.</u>

Appendix D.Commercial Trade Treaties

Albania	with Bulgaria (1926); Greece (1926); Yugoslavia (1926)(1934).
Bulgaria	" Albania (1926); Greece (1927); Turkey (1930); Yugoslavia (1934).
Greece	" Albania (1926); Bulgaria (1927); Turkey (1930)(1934); Yugoslavia (1927).
Turkey	" Bulgaria (1930); Greece (1930)(1934); Rumania (1930); Yugoslavia (1933).
Rumania	" Turkey (1930); Yugoslavia (1930).
Yugoslavia	" Albania (1926)(1934); Greece (1927); Rumania (1930); Turkey (1933); Bulgaria (1934).

There were thirteen Trade Treaties signed between the Balkan nations in the period 1926-34. I have listed them country by country. The source for these dates was R.J. Kerner and H.N. Howard, The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente 1930-35, Berkeley, California, 1936, p. 22.

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