

B. K O N D I S

THE ROLE OF THE ALBANIAN FACTOR
UPON THE GREEK-BULGARIAN UNDERSTANDING OF 1912

The purpose of this paper is to examine and analyse the extend that the Albanian factor affected the Greek-Bulgarian understanding and the outbreak of the First Balkan War.

The relations between Greece and Bulgaria, which had been of the worse description from 1896 to 1910, showed a marked improvement in the course of 1911. In April, three hundred Bulgarian students had visited Greece and when a deputation called on Venizelos he was reported to have said that Greece and Bulgaria were two sister nations working for their common interest both economic and political, and moreover, noted that an understanding between them was absolutely necessary¹. The Bulgarian government greatly impressed by the hospitality provided to the Bulgarian students considered the visit as the beginning of the desired rapprochement between the two peoples². In Bulgaria, according to the British, there were two schools of thought into the lines a rapprochement should follow. One called the Russian school advocated, in the first place, an attempt to bring about the union of the churches, and thought that, once that was effected, everything else would follow. The other school, to which King Ferdinand belonged, favored of coming to an arrangement by which the two countries would work on parallel lines and carefully abstaining from hindering each other, as they previously had done in the past. Thus, when mutual confidence had been restored, they could thing of tackling such thorny questions as that of the churches³.

Throughout 1911 the improvement in the relations between the two countries had been fully maintained, but Greek overtures for a closer connection had been turned down by the Bulgarians. Nevertheless, by early fall of 1911 the tendency toward common action between the Bulgarian and the Greek representatives, in the Ottoman Parliament and between the exarchate

1. FO 371/1054/17034, Elliot to Grey, Athens 27 April 1911.

2. A.Y.E., 1911, B51, No. 549, Panas to Foreign Ministry, Sofia, 19 April 1911.

3. FO 371/1053, Lindley to Grey, Sofia, 15 February 1911.

and the Patriarchate, was a noted improvement⁴. In the end, however, outside factors, the widespread discontent in Macedonia, the explosive revolutionary situation in Albania and the Italo-Turkish war, which were beyond the control of either Athens or Sofia, played a decisive role and forced the Greeks and the Bulgarians to come to an understanding.

The Italo-Turkish war in September 1911, provided a strong stimulus to a united front in the Balkans against Turkey. This war had far reaching repercussions. It gave added evidence that the Young Turks had done little to increase their military strength; it stimulated the territorial ambitions of the Balkan states and the feeling that it should be relatively easy to acquire the remaining territories of Turkey in Europe, namely Macedonia, Thrace and Epirus. After the outbreak of this war the acts of violence and the number of disorders increased greatly in Macedonia⁵.

In Albania a revolt broke out in March 1911, among the Catholic Malissori tribes bordering on Montenegro, who could not stand the rigid centralization policies of the Young Turks, and were to lay down their arms only by promises of reform⁶. The Greek government with great concern followed the events in northern Albania. Ioannis Gryparis, the Greek Foreign Minister, directed the consular agents to support the struggle of the Malissori in northern Albania but on the other hand to discourage the spreading of the revolt in southern Albania and Epirus. The Greeks believed that the Albanian nationalists wanted to spread the revolt in Epirus and the sanjak of Korytsa in order to get Greece involved in a war with Turkey; and to present Epirus as an Albanian land⁷. The Bulgarians, and the Serbs, on their part, being afraid of an Austrian advance into the Sanjak, in case the Albanian rising assumed a more serious character, thought that they should keep in close touch for the protection of their interests⁸.

During the period of the Malissori revolt, the Albanian nationalists in

4. A.Y.E., 1911, file A.A.K.Θ, nos. 25969 and 30682. Foreign Ministry to Embassy at Constantinople, Athens, 26 September and 15 November 1911.

5. Andrew Rossos, *Russia and the Balkans, 1909-1914*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1971, p. 73.

6. For details see Basil Kondis, *Greece and Albania 1908-1914*, Thessaloniki 1976, pp. 50-62.

7. A.Y.E., 1911, File unnumbered, No. 10193, Greek Foreign Ministry, to Consulates in Albania and Epirus, Athens, 25 April 1911.

8. *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*, eds. G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley, Vol. IX, Part I, London, 1933, No. 470, Paget to Grey, Belgrade, 11 April 1911. (Hereafter cited as B.D.).

the south formed guerrilla bands and tried to prepare an uprising in Epirus, not so much because they could arouse the Moslem population, but in order to confuse the borders between Epirus and Albania and to present the latter as Albanian territory⁹. The Greek government believed that the Austrian Consul at Valona had instigated the unrest. They thought that Austrian encouragement of an Albanian movement was simply to create another element of discord in the Balkans, in order to give herself another excuse for intervention in the peninsula¹⁰.

At this point the Austrian government favored the creation of a large autonomous Albania, considering that a small and weak Albania would not be able to resist the encroachments of Bulgaria and Serbia and she would, therefore, be a continual source of danger in the area. A large Albania would also help to solve the Thessaloniki problem since—according to Austrian views—that city could not belong to anybody but Turkey and a free road passing through an Albanian state would have been beneficial to the Austrians¹¹.

The idea of the creation of a big Albania was strongly objected to by the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian governments. Thus, in order to overcome Bulgarian objection, the Austrians proposed that Bulgaria should come to an agreement with them. According to the British Minister at Sofia Sir H. Bax-Ironside the Austrian views were as follows:

If the Albanian crisis goes from bad to worse and extends to Macedonia, Austria must expect that Bulgaria will then seize the opportunity of satisfying her national ambitions. She cannot, moreover, undertake any overt action without the consent of Austria. In any case you will have to count with us when the moment comes for realising the profits of the general break-up: it will therefore be to your advantage to come to an agreement with us in advance. There are two points, however, on which Austria will not give way. She wishes to see a weakened and, if possible, territorially attenuated Serbia, and an autonomous and strong Albania. We are prepared now to come to a private understanding with you on this question

9. A.Y.E., 1911, File unnumbered, No. 7611, Foreign Ministry to Embassy at Constantinople, Athens, 15 April 1911.

10. A.Y.E., 1911, B/52, No. 19286, Consul at Valona to Foreign Ministry, Valona, 19 July 1911.

11. For the Austrian views see *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914*, Eds. L. Bittner, A. F. Pribram, H. Srbik and H. Übersberger, 9 Vols, Vienna, 1930, Volume III, nos. 2567, 2568, 2571, 2574 (cited as OUA).

and, in fact, it is the condition of our future co-operation. To suit our views Albania should extend to the east as far as Prishtina, and thence north-east to the actual frontier of Serbia; from thence along the left bank of the Morava joining the river Vardar at Uscub, and following this river to its outlet in the Aegean Sea.

We propose that you should have the Serbian province of Pirot, as far as the Morava and all that part of Macedonia situated between the Rhodope, the middle course of the Vardar and the northern course of the Struma. The town of Salonica and the peninsula of Chalcidice would thus remain outside the new Albania, and the extended Bulgaria, under the sovereignty of Turkey as at present¹².

It is evident that Austria wanted a large autonomous Albania, and as large a Bulgaria as possible in order to maintain her rivalry with Serbia. The Bulgarians could not agree to the Austrian proposals. Bulgaria desired a large, independent and autonomous Macedonia and not a large Albania, which would have been entirely under Austrian influence. Prime Minister Ivan Geshov had told the British ambassador that "Bulgaria could never allow Austria to come further south, and he was sure that his countrymen would oppose such designs to the last"¹³. Geshov, also, discussed the Austrian menace with the Greek Minister and the Serbian Chargé d'Affaires in Sofia, who noted with great satisfaction that for the first time a Bulgarian Prime Minister had spoken in this sense and believed that franker talks between the representatives of the Balkan States would follow¹⁴. The British minister, also, thought that in view of the Austrian designs, the first and most essential point was for Bulgaria to establish an entente with Serbia¹⁵.

Indeed, at this point, serious negotiations started between the Bulgarians and the Serbs; and in accordance with Russia's advise Bulgaria had first to conclude an agreement with Serbia and then to start discussions with Greece and Montenegro¹⁶.

12. BD., Vol. IX, Part I, No. 510, Bax-Ironside to Grey, Sofia, 24 July 1911. The Austrian views were not kept secret in Sofia and reports even appeared in the newspapers. A.Y.E., 1911, B/51, No. 23613, Panas to Foreign Ministry, Sofia, 20 August 1911.

13. FO 371/1054/32857, Bax-Ironside to Grey, Sofia, 9 August 1911.

14. FO 371/1054/34721, Bax-Ironside to Grey, Sofia, 28 August 1911.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Ernst Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913*, Cambridge Mass., 1938, p. 32-33. For details about the Serbo-Bulgarian Alliance see Helmreich, *The Diplomacy*, pp. 3-68. Edward C. Thaden, *Russia and the Balkan Alliance of 1912*, University Park, Pa, 1965, pp. 58-98. Rossos, *Russia and the Balkans*, pp. 72-103. Νικόλαος Βλάχος, 'Ιστορία

Under Russian sponsorship, on 13 March 1912, the first treaty of the Balkan alliance system was concluded between Serbia and Bulgaria. The two states signed a mutual assistance pact in defense of their independence and integrity and agreed to take joint action against any great power which tried to invade the Balkan territories of the Turks, even though only one of the parties considered this injurious to its interests¹⁷. A secret annex however, provided that in case of a joint victory all territory won by the allies was to be administered jointly for a period of three months. The territorial claims were defined as follows: Serbia recognized the right of Bulgaria to the territory east of the Rhodope Mountains and the river Struma; while Bulgaria recognized a similar right of Serbia to the territory north and west of the Shar Mountains that is Kosovo and the Kosmet. Regarding the intermediate regions of Macedonia lying between the Shar Mountains, the river Struma and Lake Ohrida, were to be formed, if possible to an autonomous province. But if partition was decided upon later, Serbia was to claim a strip of territory in northern Macedonia and Bulgaria was to have the region around Ohrida, while an unassigned area stretching on both sides of the upper Vardar was to be left to the arbitration of Nicholas II of Russia¹⁸.

In the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of March 1912, although no mention was made of Albania, the agreement gave Serbia the possibility of acquiring Albanian territory and an outlet to the Adriatic. The Albanian problem, however, was indeed discussed during the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations. The Serbian Prime Minister Milovan Milovanović, on a meeting with Geshov on 11 October 1911, complaining against Austria's plans for the creation of a large autonomous Albania, suggested that the only possible solution, after the defeat of Turkey, would be the annexation of northern Albania by Serbia and southern Albania by Greece¹⁹. Characteristic is that Milovanović thought that the Albanians did not even deserve any form of independence.

There had never been an Albanian nation, like a Serbian, a Bulgarian or a Greek nation. The Albanians, divided up as they were by their different religious creeds and without any past history or traditions, except brigandage, did not possess the elements essential for the life

τῶν κρατῶν τῆς Χερσονήσου τοῦ Αἰμού 1908-1914, Athens 1954, p. 264-311.

17. For the text of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty see I. E. Geshov, *The Balkan League*, London, 1915, pp. 112-127.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-55.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 15. About the meeting between Geshov-Milovanović see also BD., Vol. IX, Part I, No. 525, Bax-Ironside to Nicolson, Sofia, 23 October 1911.

of a nation. Were by chance autonomy granted to them, discord would at once reign and the result would be an appeal to Austria, their maker. Any encouragement, therefore, given from outside to Albanianism was merely playing into the hands of Austria²⁰.

In subsequent discussions it was noted by the Serbs that besides the Austrian activity in Albania there were Italian agents as well working in the area and that reports from northern Albania indicated that a serious revolt would break in the spring of 1912²¹.

The event, however, which brought to the fore the Albanian factor was the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war in September 1911. This war had immediate repercussions on the situation in Albania. The Albanians appeared to rejoice in the state of war, not because Italy was popular, but rather because they thought Turkey, finding herself in external difficulties, might adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards the Albanians than would otherwise have been the case. Turkish attempts to mobilize them to defend the Empire against Italy had completely failed²². In December 1911 the Albanian deputies of the Ottoman Parliament wishing to exploit the situation demanded political, economic and cultural reforms for Albania. On 11 January 1912 Hasan Prishtina, one of the most influential Albanian deputies from Kosovo, warned the Porte that another Albanian revolt would take place in the event that the Albanian demands were not fulfilled²³. Indeed, as predicted the Albanian uprising broke out in the end of April²⁴.

Before the outbreak of the Albanian revolt, Hasan Prishtina went to Skopje to secure the cooperation of the Macedonian Internal Organization, which was also greatly discontented with the Young Turks. He proposed a joint revolt aiming at the creation of an "autonomous Albano-Macedonian state"²⁵. The local leaders could not give a reply noting that permission was needed from Sofia. But the Bulgarian government prevented the Macedonian Organization from coming to any definite arrangement with the Albanians,

20. BD., Vol. IX, part I, No. 540, Barclay to Grey, Belgrade, 16 January 1912.

21. *Ibid.*, Nos. 550 and 556, Barclay to Grey, Belgrade, 15 and 29 February 1912.

22. State University of Tirana, *Historia e Shqipërisë*, (The History of Albania), Vol. II, Tirana, 1965, p. 324.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 324-325.

24. For the Greek policy towards the Albanians see Kondis, *Greece and Albania*, pp. 67-77.

25. University of Tirana, *Historia e Shqipërisë*, p. 329, Shukri Rahimi, *Lufta e Shqiptarëve për Autonomi (1897-1912)*, Prishtina 1978, p. 197.

since it looked forward to the Balkan alliance²⁶. The Albanians were told that while the Macedonian Organization sympathized with them, it was not in a position to give any support, and they were advised to reserve their strength for a more opportune moment²⁷.

At this same period—May 1912—the Greco-Bulgarian treaty was signed²⁸. It is probable that the widespread discontent in Macedonia and the explosive revolutionary situation in Albania convinced the Bulgarians that they had to hurry with the conclusion of an alliance with the Greeks. The objective of the Greco-Bulgarian rapprochement was to strengthen the cooperation of the two national elements in Turkey for the defense of their national rights²⁹. This was a defensive alliance to remain in force for three years and to be kept secret. It provided that if one of the parties should be attacked by Turkey, the other would declare war against Turkey and would not conclude peace except by joint agreement; both states were to act jointly in relations with Turkey and the Great Powers in all actions having for an object the protection and defense of Greek and Bulgarian Ottoman subjects. In a secret annex the alliance was declared not to be operative in case of war arising between Greece and Turkey over the admission in the Greek Parliament of Cretan deputies against the wish of Turkey³⁰. This secret annex, however, became void with the military convention signed on 5 October when Bulgaria undertook to assist Greece in the event the latter country was obliged to settle the Cretan question in accordance with the wishes of the Cretan people, and in consequence of that action was attacked by Turkey³¹.

Comparing the texts of the Serbo-Bulgarian and Greco-Bulgarian treaties we see that the latter treaty contained no territorial provisions. Moreover, it was exclusively anti-Turkish³², since it was very unlikely that it would ever be used as a weapon against Austria. Upon the persuasive advice of Venizelos, a definitive settlement for Macedonia was postponed³³. Geshov states that “owing to lack of time, we were unable to conclude with Greece an agreement

26. *Ibid.*

27. FO 421/281, No. 110, Barclay to Grey, Sofia, 23 May 1912.

28. The treaty was signed on May 30, but on Geshov's insistence it was dated May 29th since the 30th of May happened to be Tuesday. Helmreich, *Diplomacy*, p. 76. A.Y.E. 1912 file A, Panas to Foreign Ministry, Sofia 30 May 1912.

29. Venizelos' speech in the Greek Parliament on 4 July 1913.

30. Geshov, *The Balkan League*, pp. 127-133.

31. D. Drossos, *La fondation de l'alliance Balkanique*, Athens, 1929, p. 31. Geshov, *The Balkan League*, p. 133.

32. Article 2, Geshov, pp. 128-129.

33. George Ventiris, 'Η Ελλάς τοῦ 1910-1920, Vol. I, Athens 1929, p. 97.

with respect to the future frontiers in Macedonia”³⁴. However, both Venizelos and Geshov desired to avoid a territorial settlement hoping that their claims would be decided by the force of arms³⁵.

In spite the signing of the Greco-Bulgarian understanding, there was still mutual mistrust and suspicion. The Greek government was afraid of the prospect of the Macedonian organization coming to an arrangement with the Albanians³⁶, while the Bulgarians thought that the Greeks might conclude a secret agreement with the Albanians³⁷. At this point, it has to be emphasized that the Albanian unrest was causing considerable anxiety to the Greek and Bulgarian governments. Both governments feared that the Albanian revolt might move towards Epirus³⁸ and Macedonia³⁹.

Indeed, the progress of the Albanian insurrection had given rise to a movement in Bulgaria in favor of armed action against the Turks. There was a certain feeling of discontent among some of the Army officers and the same feeling manifested itself among some of the Cabinet members⁴⁰. Geshov, however, feeling certainly uneasy about the situation intended temporarily to adopt a policy of watchful waiting and would not go to war unless a general uprising occurred in European Turkey with the inevitable consequences in Macedonia, which would leave Bulgaria no alternative but to intervene⁴¹.

In August, however, the situation was drastically altered with the Kochana massacre⁴² and especially with the success of the Albanian revolt. The news of the massacre caused protest meeting in Sofia and in other cities calling the Bulgarian government to undertake military action against Turkey for the liberation of Macedonia and Thrace from Turkish slavery⁴³. Although public ferment was growing high in intensity, Geshov hoped that he would be able

34. Geshov, *The Balkan League*, p. 40.

35. Ventiris, ‘Η Ελλάς τοῦ 1910-1920, p. 97; Henryk Batowski, “The failure of the Balkan alliance of 1912”, *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 7, (1966), p. 114.

36. A.Y.E., 1912, IA, No. 700, Panas to Foreign Ministry, Sofia, 9 June 1912.

37. A.Y.E., 1912, IA, Special Protocol No. 36, Panas to Foreign Ministry, Sofia, 10 July 1912.

38. For the Greek concern Kondis, *Greece and Albania*, pp. 72-74.

39. FO 421/281, No. 49, Barclay to Foreign Office, Sofia, 4 July 1912.

40. F.O., 421/282, No. 31, O’Beirne to Grey, St. Petersburg, 8 July 1912. FO 421/282, No. 85, Barclay to Grey, Sofia, 11 July 1912.

41. FO 421/282, No. 182, Barclay to Grey, Sofia, 30 July 1912.

42. After two bombs had exploded on the Kochana market, Turkish troops killed 46 people and wounded 120 in reprisals.

43. A.Y.E., 1912, IA, No. 908, Panas to Foreign Ministry, Sofia, 14 August 1912. BD., Vol. IX, Part I, No. 615. Barclay to Grey, Sofia 14 August 1912.

to control it. What really preoccupied him, as well as the Greek and Serbian governments, was the problem of the Albanian revolt. The Albanians, on 9 August 1912, had succeeded in dictating their terms to the Young Turk government for the virtual control of the vilayets of Yanina, Monastir, Kosovo and Shkodra.

At this point, Austria, anticipating a reaction of the Balkan states against the Turkish concessions to the Albanians and anxious to protect her own interests in the Balkans, decided to intervene. On 13 August, 1912 Count Leopold Berchtold, the Austrian Foreign Minister, dispatched a note to the Great Powers proposing that they encourage the Porte to decentralize administration, introduce reforms and restrain the Balkan States⁴⁴.

Berchtold's proposals were not received very well by the other Powers. Both the Russian and French ambassadors at Constantinople agreed in believing that the Austrian Minister's proposal were made with the object of creating an autonomous Albania. Indeed, Berchtold was only interested in Albania. He did not oppose territorial changes in the Balkans as long as Albania was preserved and no other power received any territory along the eastern shore of the Adriatic⁴⁵.

The Austrian proposal coupled with the Turkish concessions on 18 August to the Albanians, which tented towards autonomy, caused great anxiety in the Balkan States. The Bulgarians viewed the proposal as part of an Austrian plan to support Albanian aspirations to territory as far as the Vardar River, thus giving purely Bulgarian districts to the Albanians. An enlarged Albania would have given Austria the control of the route to Thessaloniki⁴⁶.

The Serbian government considered that Austria was directly responsible for the unrest at that time in the Balkans. The Serbians feared that the decentralization proposal would develop into an autonomous Albania which as understood by the Albanians would include the vilayets of Kosovo, Monastir, Janina and Scutari, which would of course also conflict with Serbian and Bulgarian interests. According to the Serbs the proposal was Austria's countermove to the rumored Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of Alliance⁴⁷.

At this point the Greek government took the initiative. On 18 August, the day that the Turkish government accepted the Albanian demands, proposed to Sofia, Belgrade and Cetinje the conclusion of a quadruple entente aiming

44. OUA, Vol. IV, No. 3687.

45. *Ibid.*, No. 4118.

46. A.Y.E., 1912, B-52, no. 104, Panas to Foreign Ministry, Sofia, 21 August 1912.

47. BD., Vol. IX, Part I, No. 659, Paget to Grey, Belgrade, August 20, 1912.

at reducing the demands of the Albanians to their just limits and turning in favor of the Christian Slavs and Greeks of the Ottoman Empire the decentralization proposal of Austria⁴⁸. The Greek proposal was not directed against the creation of an autonomous Albania. What the Greeks really objected to was an enlarged Albania comprised of the four vilayets. This enlarged Albania encroached upon territories which were regarded as Greek. Therefore, the Greek government vigorously protested to the Porte⁴⁹. The Turks, however, ignored the Greek protest. Thus in the last week of August, the Greeks repeated their proposal of 18 August asking Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro to unite with Greece in a collective demarche toward the sublime Porte. In the demarche, Lambros Koromilas, minister of foreign affairs, outlined specific requests to be fulfilled by the Turks for the immediate improvement of the situation of the Christian population in the Ottoman Empire. In order that the reforms be sufficiently applied, he proposed the appointment of European valis in every vilayet. In the end he formally suggested that the four Balkan states support this program with simultaneous mobilization of their armies and a threat of war⁵⁰.

The question that arises is whether the Greek government really considered to backup its proposal by mobilizing and a threat of war. The available sources indicate that, at this point, the Greeks were not in a position to mobilize, but were only interested in finding out what Bulgaria and Serbia were up to⁵¹. Moreover, the proposition for the appointment of European valis aimed at dissuading Bulgaria to demand the autonomy of Macedonia⁵².

The Bulgarians, doubting the sincerity of the Greeks in making the proposal, thought unwise to provoke Turkey into mobilizing before the Balkan states had completed all the necessary arrangements⁵³. The Serbs were of the same opinion⁵⁴.

48. A.Y.E., 1912, file unnumbered, No. 91, Koromilas to Embassies at Sofia, Belgrade and Cetinje, Athens, 18 August 1912, Drossos, *La fondation de l'alliance*, p. 68.

49. A.Y.E., 1912, file unnumbered, No. 25246, Koromilas to Constantinople Embassy, Athens, 20 August 1912.

50. A.Y.E., 1912, file unnumbered, Nos. 99 and 271, Koromilas to Embassies at Sofia, Belgrade and Cetinje, Athens, 23 and 25 August 1912. A.Y.E., 1912, B-52, No. III, Koromilas to Panas, Athens, 28 August 1912.

51. A.Y.E., B-52, No. 133, Koromilas to King George, Athens, 4 September 1912, Koromilas wrote to the King in Denmark...Permettez moi encore de nous faire remarquer qui il n'est pour le moment probable que nous arrivons à la mobilisation. Notre proposition avait aussi pour but de voir jusqu'où Serbie et Bulgarie s'avancerait...

52. A.Y.E., 1912, B-52, No. III, Koromilas to Panas, Athens, 28 August 1912.

53. Rossos, *Russia and the Balkans*, p. 129.

54. A.Y.E., 1912, B-52, No. 271, Embassy at Belgrade to Koromilas, Belgrade, 25 August 1912.

The Balkan states, fearing that their national aspirations would be in jeopardy by the autonomy which the Albanians had gained, felt that they had to strike at this time. Geshov, even before the granting of the concessions, had noted that in case such concessions were granted to the Albanians and similar ones were withheld from the Macedonians, the Bulgarian government would be compelled to abandon its pacific policy⁵⁵. Indeed, on 26 August 1912, the Bulgarian government decided to go to war and accepted the offer that Montenegro had made earlier to open hostilities⁵⁶.

On 5 September the Bulgarian government informed the Greek ambassador at Sofia that Bulgaria and Serbia had irrevocably decided to go to war against Turkey, and they asked for the cooperation of Greece⁵⁷. At this point Venizelos did not want war. He thought that Greece was still inadequately prepared despite the reorganization of the armed forces. He had even reached the point of proposing to the Turks a payment of a small tribute and recognition of nominal Turkish suzerainty in Crete in return for the right of the Cretan deputies to take their seats in the Greek Parliament. But since the other Balkan States had decided to go to war, Greece could not remain a passive spectator, therefore Venizelos agreed to cooperate with the other states⁵⁸.

In retrospect, the threat, which an enlarged autonomous Albania presented to the other Balkan States, hastened in a way the outbreak of the First Balkan War.

55. FO 421/282, No. 311, Barclay to Grey, Sofia, 14 August 1912.

56. Helmreich, *Diplomacy*, p. 108.

57. A.Y.E., 1912, file unnumbered, No. 125, Panas to Koromilas, Sofia, 5 September 1912.

58. E. Venizelos, *The Vindication of Greek Policy 1912-1917*, London 1918, p. 66. In Parliament on 13 August 1917 Venizelos stated: ... Διά τὸ φλέγον ζήτημα ἔξ ἐκείνων τὰ ὅποια μᾶς ἔχωριζαν ἀπὸ τὴν Τουρκίαν, τὸ Κρητικόν, είχα φθάσει νὰ προτείνω εἰς τὴν Πύλην, ἀντὶ τῶν ὀνομαστικῶν ἐπικυριαρχικῶν δικαιωμάτων τῆς καὶ τὴν πληρωμήν μικροῦ φόρου ὑποτελείας, ἵνα ἀναγνωρίσῃ εἰς τοὺς Κρῆτας βουλευτάς τὸ δικαίωμα νὰ συνεδρεύουν ἐν τῷ Βουλευτηρίῳ τούτῳ: Ἐξήτουν ν' ἀποφύγω τότε τὸν πόλεμον, δχι διότι δὲν ἐνόμιζον ὅτι τὰ Ἐθνη δὲν εἶναι ὑποχρεωμένα νὰ κατέλθουν εἰς πόλεμον ὅταν πρόκειται περὶ Ἐθνικῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως, ἀλλὰ διότι ἐθεώρουν ὅτι ἡ Ἑλλάς δὲν ἦτο ἀκόμη τότε ἐπαρκῶς προετοιμασμένη, κατὰ τὸ διετές μόλις διάστημα τῆς ἀναγεννήσεως τῆς, διὰ νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσῃ μετά πλήρους πεποιθήσεως καὶ ἀσφαλείας τὰς περιπτώσεις τὰς πολεμικάς. 'Αλλ' ὁ πόλεμος ἔγινε, διότι ἀφ' ἐνὸς μὲν ἔγινε δυνατὸν νὰ ρυθμισθῇ τὸ ζήτημα τὸ Κρητικόν, ἀφ' ἑτέρου δὲ διότι τὰ ἄλλα Βαλκανικά Κράτη είχον ἀποφασίσει νὰ πολεμήσουν κατὰ τῆς Τουρκίας, καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς δὲν ἦτο ἐπιτετραμμένον νὰ μείνωμεν εἰς τοιαύτας περιστάσεις ἀπαθεῖς θεαταὶ ... E. Venizelos, *Πολιτικαὶ 'Υποθῆκαι*, edited by S. Stephanou, vol. B', Athens 1969, p. 4.