

# THE FAILURE OF THE BALKAN ALLIANCE OF 1912

## I. Introductory Remarks

We usually say "Balkan Alliance" instead of Balkan League of 1912 although the latter term is much more justified. It is used by the majority of historians dealing with this problem, as e. g. the authors of the English written works: C. E. Black, A. J. Grant, E. C. Helmreich, J. B. Marriott, W. Miller, Ch. Petrie, L. S. Stavrianos, A. J. P. Taylor and H. Temperley.<sup>1</sup> Also some French historians, as J. Ancel, E. Bourgeois and A. Debidour<sup>2</sup> prefer the term "Balkan League" (Ligue Balkanique). The corresponding German term is "Balkanbund", used e. g. by H. Friedjung and E. Bickel.<sup>3</sup> Less numerous are the adherents of the term "Balkan Alliance", as e. g. E. Driault, D. Drossos and N. Iorga.<sup>4</sup> Among the historians of South Slavic tongue we meet more often the term "savez" (Serbian) or "sayuz" (Bulgarian).<sup>5</sup> The newest edition of the

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1. C.E.Black and W.C. Helmreich: *Twentieth Century Europe*, p. 42; A.J. Grant and H. Temperley: *Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries*, p. 471; J.B. Marriott: *The Eastern Question* p. 443; W. Miller: *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors 1801-1927/1936*, p. 498; Ch. Petrie: *Diplomatic History 1713-1933*, p. 305; L.S. Stavrianos: *The Balkans since 1453*, p. 532; A.J.P.Taylor: *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918*, p. 485.

2. J.Ancel: *Manuel historique de la Question d'Orient (1792-1930)*, p. 247; E. Bourgeois: *Manuel historique de la politique étrangère, IV (1878-1919)*, p. 572; A. Debidour: *Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe depuis le Congrès de Berlin jusqu'à nos jours*, II, p. 194.

3. H.Friedjung: *Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus 1884-1914*, III, p. 172; E. Bickel: *Russland und die Entstehung des Balkanbundes 1912*, passim.

4. E.Driault: *La Question d'Orient depuis ses origines jusqu'à la Paix de Sèvres*, p. 396; id.: *Histoire diplomatique de la Grèce de 1821 à nos jours (avec M. Lhéritier), (1908-1923)* p. 63; D. Drossos: *La fondation de l'Alliance Balkanique*, passim; N. Iorga: *Histoire des États balkaniques jusqu'à 1924*, p. 470.

5. I.E. Gheshev: *Balkanskiyat sayuz* (and French translation: *L'Alliance Balkanique*, but in English edition: *The Balkan League*; the author's name is spelt: Gueshoff, French: Guéchoff); Serbian authors: S. Stanojević: *Srpsko-turski rat 1912 godine*, p. 35; D. Popović: *Borba za narodno ujedinjenje 1908-1914*, p. 73; V. Ćorović: *Borba za nezavisnost Balkana*, p. 49; other Bulgarian authors: G.P. Ghenov: *Iztochniyat väpros*, II, p. 556; M.I. Madjarov: *Diplomaticheska podgotovka na nashite voyni*, p. 44; N. Kolarov: *Ocherk värkhu diplomaticheskata istoriya na balkanskite voyni*, p. 13.—The author of this paper had published in Polish in 1939 a book entitled: *Historia sojuszu balkanskiego 1912* (A History of the Balkan Alliance of 1912), but now he would rather say: A history of the Balkan Coalition of 1912.

Soviet History of Diplomacy uses the term "Balkan bloc",<sup>6</sup> which is adequate to "League". Thus most specialists do feel that there cannot be comparison with other multilateral alliances known in recent history, as e. g. the Triple Alliance. There existed only bilateral alliance treaties between separate countries, as had been also correctly formulated by the Greek historian S. Th. Laskaris in his book *Διπλωματική ιστορία της Ελλάδος 1821-1914*, where he uses the plural: *αί βαλκανικαί συμμαχίαι*.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless we may say also commonly "Balkan Alliance" instead of more correct "Balkan League" or "Balkan Coalition", first in the political and diplomatic and secondly in the military sense. However, there is always to remember that when saying "Balkan Alliance" we are not exact. This expression is so to say an abbreviation of another which would run as follows: "The system of alliances existing between separate Balkan states in 1912". We may add here that there exists in modern history another example of equally inexact designation: it is the frequently used term (particularly in older historical works) e. g. in German "Dreikaiserbund", in Russian "Soyuz trëkh imperatorov", also in French: "l'alliance des trois empereurs": for the treaties concluded between Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia in 1873 and 1881 which were certainly no real (i. e. military) alliances but political agreements with no obligation of military aid. Therefore the later historians started to use such terms as "Dreikaiserverhältnis" (German) or "Soglashenye trëkh imperatorov" (Russian), "Entente des trois empereurs" etc.<sup>8</sup> This case is certainly a similar inexactitude as when we use to say "Balkan Alliance of 1912" but it is based on sufficiently long tradition for to be excusable. Even when "Balkan League" is certainly preferable, we cannot ban the other term which is perhaps also representing the primordial intention of the Balkan diplomacy in 1912.

## *II. First Reason of Failure: Lack of a general (i. e. multilateral) Agreement*

There had been signed no general i. e. multilateral treaty of alliance connecting all four states of the Balkan League. The latter consisted of a chain of

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6. *Istoriya diplomatii, II, Diplomatiya v novoye vremya 1871-1914*, p. 734; identically P.N. Yefremov: *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii 1907-1914*, p. 153, but V.V. Vovykin: *Ocherki istorii vneshney politiki Rossii, konets XIX veka-1917 god*, p. 119: *Balkanskiy sojuz=Balkan Alliance*.

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 220; identically in an older book of the same author: *Διπλωματική ιστορία της Εβρώπης 1814-1914*, p. 327. No other Greek historical books were accessible to the author of this article.

8. "Alliance" in books of the following authors, as A. Debidour: *Histoire diplomatique*

several bilateral treaties, concluded by Bulgaria with three other states, consecutively with Serbia on March 13 (Febr. 29) 1912,<sup>9</sup> with Greece on May 29 (16) and orally with Montenegro in August or September 1912. As it had been formulated by Professor Driault in the 5th volume of his (together with M. Lhéritier) "Diplomatic History of Greece": "La Bulgarie fut le pivot de l'alliance balkanique".<sup>10</sup> It means of course that the Bulgarian diplomacy was more active than the diplomats of the other Balkan states, although as we shall see, also the Greek Foreign Ministry had been particularly active in 1912 and what is less known, the Montenegrin Government had shown such activity even before, since 1910 when the first contacts with Bulgaria had started.<sup>11</sup>

It is Montenegro indeed which seems to have had also agreements with the other three Christian Balkan states but there is certitude only in the case of the Serbo-Montenegrin treaty signed on September 27 (14) in Lucern (Switzerland).<sup>12</sup> All the other agreements concluded by Montenegro in connection with war against Turkey were oral ones and very little is known on the above mentioned agreement with Bulgaria, still less on the one concluded with Greece.<sup>13</sup> Serbia had thus two treaties, one with Bulgaria, another with Montenegro and none with Greece (see infra on Greek proposals for such agreement with Belgrade). Greece had concluded only one written treaty (completed by a military convention of Oct. 5 / Sept. 22), and probably an oral agreement

*de l'Europe 1814-1878*, II, p. 458; E. Bourgeois, *op. cit.*, p. 22; "entente"—H. Friedjung, *op. cit.*, I, p. 57; Grand & Temperley, *op. cit.*, p. 406; *Istoriya diplomatii*, II, p. 34.

9. Completed by several military conventions, signed on: May 12 (April 29), July 2 (June 19), September 5 (August 23). Texts of all three: Stanojević, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-58. Also a military convention between Bulgaria and Greece had been signed on October 5 (September 22): Drossos, *op. cit.*, p. 29-32.

10. E. Driault, *Histoire diplomatique* (*op. cit.*), V, p. 71.

11. The role of Montenegro in the formation of the Balkan Coalition had been presented by E.C. Helmreich in a paper in "The Slavonic and East European Review" XV/44 (1937) and afterwards in the very valuable book: *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913*, pp. 81 sqq. But more largely by the author of the present article in his above mentioned book *Podstawy sojuszu...* and in a paper published in Serbian: *Crna Gora i Balkanski savez 1912 godine*, in "Istoriski Zapisi" (Tsetinye), 1957, p. 47 sqq., on the base of Montenegrin materials.

12. The date of September 27 (14) is almost generally accepted and based on memoirs of Montenegrin diplomats; nevertheless in the official register of treaties concluded by Serbia this treaty is dated "23 September": *Pregled međunarodnih ugovora i drugih akata od međunarodno-pravnog značaja za Srbiju od 1800 do 1918 godine* (1953), p. 174. The problem of date is discussed in my above mentioned paper published in 1957.

13. In the Belgrade daily "Vreme" a former Montenegrin Prime Minister J. S. Plamenac had stated on July 6, 1927 that a Montenegrin proposal for agreement against Turkey had been addressed to Athens on June 29, 1912 (i.e. July 12). Nothing about it is in accessible Greek sources.

with Montenegro. The Serbo-Bulgarian treaties were completed by several military conventions as had also been signed the above mentioned Greco-Bulgarian military agreement. Also a Serbo-Montenegrin military convention seems to have existed probably signed on October 6 (September 23).<sup>14</sup>

Comparing the texts of Serbo-Bulgarian and Greco-Bulgarian treaties we can see that there is little resemblance, if any at all, between the two of them. They are different as their goals had been different. The former was directed primarily against Austria-Hungary and only subsequently also against Turkey.<sup>15</sup> The latter against the Turks exclusively because Greece had no problems which might oppose her to the Habsburg Monarchy. As far as we are informed on the Serbo-Montenegrin treaty, it was more similar to that concluded between Serbia and Bulgaria i. e. directed first of all against Austria-Hungary. The common goal of all three treaties (in case of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty, rather of its secret protocol) was the possibility of a war against Turkey for the liberation of Christian provinces. But this common scope was also differently formulated: more explicitly in the secret protocol annexed to the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty, more moderately in the Greco-Bulgarian one.

It is obvious, the most important difference between the former and the latter was the existence of territorial clauses in the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty (in the secret protocol), and the lack of them in the Greco-Bulgarian Alliance. The Greeks did not want to pinion their arms in advance, the same had been the Bulgarian design. Gheshov's assertion in his book on the Balkan League that not settling of the territorial problems was caused only "by lack-of time,"<sup>17</sup> is certainly incredible. Both parties (i. e. Bulgaria and Greece) had been anxious to avoid a territorial settlement in hope to create for oneself a propitious situation by a "fait accompli". The Rumanian politician Take Ionescu, certainly well informed on the background of Balkan politics is even praising Venizelos for his wisdom with which the latter managed not to tie himself in advance concerning the territorial claims of Greece.<sup>16</sup> Certainly, Gheshov had wanted to be very wise too! But there is no doubt that every lack of

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14. The date of Sept. 23/Oct. 6, 1912 from a letter by P. Plamenac, (some time Montenegrin Foreign Minister, in 1912 chargé d'affaires in Constantinople), published in M. Boghitschewitsch's book: *Die auswärtige Politik Serbiens 1903-1914*, II, p. 563; on p. 564 Plamenac is quoting the text of art. 1 of the military agreement. Nothing else is known on it.

15. The secret protocol and all three military agreements had exclusively anti-Turkish clauses.

16. I. Guéchoff *L'Alliance Balkanique*, p. 69 (the English edition was not accessible to the author).

17. T. Ionescu: *Souvenirs* (Paris 1919), p. 189-190.

sincerity between allies must necessarily contain a germ of future decay. It is true, one might object that the existence of territorial clauses in the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty did not save it from fiasco. However, one must remember that the main reason of the Serbo-Bulgarian conflict was the external pressure i. e. the Austrian and Italian opposition to the Serbian outlet on the sea in Albania, what was not to be expected in the Greco-Bulgarian relationship connected with the Aegean region. Excessive imperialistic pretensions could be forwarded at every time and on each side what had finally completed the failure and dissolution of the League. However, some kind of previous regulation would certainly prevent a lot of friction in the first stage of the Greco-Bulgarian alliance. If there had to come a subsequent disagreement, it would perhaps appear somehow differently.

We must nevertheless recognize that there had been at least two attempts of composing a multilateral, a triple or even quadruple alliance.<sup>18</sup>

At first, in the primitive project of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance of November 1911 the Belgrade Foreign Ministry had proposed to insert a clause providing the enlargement of the treaty by inviting Greece and Montenegro to accede.<sup>19</sup> In the final text however this provision was deleted, most probably as a consequence of Russia's desire to give to the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty a prevailing anti-Austrian meaning. In St. Petersburg the Foreign Ministry was sure of Montenegrin accession in any case and the Russians were not very much interested in Greece's political aims.<sup>20</sup> We know that Sazonov had advised the Bulgarians to be cautious in their relations with Greece. Allegedly because Russia had then wished the preservation of the status-quo in the Balkans which was hardly compatible with the Greek aims and their proposals to Bulgaria.<sup>21</sup>

Subsequently it was the Greek Government which was proposing to their future allies on August 18 (5) a quadruple agreement. This fact, revealed in the excellent study written by the Greek diplomat D. Drossos and overlook-

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18. J. S. Plamenac as it is mentioned above, footnote 13, is asserting that Montenegro had started to propose a multilateral agreement since 1908/9.

19. About such Serbian proposals had reported Hartvig, then Russian envoy in Belgrade, to Sazonov in autumn of 1912. Hartvig's dispatches are published in the Soviet periodical "Krasnyy Arkhiv", VIII-IX, 1925-1926; here are pertinent documents No. 39 and 43 in vol. VIII.

20. In the *Russian Orange Book* on the Balkan events of 1912/13, published in St. Petersburg at the end of 1913, we can find only very few dispatches from the Russian Legation in Athens.

21. Cf. E.C.Helmreich, op. cit. (*The Diplomacy...*), p. 77-78.

ed by the principal authors dealing with the problems of the Balkan League of 1912,<sup>22</sup> is certainly very important and ought to be stressed. The Greek Foreign Minister in the Venizelos' Cabinet, Lambros Koromilas, was induced to that proposal by the progress of the Albanian rising and its success, consisting in a promise of autonomy granted by the Turkish Government. It is true, Koromilas did not suggest the conclusion of a formal and regular quadruple entente in his first proposal. The latter was at first connected with one question only: the Albanian rising and was directed against the project of an autonomous Albania.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless it could be a start for further common policy and the limited agreement, had it been concluded, it could be later enlarged, as the Greek diplomacy was proposing in the following weeks just before the outbreak of the war.

And shortly afterwards the Greek Foreign Minister was indeed twice reiterating his proposal: on August 23 (10) and 28 (15). He was asking then the three other Christian states to unite with Greece in a collective *démarche* at Constantinople as well as in the Capitals of the Powers.<sup>24</sup> This *démarche* had to stress the need for the immediate improvement of the situation of the Christian population in the Ottoman Empire. The Greek proposal contained several detailed requests to be fulfilled by the Sublime Porte. The second Greek proposal explained that the Christian Balkan states were not begging but requesting and that they were prepared to enforce their point of view by their mobilised armies. This last detail had to be omitted in the notes addressed to the Powers.

The distinguished Greek historian on whose book we are founding these statements, asserts that all three Balkan states addressed by the Government of Athens, had accepted the Greek proposal positively and had discussed it. We do not find however any trace of such discussion and even of the proposal in accessible Yugoslav and Bulgarian sources. There can be no doubt that the other Balkan Governments had had their own point of view already fixed which was not in conformity in all details with the Greek one. There existed identity of general policy only. In details however there was little conformity of views between Athens and Sofia and for the time being no agreement had been signed between Athens and Belgrade although it was desired by the Greeks.<sup>25</sup>

22. E.g. in the books of Driault and Helmreich as well as in those written by Serbian and Bulgarian historians. Drossos, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

23. This is stressed by an Albanian historian, S. Pollo: *La proclamation de l'indépendance albanaise*, "Studia Albanica", II, 1965, p. 90.

24. Drossos, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77. No mention elsewhere.

25. Rumours on conclusion of a Greco-Serbian alliance were frequent (*British Docu-*

The Greek diplomacy did not desist from its efforts for enlarging the existing bilateral agreement concluded with Bulgaria. For the last time a Greek proposal was forwarded to the other Christian states of the Balkans shortly before the outbreak of the war but, unfortunately, the exact date is not given by Drossos.<sup>26</sup> Most probably it had been presented in the Balkan Capitals in late September or in the first days of October. It was a proposal of a Triple Balkan League, to be formed by enlarging the existing Greco-Bulgarian treaty, with the accession of Serbia. One does not know why Montenegro was omitted. The Governments of Sofia and Belgrade had rejected the Greek proposal and the latter was later transformed into a suggestion of a separate Greco-Serbian treaty, proposed on October 22 (9).<sup>27</sup> As the Greek Foreign Ministry had originally desired to be informed at first on the substance of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty and this request was rejected by Serbia, therefore this last Greek proposal too had no practical result. Identical was the fate of another Greek suggestion of October 2 (Sept. 19) concerning the detailed requests for reorganization of the Ottoman provinces in Europe.<sup>28</sup>

Lack of general identical obligations equally binding all four Christian states of the Balkans before they started war against the Ottoman Empire, had certainly contributed to the lack of mutual confidence and gradual deterioration of relations between the Allies. If such common quadruple obligations had existed, perhaps some false steps could have been avoided, although most probably not the final catastrophe.

### *The Albanian Problem*

Now let's discuss another important cause of failure. The Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of alliance, the only one<sup>29</sup> which was settling the territorial problems connected with the partition of the Ottoman provinces, did not take into consideration the existence of the Albanians (otherwise than in a previous

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*ments on the Origins of the War*, IX/2, p. 1018; *Documents diplomatiques français relatifs aux origines de la guerre de 1914*, 3 sér., IV, No 347.

26. *Op. cit.*, p. 93: "tandis que ces pourparlers étaient encore en cours" (Drossos is referring here to the negotiations between the Powers of the Triple Entente, started on September 9, 1912).

27. Some details from the proposal are quoted by Driault, *Histoire diplomatique*, V, p. 80.

28. Drossos, p. 94-5; this author states that the Greek proposal had been accepted by Bulgaria and Montenegro but not fully by Serbia.

29. As far as we are aware of the contents of the Serbo-Montenegrin treaty, there were in it no clauses on territorial problems.

agreement, concluded in 1904 but not put into force).<sup>30</sup> The Greco-Bulgarian treaty could not deal with the Albanian problem because it even did not mention the territorial questions at all. We know however that the Government of Athens had been against the Albanian claims in the summer of 1912.

The Balkan allies aiming at the liberation of their compatriots from the Ottoman domination, were nevertheless against the liberation of another nation which was also struggling for its own liberation. Although the Albanian claims could be certainly considered as exaggerated,<sup>31</sup> it had been certainly unfair to deny to the Albanians any right to independence. It had been a false policy on the part of the Balkan allies, being not in conformity with their own slogans and with the ideas of a war of liberation.

We know from Gheshov's memoirs that he had been approached during the negotiations of 1911 by the Serbian Foreign Minister Milovanovitch who stated that allegedly the Albanians do not deserve independence and that their territory had to be partitioned between Serbia, Montenegro and Greece.<sup>32</sup> The same point of view was represented by the Serbian diplomacy in its negotiations with Montenegro.<sup>33</sup> The latter, however, as a consequence of better understanding of the Albanian problem by the King Nicholas who had been in touch with Albanian leaders for many years, had adopted a different attitude. In the Montenegrin proposal to Bulgaria for an alliance against Turkey, forwarded to the Bulgarian envoy at Tsetinye, Kulushev, there was admitted an autonomous Albania too, after the final victory of the Allies.<sup>34</sup> But the Bulgarian Government had been already bound to Serbia by the treaty of March 13 (Febr. 29) which was concealed from Montenegro both by Serbia and by Bulgaria. Therefore, accepting the Montenegrin proposal, the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry could not pledge itself concerning Albania even had it desired to do so. We are entitled to suppose that the Bulgarians would not

30. The Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of April 12 (March 30), 1904, was first published in Bulgarian by A. Toshev: *Balkanskite vojni*, I, 153-155; in C.E. Black's English translation by Helmreich, op. cit., p. 462-464.

31. Albanian claims of 1911/12 as presented by the Revolutionary Committee, had had in view four (or even five) Ottoman vilâyets (provinces): Shkodra (Scutari), Kosova (Skopye), Monastir (Bitola), Yanya (Ioannina;) sometimes even still Selânik=Thessaloniki) with area of 90,000 (or even 124,000) sq. km and population 2,7 (or even 3,8) million. Documents relative to that were published e.g. by C. Libardi: *I primi moti patriotici albanesi nel 1910-1911-1912* (Trento 1935).

32. Guéchoff: *Alliance Balkanique*, pp. 23-24.

33. D. Vujović: *Ujedinjenje Crne Gore i Srbije* (Titograd 1962), p. 61.

34. Text of the Montenegrin proposal addressed to Sofia in August 1912, from documents belonging to General J. Vuković, published in the book of Ž. G. Pavlović: *Opsada Skadra 1912-1913* (Beograd 1926), pp. 29-33.

wish the fulfilment of the Montenegrin suggestion concerning Albania because they had wanted above all to return the Serbians from Macedonia.

This fault had not only undermined the bases of the Balkan League but also had given to the Big Powers a desirable pretext to interfere with Balkan affairs, a fact that finally could not but bring a collapse: first of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty and then of the entire Balkan League.

Serbia was certainly entitled to seek an access to the sea.<sup>35</sup> But it had been false to try to find it across another people's territory and by denying that people's right to independence. As long as the Habsburg Monarchy was barricading the natural issue on the Adriatic Sea to Serbia, i.e. Southern Dalmatia, there was however another possibility. The issue of the war to come could not but bring about the territorial neighbourhood between Serbia and Montenegro. The latter had at its disposal a (not very large, it is true) coast-line with two small harbours, Bar (Antivari) and Ulcinj (Dulcigno). The Montenegrin littoral since 1909 was freed of the Austrian control imposed by the Treaty of Berlin.<sup>36</sup> Small as they are, both Montenegrin harbours could be of great utility to the Serbian foreign trade, after the construction of good roads connecting them with Serbia across the former District of Novi Pazar which had to be conquered on Turkey. This construction was certainly easier to be realized than the conquest of Northern Albania. It is true, the natural obstacles in the Novi Pazar area were considerable and few ordinary roads exist there,<sup>37</sup> but in the area between Durres (Durazzo) or Meduj (San Giovanni di Medua) and Western Serbia the obstacles are still greater and a construction of a railway or even of good roads was hardly to be realized, especially with the technical means then existing. Thus the Serbian claim to the Albanian coast was equally unjustified from the ethnic point of view and unreal from the economic one. All the more was the policy based on such claims false and absurd.

#### *IV. The Big Powers' Attitude*

As we have said, the Albanian question in the Balkan allies' plans was falsely conceived and at the same time that policy did not take into consideration the adjacent Powers' interest in Balkan affairs, particularly in Albania. The Serbians had had, it is true, a formal Bulgarian pledge (as well as the Mon-

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35. Detailed monograph by D. Djordjević: *Izlazak Srbije na Jadransko More i Konferencija ambasadora u Londonu 1912* (Beograd 1956).

36. This problem had been discussed by P. Chotch (=Šoć): *Du nationalisme serbe. Etude d'histoire politique* (Dijon 1916), pp. 124-128.

37. For the time being no railway, but there is one in construction.

tenegrin one) to combat with common force any foreign claim to any part of the Balkan Peninsula belonging until then to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>38</sup> But it had to be considered at first whether that pledge could be fully trusted and then if even it could be, whether the allied Balkan states would be strong enough to oppose efficiently a European Big Power. The Balkan Allies hoped to be eventually supported by Russia which was equally false, as had been shown by the events of 1908/9 and 1913.

Especially in the Albanian affair the Balkan Allies were challenged not by one but by two Powers, i.e. Austria-Hungary and Italy. In this case the chance of success was still smaller and the risk immense. Truly, Pašić did not prove to be a very sober diplomat with sufficient foresight. He had overestimated Russia's aid and underestimated Austrian and Italian interest in Albania.<sup>39</sup> He had had also to take into consideration that the Bulgarians would certainly not be willing to fight against two Big Powers for the Serbian access to the sea. It was obvious that the Bulgarian pledge concerning common defense of Balkan soil had been connected with the Austrian claims to Macedonia only.

Also here was then evident that the lack of multilateral entente between all four Balkan states was extremely prejudicial. If such quadruple entente had been concluded before the war and if all four Allies had in fact opposed themselves to the Austrian and Italian interference into Balkan affairs, it could certainly have more effect on the Big Powers' policy. Russia would have acted also more decisively if she had known that she might count on the entire Balkan block. Here also the non-existence of a Greco-Serbian agreement was detrimental to Serbia because Greece had been more interested in Italian plans in the Balkans.

Of course, even the united forces of all four Balkan Allies could hardly oppose two Big Powers. Nevertheless, with Russia's aid and possibly France supporting Russia, the Balkan states if only acting together would represent a much more impressive force than Serbia (even with Montenegro) alone in face of Austrian and Italian pressure.

Closely linked together, the four Balkan Allies would also represent a strong unity, better immune to Austrian intrigues aiming at dissolution of the Balkan League and especially of the Serbo-Bulgarian entente. And here particularly dangerous was the activity of the foreign Powers. Had not Vienna instigated King Ferdinand against other Balkan states (first of all against Serbia), the break-up of the League would have been much more difficult be-

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38. Art. 2 of the Treaty of Alliance signed on March 13 (Febr. 29).

39. Pašić could be informed on Albanian affairs by the Montenegrin Government which had always large contacts with Italy.

cause the Russian influence, aiming at the preservation of the League, would be certainly prevalent.

Neither must one overlook the attitude and role of Rumania. As it was once stated by the great Rumanian historian and statesman Nicolae Iorga, Rumania's place in 1912 was wrongly chosen: not aside but among the states of the Balkan League Rumania would be expected to find herself.<sup>40</sup> However being under strong German and Austrian influence, the Government of Bucharest had been rather hostile to the policy of the League as a whole, and particularly distrustful toward Bulgaria. Rumania had her imperialistic claims to a part of Bulgarian territory but could not conquer it by her own forces. She counted on Austria's and even Russia's support although Russia was considered as Bulgaria's ally.<sup>41</sup> But the Russian Government was anxious to attract Rumania, until then linked with the Powers of the Triple Alliance, on the side of the Triple Entente and decided to pay for it at the cost of Bulgaria. Therefore the Russian diplomacy was persuading the Bulgarian Government to accept the Rumanian request for revision of the Bulgaro-Rumanian frontier in Southern Dobrudja.

Without hope of Austrian and possibly Russian support Rumania could be not so exigent as she was. But if Bucharest had known that Bulgaria would be backed in every circumstance by her Balkan allies, Rumanian claims would be certainly smaller, if there would be any at all. Here also the non-existence of a strong quadruple alliance was detrimental — and not only to Bulgaria alone. The Bulgaro-Rumanian conflict had brought still more mutual hostility into the Balkans. It had pushed Bulgaria definitively toward an alliance with Austria and Germany after the Treaty of Bucharest of August 10 (July 30), 1913. Backed by her allies, Bulgaria would reject Rumanian pretensions which after many years had been even by Rumania herself recognized as not entirely substantiated.<sup>42</sup> It is a pity that in 1912 neither Bulgarian backing was given to Serbia against Austria-Hungary nor Serbian backing to Bulgaria against Rumania.<sup>43</sup>

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40. N. Iorga: *Histoire des Etats balkaniques*, p. 470.

41. E. C. Helmreich & C. E. Black: *The Russo-Bulgarian Military Convention of 1902*, "Journal of Modern History", IX, 1937, pp. 471-482; some supplementary details: H. Batowski, *Podstawy sojuszu...*, pp. 144-146.

42. Rumania had returned Southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria in September 1940; though it is true, under some German pressure.

43. It is not clear whether the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of Alliance could refer also to a Bulgaro-Rumanian conflict. Possibly yes, because Rumania then had been considered as an ally of Austria-Hungary (this had caused the conclusion of the Russo-Bulgarian alliance, but the latter had lost its validity: see footnote 41).

### V. Conclusion

As we have seen, the course of diplomatic negotiations, aiming at the foundation of the Balkan League of 1912, had brought several difficulties.

First among them was the non-existence of the general entente, equally linking all four states. Instead of a Quadruple Entente there had been concluded only several bilateral treaties of alliance without mutual connection between them and even the existence of such treaties had been concealed from the other allies.<sup>44</sup> There was no Greco-Serbian treaty of alliance in spite of numerous common interests of both states.

Then, a very tremendous mistake was committed by the disregard of the Albanian right to independence. This attitude was particularly unfair on the part of states who were preparing a war of liberation.<sup>45</sup>

And finally, there had been an insufficient diplomatic preparation of the war. The states of the Balkan League did not take into consideration the attitude of the Big Powers, particularly of Austria-Hungary and Italy in connection with the Albanian question and in general. Moreover, this insufficiency was confirmed by the lack of approach to Western Powers at all: which could be detrimental to the Balkan states if the course of the war had been different. For instance, a more friendly attitude from Italy could be obtained with Russian mediation, as after the meeting of Racconigi (1909) there was a close entente between St. Petersburg and Rome in Balkan affairs. This chance had been entirely neglected.

Thus the Balkan League was a block not strong enough to stand the pressure of all the forces which were opposed to a lasting understanding between the nations of the Peninsula.

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44. Bulgaria had not revealed to Greece her treaty with Serbia, and the latter had concealed from Montenegro the alliance with Bulgaria (as stressed by Pavlović, *op. cit.*, p. 29, footnote 2).

45. D. Djordjević: *Révolutions nationales des peuples balkaniques 1804-1914* (Belgrade 1965), p. 229, states that it had been: "l'application imparfaite du principe de nationalité sur le territoire albanais"—one would rather say that in this case it had been no application of the national principle at all.