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THE ROLE OF THESSALONIKI IN BULGARIAN POLICY DURING  
THE BALKAN WARS

Thessaloniki (Bulgarian: Solun, Turkish: Selanik) is an ancient city whose origins date back to Alexander the Great<sup>1</sup>. It was an important population and economic center in Roman and Byzantine times. In more recent times it has been an important port on the Aegean Sea and the natural outlet for the hinterland of the Vardar valley. At the beginning of the twentieth century the population of Thessaloniki was mixed, and included a plurality Shephardic Jews, along with Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Armenians and others<sup>2</sup>.

The Ottoman Turks had controlled Thessaloniki since 1430. It served as the headquarters for the Young Turk revolt in 1908, which had attempted to modernize the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman rule, however, continued to falter and other states coveted Thessaloniki. Although the large Bulgaria created by the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878 did not include Thessaloniki, many Bulgarians wanted to rule the city because of its geographic and economic importance. Thessaloniki was the natural outlet for Macedonia. Most Bulgarians considered the Slavic speaking inhabitants of Macedonia to be their ethnic kinsmen. They regarded Macedonia as wrongfully excluded from Bulgaria by the Treaty of Berlin, and rightfully theirs. Greece, however, advanced strong claims to Thessaloniki for ethnic as well as economic and historical reasons.

1. Research for this paper was conducted in part with the assistance of an IREX grant for Bulgaria in 1983 and Mankato State University Research Grants in 1991 and 1992.

2. According to the Ottoman census of 1906/07 in the Thessaloniki administrative district, or vilayet, which included the city of Thessaloniki and a considerable hinterland, there were 226,586 Muslims, 185,685 Greeks, 82,481 Bulgarians, 48,789 Jews and 21,843 others. Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914* (Madison, 1985) 166-67. Most of the Bulgarians lived in the hinterland; most of the Jews resided within the Thessaloniki city limits. Greek and Bulgarian sources vary widely on the issue of population. See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission To Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington D.C., 1914) (hereafter referred to as Carnegie Report) 194-195 for a discussion of this problem.

When the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-12 demonstrated the weakness of the Ottoman army, the Bulgarians decided to act on their claims to Macedonia. In March 1912 they concluded an alliance with Serbia which arranged for Russian support to settle their conflicting claims in Macedonia. The Bulgarians also decided to seek Greek assistance. While they did not regard the Greek army highly, they considered the Greek navy to be an important military asset because it could hinder the transfer of Ottoman troops from Asia to Europe<sup>3</sup>. An alliance with the Greeks would also provide the Serbs and Bulgarians with a pan-Balkan aspect for their campaign against the Ottomans.

On Bulgarian initiative talks began in Sofia in February 1912. Almost immediately they encountered difficulty over the issue of Thessaloniki. The Greeks considered Thessaloniki as a *conditio sine qua non* for any negotiations<sup>4</sup>. The Bulgarians likewise regarded Thessaloniki as vital for their anticipated control of Macedonia<sup>5</sup>. The talks remained stuck for much of the spring of 1912. Finally, the Bulgarians and Greeks reached an agreement in May, by simply disregarding the territorial issue.

The treaty Bulgaria and Greece signed on 29 May 1912 contained no provision for a partition of territory in Macedonia<sup>6</sup>. The Bulgarian prime minister, Ivan E. Geshov, later claimed that he lacked time to achieve such a settlement<sup>7</sup>. The Bulgarians were anxious to begin the campaign against the Ottomans. In fact, the Bulgarians considered themselves to be militarily superior to the Greeks. Geshov later admitted that the Bulgarians hoped to reach Thessaloniki before them<sup>8</sup>. The Bulgarians thought that the Greeks, who lacked a strong army and a great power patron, could not contest Bulgarian claims in Macedonia. Thus, no territorial arrangement was necessary.

War between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan alliance began on 18

3. *Prilozhenie kŭm tom pŭrvi ot doklada na parlamentarnata izpitatelna komisiya* (Sofia, 1918) (Danev) 15, (Geshov) 122; St. Danev, "Balkanskiyat sŭyuz", *Rodina* II 2 (1940) 53.

4. *Prilozhenie I* (Geshov) 122.

5. *Prilozhenie I* (Danev) 15, 17. See also *Nashata дума. Vuzrazeniya na bivshite ministri I. E. Geshov, Dr. S. Danev, T. Teodorov, M. I. Madzharov, I. Peev i P. Abrashev sreshtu obvineniyata na dŭrzhavniya sŭd ot 1923 godina* (Sofia, 1925) 61.

6. For the text of the Bulgaro-Greek treaty of May 1912 see B. D. Kesiyakov, *Prinos kŭm diplomaticheskata istoriya na Bŭlgariya, 1878-1925* (Sofia, 1925-26) 148-51, I. E. Geshov, *Balkan League* (London, 1915) 127-130. All dates except as noted (o.s. for old style or Julian calendar) are given according to the Gregorian calendar. Bulgaria retained the Julian calendar, 13 days behind the Gregorian in the Twentieth Century, until 1916.

7. *Prilozhenie I* (Geshov) 118; I. E. Geshov, *Prestupnoto bezumie i anketata po nego* (Sofia, 1914) 132-33.

8. *Prilozhenie I* (Geshov) 122.

October 1912. Geography forced the Bulgarians to commit their main armies to confront the Turks in Thrace. Only a relatively small force, the 7th Rilski Division, accompanied by Crown Prince Boris and Prince Kyril, crossed over the border into Macedonia. Urged on by the Bulgarian government and meeting little opposition, these troops hurried south toward Thessaloniki<sup>9</sup>. Advance units of the division arrived in the city on 9 November. The commander of this force, General Petur Todorov, telegraphed Tsar Ferdinand, "From today Thessaloniki is under the scepter of Your Majesty"<sup>10</sup>. Overjoyed by this success, Ferdinand telegraphed Crown Prince Boris, "How I envy you, my dear son, for your historic entry into the City of St. Paul"<sup>11</sup>. The Bulgarian Tsar possessed a romantic sensibility which made the annexation of Thessaloniki attractive.

Unfortunately for the Bulgarians, the Greeks, led by Crown Prince Constantine, had entered Thessaloniki the previous day. The Ottoman garrison, seeking favorable capitulation terms, preferred to surrender to the Greeks<sup>12</sup>. The Bulgarian Prime Minister insisted, "Entry into a city is not a title to rule that city"<sup>13</sup>. Even though the Bulgarians had lost the race to Thessaloniki, they intended to enforce their claims to the city. An uneasy co-dominium ensued.

At this point, the Greeks proposed negotiations over a division of conquered territory. The Greek prime minister, Eleutherios Venizelos, indicated that Greece wanted Thessaloniki, along with the major hinterland city of Seres and the port of Kavala<sup>14</sup>. The Bulgarians quickly rejected the Greek proposal. Geshov wrote, "Let Venizelos compare the size of our army and

9. Georgi Markov, *Bŭlgariya v balkanski sŭyuz sreshtu Osmanskata imperiya 1912-1913* (Sofia, 1989), 83. For the military details see Kiril Kosev, *Podvigŭt* (Sofia, 1983) 97-100.

10. Ivan Fichev, *Balkanskata vojna 1912-1913* (Sofia, 1940), 231.

11. Archive of Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria, Hoover Institute, Stanford California, telegram of Ferdinand to the Prince of Tŭrnovo (Boris) n.d. (late autumn 1912). Researcher's note: The Hoover Institute had only just started to catalogue this material in the summer of 1991 when I began my work. As a result not all references to this source are numbered.

12. Markov, 91-92. The Greeks evidently spent large sums of money to induce the Turkish commanders to surrender to them.

13. Narodno sŭbranie, *Doklad na parlamentarnata izpitatelna komisiya* (hereafter referred to as *DPIK*) (Sofia, 1918-19) I 565 no. 12. According to the Greeks the Bulgarians were allowed to enter Thessaloniki only as a courtesy to Crown Prince Boris, who accompanied the Bulgarian troops. Hellenic Army History Directorate, Army General Headquarters, "Hellenic Army Operations during the Balkan Wars", in Bela K. Kiraly and Dimitrije Djordjevic, eds., *East Central Europe and the Balkan Wars* (Boulder, 1987) 102.

14. *DPIK* I 560 no. 3, 560-61 no. 4, 561 no. 5.

the amount of our sacrifices with those of the Greeks, and he will understand the outlandishness of the project and our categorical refusal to accept it even as the basis for discussion"<sup>15</sup>. This concept of proportionality favored the Bulgarians because of their great military effort in Thrace and the large number of casualties they had suffered there. The Bulgarians thought that it justified their maximum demands, including Thessaloniki<sup>16</sup>. Instead, it provided a basis for hostility between Greece and Bulgaria.

The Bulgarians emphasized their claims to Thessaloniki with a visit by Tsar Ferdinand. On 19 December 1912 he entered the city and reviewed the Bulgarian contingent stationed there<sup>17</sup>. While Ferdinand was there he reluctantly met with the King George I of Greece and his sons<sup>18</sup>. This meeting stressed the pretensions of both Greece and Bulgaria to Thessaloniki.

In November the success of the Balkan allies, and especially the great Bulgarian victories in eastern Thrace at Kirk Kilisse and Buni Hissar/Lule Burgas, forced the Turks to seek an armistice. During the subsequent peace talks between the Ottomans and the Balkan allies held in London, the Greeks renewed their efforts to achieve a settlement with the Bulgarians. Venizelos offered a concrete proposal for a Greco-Bulgarian frontier stretching from the left bank of the Struma River to Lake Prespa, with Thessaloniki falling to the Greeks<sup>19</sup>. This proposal alarmed the Bulgarian delegate in London, Stoyan Danev. He informed his government that the Greeks might have to be forced out of Thessaloniki<sup>20</sup>. Danev's opinions commanded much attention in Sofia because his Progressive Liberal Party governed in coalition with Geshov's Nationalist Party. Danev was a minister without portfolio in the government, and functioned as a deputy prime minister and deputy minister for foreign affairs.

By this time the Bulgarians and their Serbian allies were beginning to quarrel over the division of Macedonia. While the Bulgarian army defeated the bulk of the Ottoman forces in Thrace, the Serbian army had occupied most of Macedonia. The Serbs were increasingly reluctant to surrender ter-

15. *Ibid.*, I 562 no. 7.

16. Archive of Bŭlgarska akademiya naukite, fond 58, diary of former Minister of Justice Petŭr Abrashev (hereafter referred to as BAN) 51-I-17-98.

17. Stephen Constant, *Foxy Ferdinand* (New York, 1980) 262-263.

18. Ferdinand, Telegram of Ferdinand to Minister President Geshov, 3 December 1912. A deranged Greek assassinated King George in Thessaloniki on 18 March 1913.

19. Narodno sŭbranie, *Devnitsi (stenographski) na sedemnadasetoto obiknoveno narodo sŭbranie* (Sofia, 1914) 1st IS, speech of St. Danev, 5 May 1914, 653.

20. *DPIK* I 583 no. 50.

ritory which would belong to the Bulgarians according to the alliance agreement of March 1912.

Consequently, a fissure opened in the Bulgarian government on the issue of Thessaloniki. The prospect of a breakdown of the Balkan alliance disturbed many Bulgarians, especially those in the Nationalist Party. When the armistice with the Ottomans collapsed at the end of January 1913, Geshov, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, moderated his views. He was prepared to submit the dispute to arbitration or even to concede Thessaloniki to Greece<sup>21</sup>. The Progressive Liberals, however, remained committed to a Bulgarian Thessaloniki. The Sofia government took no action to resolve the dispute with Greece because of the renewal of the war.

In March 1913 the Greek Prime Minister Venizelos visited Sofia. There he suggested an arrangement which would have given Thessaloniki and Florina to Greece and Kavala, Seres and Drama to Bulgaria. The Sofia government divided on this issue. While Geshov favored the proposal, Danev demanded that Bulgaria obtain Thessaloniki<sup>22</sup>. Geshov then refused to distance himself from Danev's position, reminding the Russian ambassador, A. Neklyudov, "Do not forget that the present cabinet is a coalition cabinet. On such a serious question I cannot disassociate myself from Danev"<sup>23</sup>. Here the Bulgarians missed an excellent opportunity to resolve their differences with the Greeks.

Instead relations continued to deteriorate. Less than a month after Venizelos' visit to Sofia, armed clashes erupted between Greek and Bulgarian troops in several locations north of Thessaloniki. Some Bulgarian casualties resulted<sup>24</sup>. Athens and Sofia agreed to conduct an investigation into these incidents and to form a mixed commission to avoid further problems<sup>25</sup>. Another source of friction resulted from the release of Ottoman prisoners of war by Greek authorities while Bulgaria was still actively at war<sup>26</sup>. Also, by April reports of the mistreatment of Bulgarian population in areas occupied

21. Geshov, *Prestupnoto bezumie* 17. See also Boris Vazov, *Dürzhavniyat prevrat 16 juni 1913 god* (Sofia, 1913) 26.

22. BAN 51-I-17-185; A. Toshev, *Balkanskite voini* (Sofia, 1931) II 197.

23. A. Neklyudoff (Neklyudov), *Diplomatic Reminiscences Before and During the World War, 1911-1917* (New York, 1920) 140.

24. DPIK I 975-76 no. 34, 976 no. 35. As early as February Greek and Serbian officers in Thessaloniki had demonstrated together in an attempt to provoke Bulgarian officers stationed there. Fichev, 325.

25. DPIK I 982 no. 49.

26. *Ibid.*, I 590 no. 63, 64, 597 no. 77.

by the Greek army began to reach Sofia<sup>27</sup>. The major difficulty between Greece and Bulgaria, however, remained the lack of agreement on the frontier issue. This foundered on the dispute over Thessaloniki.

On 26 March the Bulgarians captured the Turkish fortress-city of Adrianople after a five-month siege. This victory encouraged Geshov to make another attempt to find a solution to the Greek problem. Hostility between Bulgaria and Serbia increased after the fall of Adrianople. This made the resolution of the dispute with Greece imperative for Bulgaria.

At an important government council on 5 April 1913 Geshov suggested that the Bulgarians end their dispute with Greece by means of arbitration. An indication from St. Petersburg that Russia would uphold Bulgarian claims in Macedonia against Serbia bolstered Geshov's position<sup>28</sup>. He initially received the council's support<sup>29</sup>. Danev, however, who was in St. Petersburg to observe the Great Power arbitration of the Bulgarian-Romanian dispute over the Dobrudzha, had not yet approved. The Great Powers' decision for Romania in the Dobrudzha dispute did little to advance the idea of arbitration for Danev. When he returned to Sofia, he rejected and was the members of his party participating in the government rejected the idea of arbitration<sup>30</sup>. Because of the decision in St. Petersburg they thought that arbitration would only work against the interests of Bulgaria. Also recent overtures from Austria-Hungary requesting special economic arrangements from Bulgaria in Thessaloniki encouraged this faction<sup>31</sup>. With half of the government now opposed to arbitration with Greece, another opportunity for a peaceful resolution of the Greco-Bulgarian dispute passed. Geshov did not press the issue further at this time.

Another abortive attempt to negotiate the Bulgaro-Greek dispute occurred in April. Geshov indicated to the Greeks that Bulgaria was prepared to begin negotiations as soon as Greece presented and "acceptable" frontier line as the basis for talks<sup>32</sup>. When Athens did respond with a frontier proposal,

27. Ferdinand, "Polozhenie na bŭlgarskite naselenie na Kostura, Voden i Solun sled vliزانeto na grŭtskata armiya", n.d.

28. Tsentralen dŭrzhaven istoricheski archiv, Sofia (hereafter referred to as TsDIA) fond 568 opus 1 a.e. 704 19; *Prilozhenie I* (Geshov) 125; *DPIK I* 430 no. 51.

29. TsDIA fond 568 opus 1 a.e. 704, 19-20; Geshov, *Prestupnoto bezumie* 106.

30. BAN 51-I-18-247; TsDIA fond 568 opus 1 a.e. 704, 19.

31. Ministerium des k. und k. Hauses und des Aeussermn. *Oesterreich-Urngarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914* (hereafter referred to as *O-UA*) (Vienna, 1930) V 5585, 5586.

32. *DPIK I* 592 no. 73.

Geshov promptly rejected it. He specifically objected to the extent of Greek claims to the hinterland of Thessaloniki, which surpassed the claims Venizelos had advanced during the talks with Danev in London the previous December<sup>33</sup>. The Bulgarians now wanted a frontier with Greece approximating the San Stefano border<sup>34</sup>. They continued to insist on the principality of proportionality as the basis for this claim<sup>35</sup>.

An incident concerning the Bulgaria garrison in Thessaloniki emphasized the unrealistic expectations of the Bulgarian government in the dispute with Greece. The Bulgarian military, increasingly concerned about Bulgaria's strategic situation after the armistice, wanted to consolidate its forces. On 26 April Deputy Commander-in-Chief Mikail Savov ordered the Bulgarian soldiers stationed in Salonika to withdraw<sup>36</sup>. Greek troops surrounded them and placed them in an exposed and potentially dangerous situation. The Bulgarian government, however, opposed any withdrawal. It feared that the Greeks might view any such withdrawal as a hostile act of military consolidation<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, the government was reluctant to sanction a retreat of the military forces which symbolized Bulgarian aspirations to Thessaloniki. Finally, a report by the former Bulgarian consul in Thessaloniki, Antanas Shopov, buttressed Bulgarian pretensions against the Greeks by claiming a large Bulgarian population in the hinterland of Thessaloniki<sup>38</sup>. So Geshov, despite his desire to reach an accommodation with the Greeks and his personal willingness to forgo Thessaloniki, insisted to Savov that the troops remain<sup>39</sup>. Geshov explained that their presence was necessary as a bargaining factor. Savov complied, but noted,

Military prudence compels me to concentrate on the soldiers. As long as politics forces the opposite, I shall not bear the consequen-

33. *Ibid.*, 583 no. 49, 589-99 no. 80, 602-03 no. 87.

34. Ministère des Affaires étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français* (hereafter referred to as *DDF*) (Paris, 1929-1959) 3rd ser. VI 336.

35. Geshov, *Prestupnoto bezumie* 81.

36. *DPIK* I 1032 no. 143. According to the Bulgarian constitution the Tsar was the Commander-in-Chief of the Bulgarian army. Ferdinand's lack of any military acumen made General Savov the real commander.

37. BAN 51-I-18-266.

38. Ferdinand 47-9 1913, Report of A. Shopov to I. E. Geshov, 2 April 1913 os.

39. *DPIK* I 1032 no. 144.

ces. I realize that the question of Salonika is being resolved politically. We could lose these troops because of politics<sup>40</sup>.

Savov's comment demonstrated sound military judgement, but a naive grasp of politics.

Geshov decided to make one more attempt to resolve the problem with Greece. He worried that the Greeks might conclude an agreement with Serbia which they would utilize to provoke war against Bulgaria<sup>41</sup>. He renewed his effort to obtain the consent of his government for the principle of arbitration<sup>42</sup>. Geshov dropped all pretense to the idea of proportionality and proposed a frontier which included Drama and Serres, the two most important towns in Thessaloniki's hinterland, but conceded Thessaloniki itself<sup>43</sup>. Geshov's fellow Nationalists agreed. One Nationalist minister, Teodor Teodorov, argued that Bulgaria need not attempt to acquire Thessaloniki at the present time, but that with the hinterland in Bulgarian hands, "in ten years every Greek in Thessaloniki will be a salted mackerel"<sup>44</sup>. His Progressive Liberal coalition partners, however, continued to insist that Bulgaria obtain Thessaloniki. Danev even considered the outright seizure of the city to present the Greeks with a fait accompli<sup>45</sup>. If the dispute did come to arbitration and the Great Powers awarded Thessaloniki to Greece, Danev thought that the Bulgarians need not "stand on ceremony" but should use force to oust the Greeks from the disputed territories<sup>46</sup>.

Renewed fighting between Greek and Bulgarian troops near Kavala at the first of May caused considerable casualties on both sides<sup>47</sup>. This fighting increased Geshov's determination to achieve a settlement. He feared that the clashes with the Greeks foretold a Serbo-Greek alliance directed against Bulgaria<sup>48</sup>. Geshov wanted no further incidents. He told the military to avoid armed conflicts with the Greeks<sup>49</sup>. The Bulgarians also signed a protocol with the Greeks which established a demarcation line between their respective

40. *Ibid.*, 1033 no. 146.

41. Ferdinand, memo of S. Dobrovich to Ferdinand, 16/3 May 1913.

42. Geshov, *Prestupnoto bezumie* 17; *Prilozhenie I* (Geshov) 146.

43. Geshov, *Prestupnoto bezumie* 17-18.

44. BAN 51-I-18-280; *Prilozhenie I* (Teodorov) 185, 202.

45. BAN 51-I-18-280.

46. Ferdinand 46-3 1913, telegram of Dobrovich to Ferdinand, 29 April 1913 os.

47. DDF 3rd ser. VI 539.

48. BAN 51-I-18-298.

49. DPK I 1061 no. 207.



forces<sup>50</sup>. The demarcation line failed to prevent additional incidents<sup>51</sup>. It did, however, establish some basis for cooperation.

Any hope for the resolution of the Greco-Bulgarian dispute faded when Danev indicated that he could not accept arbitration because of the conclusion of a Greco-Serbian agreement on 5 May 1913<sup>52</sup>. This Greco-Serbian agreement, followed by a military convention on 17 May and a formal treaty on 1 June, was clearly directed against Bulgaria<sup>53</sup>. Geshov's Greek policy failed due to his insistence on a proportional settlement of the frontier question and on Danev's fixation on Thessaloniki. A condescending attitude toward the Greeks had not helped.

Geshov's failure with Greece was among the reasons that forced his resignation on 30 May. The more aggressive Danev replaced him. Danev later stated that he would accept Russian arbitration in the dispute with Greece only on the condition that Thessaloniki was guaranteed to Bulgaria in advance<sup>54</sup>. During the previous year Danev had championed Bulgarian aspirations to Thessaloniki. He was not alone in his desire to acquire this port for Bulgaria. A memo from the Bulgarian Economic Society to the government warned of the consequences of a Bulgarian failure to secure Thessaloniki, "Without Thessaloniki Bulgaria is forever deprived of the most powerful basis for economic development and progress—a great port on the open sea"<sup>55</sup>. Even *Mir*, the newspaper of the Nationalist Party, argued for a Bulgarian Thessaloniki<sup>56</sup>. In the absence of a strong Bulgarian community in Thessaloniki the Sofia government appealed to the Jewish community in Thessaloniki. They emphasized that the Jews would fare better politically and commercially under Bulgarian rule<sup>57</sup>. The Greeks would promote their own agenda to the detriment of the Jewish community.

Under Danev a peaceful resolution of the Thessaloniki problem became impossible. He still considered the seizure of the city by a coup de main as a

50. *Ibid.*, 1064-65 no. 214, 1079-81 no. 243; Toshev II 298.

51. D. J. Cassavetti, *Hellas and the Balkan Wars* (London, 1914) 317; *O-U.A* VI 7178.

52. BAN 51-I-18-307; *DPIK* I 608 no. 100.

53. E. C. Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars* (New York, 1969) 347-49; Andrew Rossos, *Russia and the Balkans* (Toronto, 1981) 177-78. For a text of the 5 May agreement see British Foreign Office, *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914* (London, 1926-38) IX ii 1019-20.

54. Geshov, *Prestupnoto bezumie* 102; *Prilozhenie* I (Teodorov) 210. Danev obviously had little understanding of the arbitration process.

55. Bŭlgarski istoricheski archiv, Sofia, II D11189.

56. *Mir* no. 3908, 9 June 1913 os.

57. See for instance Aron Astruc Gueron, *Salonique et son avenir* (Sofia, 1913).

means to resolve the issue<sup>58</sup>. Even here he received support from other political areas. The former Bulgarian Prime Minister Alexandŭr Malinov stated, "If the Greeks defy us over Thessaloniki, we shall certainly go to war with them"<sup>59</sup>.

An attack on Greece was certain to bring Serbia into the war on the Greek side and cause revulsion against Bulgaria throughout the rest of Europe. Before Danev could act against Greece, war did erupt on 30 June after a series of limited Bulgarian attacks against Serbian forces. Romania and Turkey soon joined Serbia and Greece in a counter attack on Bulgaria. This combination quickly defeated the Bulgarians. As General Savov had predicted, a superior Greek force overwhelmed the Bulgarian contingent in Thessaloniki and forced it to surrender<sup>60</sup>. After the surrender many Bulgarian notables from Thessaloniki were arrested by Greek authorities, and some were murdered<sup>61</sup>.

The Treaty of Bucharest, which formalized the end of this Second Balkan or Interallied War, left the Bulgarians defeated and devastated. They failed to obtain their major goals in the former Ottoman province of Thessaloniki. This circumstance was largely their own fault.

The Bulgarians exaggerated the importance of the city of Thessaloniki, ultimately to the detriment of their much more viable pretensions to Macedonia and the Thessaloniki hinterland. Their aspirations to control Thessaloniki were unrealistic. These were based on romantic and economic sensibilities. The city lacked a large Bulgarian population. The Bulgarians as yet had no important economic investment there. An initial claim to Thessaloniki might have facilitated negotiations with Greece for the annexation of the hinterland. A division of opinion within the Bulgarian government precluded this possibility.

By focusing on Thessaloniki the Bulgarians gained the enmity of Greece. This placed them in a difficult situation. As a result they lost not only the city, but also areas of the hinterland which did have a significant Bulgarian population. Furthermore, a hostile Greece precluded a concentration of Bulgarian forces against Serbia and helped bring about the loss of Macedonia. Bulgaria would intervene in both the First and Second World Wars in failed efforts to obtain Macedonia. Traces of this problem endure today in the refusal of the Athens government to recognize the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

58. BAN 51-I-51-338; *Prilozhenie I* (Savov) 280.

59. Leon Trotsky, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913* (New York, 1980) 337.

60. For accounts of the fighting in Thessaloniki see Carnegie Report 187-188; and Leon Sciaky, *Farewell to Salonica* (New York, 1946) 218-19.

61. Carnegie Report 189-90.

**BULGARIA IN THE BALKAN WARS**

