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The Balkan Wars: An Expected Opportunity for Ethnic Cleansing

IGOR DESPOT

Abstract

The Balkan states in 1912 created a system of alliances ultimately aimed at the expulsion of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkan territory and from Europe. The changes that happened during the Balkan wars in the Macedonian territory were far-reaching. Balkan Muslims largely left the areas that they had settled for centuries. The Christian population that was part of the Ottoman Empire before the wars, having certain rights and customs and a large amount of problems (lingering Ottoman feudalism, the non-existence of security, be it from the Komitadji groups of the neighboring countries, or from the vengeful Turkish persecutions), had hoped for the war to bring liberation and better life conditions. The initial enthusiasm was very quickly replaced by the fight for mere survival as well as the loss of rights and customs that the “millet” system has continuously nurtured under the Ottoman Empire. The “liberators” were often wrong (the others), which led to large migrations among the Christian population of the Balkan states. The ethnic image of the Balkans changed completely and those who remained in their homes and survived the war most often did not have any minority rights and were subjected to assimilation. The situation was most drastic in Aegean Macedonia, which in a little more than a decade changed from multinational environment to an area almost completely inhabited by the Greeks.

Keywords: *The Balkan Wars; the Ottoman Empire; ethnic cleansing; Macedonia; Greece; Bulgaria; Serbs; war crimes*

Introduction

In 1912, the Balkan states created a system of alliances ultimately aimed at the expulsion of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkan territory and from Europe. It was not an easy task because of the national and ideological struggle during the second half of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century. For decades, the Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian national idea collided in European Ottoman Vilayets, and population statistics created by the authors of the three countries had nothing to do with the actual situation on the ground. Propaganda through churches, schools, military, Komitadjis squads tried to make compatriots out of the Christian population of the Empire, and the population of Macedonia and Adrianople was treated as a material suitable for changes (like Macedo-

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nian salad or pasta that can be kneaded). Ottoman Empire's hardships at the beginning of 1912, were considered as a favorable opportunity for the expansion of the country at the expense of the Empire and the countries, instead of seeing each other as enemies, developed the idea of compromise, trying to extract as much as possible in order to increase the territory, the tax base and human resources. Therefore, the propaganda changed completely and Chetnik units assigned the new task. Greece had to give up its alliance with the Turks against the Slavs, Bulgaria had to give up the autonomy of Macedonia, which would then be, at a favorable moment, merged with Bulgaria and Serbia and had to give up its maximalist territorial aims. Former bitter enemies were subjected to propaganda that emphasized the heterodoxy of the Turks and need for Christian liberation from the terrible terror that the Ottoman Empire had carried out for centuries. The episodes in which their countrymen had been victims of the Ottoman state were drawn from the past.

In all countries, the war aims could be easily defined. First, substantial aim was the expulsion of the Ottoman state, administration and army from the Balkan area. Second was the merger of the territory. And the third aim was to create an ethnically pure territory. Prerequisite for the creation of such an environment was the liquidation of Muslims, either through expulsion or killings. After that, it was necessary to convince the Christian population of conquered territories to accept the new state. Those who could not, had to leave the area. Pretext for that were the decisions of the Congress of Berlin (1878) that provided widening of the states not on the basis of ethnic situation, but by agreement of the Great Powers.¹ After the departure of the refugees following the Berlin Congress, colonists settled in those areas. At the beginning of the war that could not be publicly stated and that is why condominium (joint administration) was agreed for the disputed areas. But in reality, it occurred only in Sandzak between the Serbs and Montenegrins.

In the preparation for the war, the need was emphasized for the liberation of Christian brothers who, in their opinion, suffered under inhumane and non-European rule. The Balkan states engaged in strong propaganda in order to get a larger percentage of the population ready for the wars and, at the same time, in order to convince Europe that status quo, supported by the great powers, was ultimately unsustainable. Through those actions, they also tried to prepare the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire to support other Balkan countries in conducting wars. Obviously, the results were good: they received, as the Balkan countries praised, the best response to the mobilization call in the history of warfare and most of the Macedonian Christian population became involved in the volunteer units of the Balkan states. The Entente powers, led by Russia, achieved non-interference of superpowers in the initial conquests of the Balkan countries.

Ultimately, this led to the massacres of the Muslims, putting on fire as much as 80 percent of their villages leading to massive flight of the Muslim population to Asia. The Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek sides were facing serious problems with the irregular troops ("Komitadjis", "chetniks") who would just ignore the orders to respect the rule of wartime laws. The response to the pressures from Europe were often verbal assurances that the irregulars had been disbanded or put under control. The liberated Christian population also showed initial excitement with the "liberators"; however, after the war, campaign administration in the liberated parts of the Balkans was often such that the population quickly cooled off because of false liberators. With the outbreak of the Second Balkan War, the conflict between the Cross and the Crescent was over, but the magnitude of crimes did not scale down. The victor of the propaganda campaign was

the Greek prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos. He set up a commission for investigating Bulgarian crimes and had its report translated into several languages, making Europe believe that the Bulgarians had outdone everyone else in abuses and crimes, while the Greeks were seen as the defenders of the civilization. The course of the wars, the war crimes and fear of the conquerors deeply changed the ethnic landscape of the Balkans. The masses of population followed the armies and took refuge in their ethnic mother states. Exchanges of population took place on a vast scale. Of course, some chose to stay in their original homes and ended up being assimilated. This resulted in a complete change of Macedonia's ethnic profile, which is most evident in the Aegean Macedonia where, according to statistics of the League of Nations, 88% of the Greeks lived at the end of the 1920s.

Preparation for the War

The Balkan alliance was created by a set of circumstances in which people who were in the position of Prime Ministers of Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria realized that the chetniks' fights in Macedonia are of no benefit to them and that they must act together, if they want to free their "compatriots" within the Empire and conquer parts of Macedonia for their own countries.² The Greek prime minister Eleftherios Venizelos, Serbian prime minister Milovan Milovanović as well as Bulgarian prime minister Ivan Estratijev Geshov had to overcome the powerful opposition in their respective states and their different conception of the solution to the Eastern Question. The favorable situation that was provided by the outbreak of the Tripolitanian War³ and the Albanian uprising drove them to start immediate action. The problem with that alliance was the non-existence of a multilateral agreement or an agreement about the division of the territory—instead of that, a combination of various bilateral agreements were made, which did not provide a solid foundation for the potential post-victory situation.

The Bulgarians were the most active party in the preparation for the war, and they started with armed propaganda and the generation of conditions needed for the outbreak of war. In order to trigger the Young Turks [Jön Türkler] to persecute the Christians within the Empire, and thereby cause the anger of their compatriots within the country and the outrage of European public opinion, the heads of the Internal Macedonian Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (IMARO) decided to start with terrorist bombings. The first actions of this sort had already happened, in December 1911, in Štip. Next came the explosion of the bomb in Kočani.⁴ These explosions caused huge massacres in which several dozen Bulgarians were killed, and hundreds were robbed. This, again, caused a chain reaction in the Bulgarian cities. Various meetings were held, and their goal was to convince the governments of the Balkan states to head into war as soon as possible and liberate their Christian brothers from the jaws of the Ottoman Empire. Resolutions which were adopted on these meetings demanded the immediate action of the Bulgarian government.⁵ Meetings, that called upon the Balkan governments for action, were also held in Serbia,⁶ and they were triggered not only by these massacres but also by the massacres of the population in Sanjak, Metohija and Donji Vasojevići, and by the dissolution of the Serbian schools and other educational institutions as well as by the massacre in Berani.

The manifesto of the Bulgarian Tzar that called the nation into the war against the Turks contains a very significant part at the very end. In it, Emperor Ferdinand underlines how the forthcoming war is not just a common war, but a war of the Cross against the Islamic crescent moon. He also emphasizes the integrity and the sanctity of

the fight for human rights of Christians in the Ottoman Empire.⁷ To the population, this war was presented as the last of the Crusades. Words such as providence, of-one-kin, of-one-nation have been the very foundation of the manifesto. Stefan Cankov, the chief of the cultural-educational department of the St. Sinode, on this occasion even came up with the catchword according to which a soldiers' reward for death on the battlefield is to go straight to God in heaven, and remain among the righteous.⁸ In all churches on October 18th 1912, a service was held for the well-being and victory of the Bulgarian army and its allies.⁹ The Ottomans have been seen in all the alliance countries as the lasting enemies, so the mobilization brought about amazing results.¹⁰

Out of the volunteers that arrived in Bulgaria, mostly from Macedonia and East Thrace, a special Macedonian-Adrianople "opolchenie" (people's militia) was formed. This unit was put under the command of regular officers, it took part in regular military actions and may not be confused with the chetnik units that had been in existence before the war broke out. At the beginning of the war, the "opolchenie" had consisted of 14,670 volunteers,¹¹ out of which there were 12,000 Macedonians.¹² Additionally, there were also volunteers from other regions.¹³ By the end of the war, the "opolchenie" consisted of 26,638 soldiers and 947 officers.¹⁴ Jane Sandanski, on the other hand, had a unit under his own control that had participated in the joint fight with the Bulgarians, but had its own commandment. That unit was on the right wing of the Seventh Rila division and had up to 2000 fighters.¹⁵ That division was the one that set the town of Melnik free.

Similar words have been used in Serbia as well. In his order to the First army on the eve of the operations, Crown Prince Aleksandar, the commander of the First Army, was reminded of the five centuries of the Turkish oppression, abuse, disgrace and annihilation. He proclaimed the goal of the liberation of the brothers as well as vengeance for Kosovo.¹⁶ The mobilization in Greece was completed within five days, but even afterwards the volunteers from Crete, the Aegean Islands, Macedonia, Europe and USA continued to arrive.¹⁷ The immigrants helped with the equipping of the military for the war. The poet Spyros Matsoukas had been traveling around the world, collecting the support for the forthcoming war from among the displaced Greeks. During his travels in Egypt, Cyprus and the USA, he had collected a large amount of financial help. In USA alone, he managed to collect enough money to buy three air planes and one destroyer.¹⁸ All these volunteers have been under the influence of the propaganda when they went to save their brothers and compatriots from the centuries long Turkish terror, as well as free their medieval lands.

The Enthusiasm of the "Liberated" Population

At the beginning of the war, the now liberated (conquered) areas were bursting with enthusiasm no matter which army had entered which city. Since the agreement on condominium had been reached before the war, as well as the agreement that the territory will be shared only post festum, it was no wonder that peoples who had considered themselves Bulgarians, Serbians, Greeks or even Macedonians had welcomed the "Christian" armies with enthusiasm. Memories of certain officers who took part in the liberation can only confirm the initial enthusiasm.

In Kumanovo, the population welcomed the Serbian army in delirium. Panta M. Draškić, back then a captain 1st class who was in command of the Third company of the Third battalion in the Sixth Regiment, was the first one to enter the city with his soldiers. He reports being dragged around and given treats by people wherever he

went, and that the soldiers were crying with happiness. It was all too difficult for him, so he did his best to get the army out of the city as soon as possible.¹⁹

Vasil Kolarov (actually a staunch socialist) had written in his diary about the enthusiasm of the people caused by the Rila division²⁰ in its conquering march through Macedonia towards Thessaloniki. Rila division was the first one to enter Štip, where the entire city was thrilled to welcome the liberators. As a socialist who was against the war, he had noted the backwardness of the settlements where the Bulgarian army had entered, but still did not hide the pride he felt with of the victory and the ejection of the Turks from these areas.²¹

However, even the stories of the liberation of the settlements note certain incidents. The most famous one would be about Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadorđević having slapped a little girl. He had asked her what she was, and when she had replied “A Bulgarian”, what she got was a slap in the face. The most famous Bulgarian poet Ivan Vazov used this story for his poem “And what are you?”²² Incidents such as this and the propaganda that followed were the introduction to the Second Balkan War and showed that not everything in the field is ideal, and that the conquerors had no intention of sticking to the condominium that was agreed upon before the wars had started.

Dissatisfaction of the “Liberated” with the New Masters During the First Balkan War

The new masters had started to impose their rules, and the population that had their confessional freedom as part of the Ottoman Empire already during the First Balkan War, now started being assimilated both in the religious and ethnic sense.

Egzarhist churches had been turned into Serbian orthodox churches very quickly, or into the Greek patriarch churches, and the pressures in the sense of acceptance of a new nation were tremendous. Since the majority of the population of Macedonia actually belonged to the Bulgarian Egzarhist church, and Bulgaria had received only a part of Macedonia, the ones who complained the most were the Egzarhist priests. The complaints of Egzarhist priests kept coming from the field, reporting the pressure made on them by the Serbs. The report of the Ohrid mitropoly from April 15th 1913 shows how Serbs had been behaving towards the Bulgarians in an extremely hostile manner. At the beginning of April, the commander of the garrison had invited 22 of the most respected citizens, 11 teachers, 2 students, the secretary of mitropoly, together with 6 merchants and explained to them that this will never be Bulgarian territory, it has belonged to Serbia since the very beginning, but that there was a strong Bulgarian propaganda that has mislead the people. What is required is loyalty towards the new state, Serbia, which has no intention of ever abandoning these areas.²³ Besides that, cases have been reported of students being forbidden to return to their studies in Sofia, but were, instead, sent to continue their studies in Belgrade.²⁴ New, Serbian taxes had also been introduced in the field, which the reports to the Bulgarian government claimed were worse than the Turkish ones.²⁵

Serbs had already tried to assimilate the Macedonians through educational policies, after having conquered parts of Macedonia and Kosovo. The conquered parts were not governed according to the Serbian constitutional order, the residents were deprived of their Serbian civil rights, and the “newly liberated areas” were governed according to special regulations. The population had neither active nor passive voting rights, nor did they have any representation in the Serbian parliament. Even during the First Balkan war, on 27 December 1912, a Regulation was passed on the setup of the authorities in the

newly occupied areas, which had remained in power at the end of the war when the king had proclaimed the annexation of the newly occupied areas, and thereafter a whole series of new regulations had followed.²⁶ The fundamental question was how to integrate this area into the Serbian state and which means would be the most suitable ones to do it. Even during the wars, Serbs from various areas (of the Monarchy as well as Serbia) had set themselves on the way to Skopje and Kumanovo to see if there was any way for them to come to the land in the newly occupied areas. As many people had left these areas due to the wars, many possibilities for allotment of their land to the loyal Serbs were opened, and those again were supposed to serve the assimilation of those areas.

The second stabilization factor for the Serbian authorities was the organization of the Serbian religious-educational network in Macedonia and Kosovo. It required the opening of as many schools as possible and taking over the previous Egzarhist, Greek or Turkish schools. The liberated areas were split into four educational domains (Skopje, Veles, Bitola and Priština) which were led by school inspectors. As Serbian teachers were lacking in number, the intention was to attract the Egzarhist teachers into Serbian schools. For that purpose, special courses for studying the Serbian language were held.²⁷ Even in November 1912, the commander of the Kumanovo district, Trifunović, understood the range of problems Serbia might have with teachers. He suggested that Serbia give financial help to the Bulgarian teachers which the “egzarhija” had failed to pay for three months, all in order to attach them closer to Serbia.²⁸ Even before the end of the First Balkan War, the Serbian church had strived, and for the most part succeeded, in taking over Egzarhist churches in Egzarhist settlements.

The situation in the part of Macedonia that was conquered by the Greeks had not been very different. As the end of the First Balkan War was approaching, together with the final assessment of the borders, the pressure on the activity of “egzarhija” and on the Macedonian-Bulgarian people was getting bigger and bigger. The bishop of Voden had complained to Geshov in his letter from April 14th 1913, claiming that the Greek police had invaded the pure Bulgarian village Rusilovo and had forced the population to sign that they were Greeks. They had threatened the population with force if they refused to sign the statement about their Greek heritage.²⁹ Later on, the same pattern was repeated in many municipalities and letters kept arriving at the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding these occurrences.³⁰ A picture was even circulated amongst the Greek soldiers that had a Greek soldier eating the face of a Bulgarian soldier. That prompted a certain fanaticism amongst the Greeks.³¹ Already during the First Balkan War, the Greeks had set fire to 160 inhabited settlements which had driven 16,000 Macedonian Slavs to leave their houses and head towards Bulgaria.³²

Crimes in the Balkan Wars

Just as all the other wars, the Balkan wars were also abundant with various crimes.³³ In the area of the Balkans, the civilians have always been a target, so these wars brought nothing particularly new in that regard. Ever since the beginning of the 19th century, and the beginning of the wars whose goal was the deliverance of the Christian peoples living in the Balkan area, the Muslims have been the main target of ethnic cleansing, with the objective being the creation of the respective nation states. In the Balkan wars themselves, and due to the eruption of the nationalist ideas and the mixed population, the goal was, however, to generate an ethnically clean territory regardless of the religion. Although on the eve of the wars the Turks were proclaimed the only target for propaganda purposes, the crimes did not stop even when the Ottoman state was cast out, nor when the

Muslim population was banished from the area. The crimes kept occurring with the same intensity even among Christian peoples, and with the goal of banishing or assimilating the others (i.e. those who had not professed their nationality to be Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian, ...). From the occurrences described in numerous publications, we could draw the following conclusions:

- (1) As already described in this article, the First Balkan War was being prepared as a war against the non-Christian heterodox peoples. The consequences of such a propaganda are well known. By January 1913,³⁴ the Serbs had killed over 25,000 Albanians in Kosovo, and 80% of the Muslim villages had been burned to the ground. According to the Turkish historians, at least 500,000 Muslim civilians were killed during the Balkan wars altogether. Historian H. Yıldırım Ağanoglu finds that 600,000 out of 2,315,000 persons were killed during that time.³⁵ Besides those who had lost their lives, around 200,000 people had fled to areas which were then part of the Ottoman Empire.³⁶ In the areas conquered by the Bulgarians, Montenegrins, and Serbs, there are also examples of mass conversions of Muslims to Christianity.³⁷ Despite all that, during the First Balkan War we come upon several examples that clearly show that no genocide was being planned from the side of those in power. During the First Balkan War, the Bulgarians were also committing war crimes and the Bulgarian government tried to prevent them on several occasions. The Prime Minister Geshov was warned by the Great Powers about the atrocities committed by the Bulgarian troops and he then passed on the notification to General Savov with the remark that such practice had to be stopped. The orders on the conduct of the troops were issued as early as 8th October 1912,³⁸ but since that did not have sufficient effect, on December 29th Savov issued another order on army conduct.³⁹ He highlighted the cases of the troops' misconduct towards the civilians, plundering and violence. He stated that that was a disgrace for the Bulgarian nation and that it undermined the trust of the Muslim community. So he issued an order that such cases must be brought before the court martial regardless of the perpetrator's rank, that harsh disciplinary measures must be introduced and that it should be made clear that the Muslims in the newly conquered areas were under the protection of the Bulgarian wartime laws. The relationship with the prisoners of war ranged from absolute compliance with the laws of war to mass killings, *albeit* the latter occurred much less frequently.
- (2) The war crimes, however, did not stop after the Ottoman Empire was cast out of the Balkans. The politics of the scorched land and ethnic cleansing continued. To a large extent, an attempt to assimilate the found population was also present; according to the oppressors, this population should not have had problems with accepting their new nation because the leading theoreticians of the invading countries saw them as a sort of material that can be ground and mixed up in order to make them into their countrymen and countrywomen. The problem with this idea was that during the forty years of existence of the Exarchate, the awareness of belonging either to the Greek or to the Bulgarian ethnos had awoken. The best example for the politics of the scorched land was the demolition of towns in the course of their abandonment due to military defeat. In the Second Balkan War, old animosities dating back from the Komitadji battles awoke. It is noticeable that there were no commands to stop the

crimes in the allied war similar to those that Bulgarian Prime Minister, Geshov and General Savov sent during the First Balkan War.

- (3) This raises the question of whether the Komitadji units were the ones to blame for the crimes committed, as state officials from all sides claimed, or were those units a part of the state politics. It is extremely difficult to find the answer to this question. The cases differed. Leon Trotsky even recorded the conflicts of the regular Serbian units against the Komitadji because of the crimes the latter had committed near the town of Prilep.⁴⁰ The response to the pressures from Europe was often the verbal assurances that the irregulars had been disbanded or put under control.⁴¹ Nonetheless, there were reports about the crimes such as the massacre of sixty Albanians in Gnjilane area on 27 February.⁴² Although it is largely true that the Komitadji, experienced in armed conflict and unfamiliar with the law of war, committed crimes, sometimes arbitrarily, it is also possible to conclude that the authorities exploited them as a justification in the moments when European countries discovered crimes, claiming that they were out of control. According to my analysis, more common were cases where they were used to do the dirty work for the government apparatus.⁴³

The European View on the “Savage” Balkan Peoples

Europe was eager to see these crimes happen in order to prove its claim that the southeast of Europe was inhabited by tribes not able to cope with the civilized world. After the discourse of the “terrible Turk” had been introduced into the public space by the British Whig Party leader William Ewart Gladstone who used it in one of his speeches,⁴⁴ the time had finally arrived to create the discourse of the “uncivilized Balkan people”. Various European officials and consular representatives were putting a lot of effort into introducing all these crimes to the European public opinion, which had led to occasional exaggerations and fabrications of said affairs. In the war propaganda the most prominent case was that of the Consul Prohaska in Prizren who was allegedly, according to the claims of the Monarchy’s authorities, tortured and castrated. However, it turned out that he was only prevented from inciting the Albanian tribes to riot and from communicating with Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was not even detained.⁴⁵ This case was the subject of correspondence from the Serbian ambassador to Russia Dimitrije Popović. He pointed out that Prohaska had been inciting the Prizren Albanians to fight and even he himself was firing shots at the Serbian troops from his attic. This was not the only affair which involved the representatives of Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkan states.

If we were to read European newspapers from that period, the main oppressors were the Bulgarians and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the Serbs. On the other hand, the Greeks were being proclaimed as the protectors of European civilization. However, despite Greece being regarded as the milestone of the then contemporary European civilization, the Carnegie Commission Reports had also acknowledged the crimes of the “so-called” protectors of European civilization, most notably Greece, because the Commission had two Bulgarophiles, namely Pavel Miljukov and Henry Brailsford, who were not in favor of the Greeks. Thus it was determined that none of the parties were immune to committing crimes.

Ever since the Balkan wars, the Balkans has been set up as a contrast to Europe with its horrific, uncivilized, romanticized nationalism. For George F. Kennan, the author of the introduction to the reprint of Carnegie Foundation’s report on the Balkan war crimes

published in 1993, the post-Yugoslav wars from 1990s were a mere logical sequence and continuation of something that had already been happening in 1912 and 1913.⁴⁶ In an excellent book *Imagining Balkans*, written by Maria Todorova, we come upon the theoretical explanation of how Europe sees the Balkans.⁴⁷ For the Western world, the Balkans are something uncivilized (whereas the incivility of Europe is very often simply overlooked). It remains questionable why the behavior of the Belgians in the Belgian Congo,⁴⁸ or the crimes committed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the First World War would be any less brutal than the ones committed by the “terrible Turks” or the “savage Balkan people.” The motive for the flare-up of the discourse of Balkanism can be found precisely in the wars of the 1990s. The Austrian historian Karl Kasser, working on the project “The Balkan family” together with his collaborators, even presented a hypothesis that the idea of the Balkan patriarchal family is to blame for the frequencies and the incidences of rapes that had happened during the wars in 1990s. The desire to cause disgrace to the other man by raping his woman is, according to this group of researchers, deeply rooted in the very image of the Balkan families.⁴⁹ This hypothesis can, however, be put to question rather easily. A part of the oral history transmitted from generation to generation in the former Yugoslavia were also the stories about the Circassians and Russians who allegedly regularly raped women in the Second World War. The question that remains open is whether this is also a part of a patriarchal Circassian or Russian family, or whether the war in itself was the reason for the misdeeds and the manifestation of the conquerors’ power.

In conclusion, many crimes had taken place in both Balkan wars of early and late 1900s, and one part of the population was traditionally leaving their homes even before the victorious army arrived to the area, probably whilst correctly concluding that the crimes will happen; and hence, the said wars have completely changed the ethnic makeup of the Balkans.

Consequences for the “Liberated” Population after the Wars

The pressure that had existed during the times when Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria were still allies had become unbearable after the mutual conflict for the bigger part of the population of Macedonia. All this had brought a change to the ethnic picture in Vardar and Aegean Macedonia. It had become a colonization, where the land was given to the “good” Serbs. The “good ones” were various chetniks and volunteers who took part in the wars. Altogether, by 1941 around 100,000 Serbs had arrived in Vardar Macedonia, and that according to two criteria: either as part of an administration in the new districts or for the purpose of populating the villages.⁵⁰ When it came to the creation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, the colonization of the Serbs had gone into two directions, so the number of the colonized into the Vardar part of Macedonia was still significantly lower than the one in the Aegean part that was held by the Greeks.

All this caused uprisings in Macedonia against the Serbian and Greek authorities. In June 1913 there were uprisings in Tikveš, Negotin, Kavadarci and Vataš; and in October 1913 the entire area of Ohrid, Debar and Strus were in the middle of uprisings as well.⁵¹ All these uprisings brought the vengeance of those in power. In Kavadarci 263 “egzarhists” were murdered; in Negotin the number amounted to 280 and in Vataš the number of killed was 40 and by October, however, it resulted in 1,000 rebels being killed. Around 30,000 “egzarhists” and Albanians fled to Albania. Over 260 villages were burned, and from the larger settlements in Negotin 750 out of 800 residents were

lost in a fire.⁵² These uprisings were connected to the rebellions of the Albanians in the areas that were under Serbian administration, and they were encouraged and indeed financed by Bulgaria and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Altogether 86,572 citizens moved out of the Aegean part of Macedonia, and they ended up populating mostly Bulgarian areas, whereas the smaller part had ended up in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.⁵³ Next to the Slavic population, even Vlachs from these areas moved to the southern Dobruja between the two World Wars. Close to 6,000 Vlachs from the Aegean and Vardar Macedonia and 14,000 people from Romania also arrived, which prompted the Bulgarians and the Turks from those areas to move out and go to Bulgaria and Turkey. At least 100,000 people had left the areas of Southern Dobruja before the Second World War had started.⁵⁴

Not even the Jews in the Aegean Macedonia lived a peaceful life. A number of them had moved out into various European countries.⁵⁵ All these Jews were displaced by the Greek government during the two waves of colonization. The first one started from Greece itself, mostly during the time span before the end of the 1920s when almost 53,000 Jews arrived from Greece.⁵⁶ After the Greek-Turkish war of 1919–1922 around 350,000 Muslims were deported from the Aegean Macedonia, and 565,000 Greeks from Asia Minor, Europe and Africa have taken their place.⁵⁷ In conclusion, in the fifteen years after the Balkan Wars, the Greeks formed 88 per cent of the population in the Aegean part of Macedonia, according to data from the League of Nations.⁵⁸ That is, however, official data. It was not advisable to accentuate the Slavic heritage in Greece, so Stojan Kiselinski states how the percentage of Greeks had reached 50%, whereas there was still only 17% of Macedonians.⁵⁹

Conclusion

The changes that happened during the Balkan wars in the Macedonian territory were far-reaching. The Christian population that was part of the Ottoman Empire before the wars, having certain rights and customs and a large amount of problems—lingering Ottoman feudalism, the non-existence of security, be it from the Komitadji groups of the neighboring countries, or from the vengeful Turkish persecutions—had hoped for the war to bring liberation and better life conditions. However, the initial enthusiasm was very quickly replaced by the fight for mere survival as well as the loss of rights and customs that the “*millet*” system⁶⁰ had continuously nurtured under the Ottoman Empire.

The Balkan Wars fit in the stereotypical image of the Balkans as a region in which the winners take all from those who are defeated, from human dignity to human life. The story of human courage and of the liberation of national brothers was overshadowed by the war crimes. These crimes were committed by all parties involved in the conflict, and measuring which army was the most brutal is almost impossible. The question is whether the crimes were part of the government policy of the states involved in the wars, or were crimes caused only by the hatred of the soldiers in the field who committed them. In the First Balkan War, we can find a small number of documents in which such crime policy was enforced—in the case of Bulgaria and Greece. There were also a large number of prisoners of war who didn't complain that they had any problems with the victorious armies. Indeed, irregular units exerted the most serious crimes in the First Balkan War, without the approval of high-ranking officers in the field. In the Second Balkan War such orders or regrets didn't exist. Maybe the reason for this is the short duration of that war, which made impossible any kind of reaction from the governments of the warring parties. In the Aegean and Vardar Macedonia, the pressure of assimilation and the rele-

gation to a second-class position caused either emigration or assimilation—a very successful one in the Aegean Macedonia, and a rather unsuccessful one in the Vardar Macedonia. Final figures show that the desire to liberate the national (Christian) brothers only justified the policy of ethnically pure countries.

NOTES

1. Justin McCarthy, “Ignoring the People: The Effects of the Congress of Berlin”, in *War & Diplomacy, The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Peter Sluggett, Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 2011, pp. 429–448.
2. Yura Konstantinova, *Balgari i Garci v borba za osmanskoto nasledstvo [Bulgarians and Greeks in Struggle for Ottoman Legacy]*, Sofia: Izdatelstvo Faber, 2014. Konstantinova explains the origin and goals of Bulgarian and Greek propaganda activities and the resistance in both countries to the alliance that emerged prior to the Balkan wars.
3. Ivan Fichev, *Balkanskata vojna 1912–1913, prezhiveleci, belezhki i dokumenti [The Balkan Wars 1912–1913, Experiences, Notes and Documents]*, Sofia: Državna pečatnica, 1940, pp. 41–42. As the commander of the General Staff of Bulgaria, Fichev had tried arranging a certain form of cooperation with the Italians, but they had decidedly replied how Bulgaria has to do nothing in order to prevent the outbreak of a general war.
4. Svetlozar Eldarov, “Tajnite oficerski bratstva v balgarskata armija prez 1912 g” [“The Secret Societies in the Bulgarian Army in 1912”] in *80 godini ot Balkanskite vojni 1912–1913 [80 years from the Balkan Wars 1912–1913]*, Sofia: IMO Sv. Georgi Pobdonosec, 1995, pp. 17–26; Ismet Kočan, *Bitka za Makedonija [Battle for Macedonia]*, Skopje: Bata Press, 2010, p. 70 in his work describes the assassination attempt where on the third day of Kurban Bayram a certain “Bulgarian” (quotes by Kočan) had left a bag full of explosive. Two Muslims had died, one Jew and one Bulgarian, and twenty-five people were wounded. The Turks had hereafter attacked the Bulgarians with the sticks, killing seventeen and wounding a hundred and forty-nine people. In Kočani, the bomb had exploded on the wheat market, killing twenty-eight people. Revenging themselves, the people have killed twelve and wounded a hundred and eighty Bulgarians.
5. Atanas Shopov, *Kak ni se nalozhi Balkanskata vojna [How the Balkan Wars were Waged]*, Sofia, 1915, p. 33. In the Central State history archive in Sofia, there is a large number of documents (resolutions) from the meeting held in Sofia, Plovdiv as well as in the other bigger Bulgarian cities. See: *Tsentralniya drzhaven istoricheski arhiv (TsDLA), Ministerstvo na vanshnite raboti [Central State Historical Archives, Ministry of Interiors, fund 176, description 2, 1198/1]*. For instance, in the resolution from Plovdiv, from the meeting held in June 1912, it is claimed that the Turkish government does not guarantee not even the minimum rights, not only for the cultural development but for the bare life of the Christian people as well; the demand is being made for the Bulgarian government to use all the rational means and Eastern Thrace, as this is the only way to preserve peace in the Balkans. *TsDLA*, 176,2,1198/1, list 89.)
6. *Obzor* (Croatian newspaper) 15.8.1912; 27.8.1912; 28.8.1912.
7. Svetlozar Eldarov, *Pravoslavieto na vojna [The Orthodoxy in the War]*, Sofia: Voenno izdatelstvo, 2004, p. 66.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
10. On the success of the mobilization see: Igor Despot, *The Balkan Wars in the Eyes of the Warring Parties*, Bloomington: iUniverse Inc, 2012, pp. 62–80.
11. Mariya Dimolareva, “Zheni-dobrovolci prez Balkanskata vojna” [“Women Volunteers in the Balkan Wars”], in *Spornik mezhdunarodna konferencija, 90 godini Balkanskata vojna [Proceedings of the International Conference, 90 Years from the Balkan Wars]*, Kardzhali: Balgarskata akademija na naukite, Institut za istorija, 2002, pp. 242–256.
12. Manol Pandevski, “Makedonskoto osloboditelno dviženje megju 1903 i 1918 godina: razvojni fazi, vnatrešni diferencijaciji, politički grupaciji, pojavni oblici” [Macedonian liberation movement between 1903 and 1918: development phases, internal differentiations, political groups, forms] in *Makedonija vo vojnite [Macedonia in Wars]*, ed. M. Pandevski, D. Zografski, and I. Katardžiev, Skopje: Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, 1991, p. 33.
13. Iliya Iliyev, *Armenskata dobrovolcheska rota v Balkanskata vojna 1912–1913 g. [The Armenian Volunteer company in the Balkan Wars 1912–1913]*, Sofia: Voenno izdatelstvo, 1989. Iliyev states various

- nationalities in the Macedonian-Odrin “opolchenie”. Besides the Macedonians, prevailing in this unit, it comprised of 275 Armenians, 82 Russians, 68 Romanians, 40 Serbs, 25 inhabitants of Asia Minor, 15 from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 12 from Montenegro, 3 Greeks, 2 Czechs, an Italian, an Englishman, an Albanian, and a single Croatian ...
14. Dimolareva, Zheni- dobrovolci, *op. cit.*, p. 242.
 15. Vanče Stojčev, “Voenata dejnost na Jane Sandanski” [Military Activities of Jane Sandanski], in *Jane Sandanski i makedonskoto osloboditelno delo* [Jane Sandanski and Macedonian Liberation Movement], ed. I. Katardžiev, G. Todorovski, and K. Bitovski, Skopje: Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, 2007, pp. 71, 72.
 16. Branislav Gligorijević, *Kralj Aleksandar Karađorđević’ u ratovima za nacionalno oslobođenje* [King Alexander Karađorđević in the Wars for National Liberations], Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2002, p. 83.
 17. Joachim, G. Joachim, *Ioannis Metaxas: The Formative years 1871–1922*, Mannheim und Mohnesee: Bibliopolis, 2000, p. 96.
 18. Ioannis G. Rouskas, “Spyros Matsoukas and the Contribution of the Greek Emigrants to the National Effort of 1912–13”, in *Acta, International symposium of Military History, Moudro[?] 92“-” Pavlos Melaš 92*, Greece: International Commission of Military History: Hellenic Committee of Military History, 1992, pp.142–144.
 19. Panta M. Draškić, *Moji memoari* [My Memories], Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1990, 54.
 20. Rila division was the only Bulgarian military division on the Macedonian battlefield. It had over 30,000 soldiers, and according to the Bulgarian-Serbian military convention, its purpose on the Macedonian soil was to be a resource unit for the Serbian army during their conquests. The remaining of the Bulgarian army was in the Eastern Thrace.
 21. Vasil Kolarov, *Pobedi i porazheniya: Dnevnik* [Victories and Defeats: A Diary], Sofia: Hristo Botev, 2001.
 22. Yura Konstantinova, “Allies and Enemies: the Balkan peoples in the Bulgarian political propaganda during the Balkan Wars”, *Études Balkaniques*, Sofia, No. 1, 2011, p. 130.
 23. *TsDLA*, 176, 2, 1405, 17.
 24. *TsDLA*, 176, 2, 1405, 124. Ivan Hristov from Bitola was sent to study in Belgrade.
 25. *TsDLA*, 176, 2, 1405, 31.
 26. Gligor Todorovski, *Makedonija po rasparčuvanjeto* [Macedonia After Partition 1912/13–1915], Skopje: Matica makedonska, 1995, p. 15.
 27. Gligor Todorovski, “Dokumenti za prosvetnata politika na srpskoto kralstvo vo Makedonija (1912–1915)” [Documents Concerning Educational Policy in the Serb Kingdom in Macedonia (1912–1915)], in *Glasnik na Institutot za nacionalna istorija*, Vol. XII, No. 3. Skopje, 1968, pp. 197, 198.
 28. *Ibid.*, pp. 201, 202.
 29. *TsDLA*, 176, 2, 1393, 4.
 30. *TsDLA*, 176, 2, 1393.
 31. Stojan Kiselinski, *Etničkite promeni vo Makedonija (1913–1995)* [Ethnic Changes in Macedonia (1913–1995)], Skopje: Institutot za nacionalna istorija, 2000, p. 31.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
 33. I have covered this subject in my book: Despot, *The Balkan Wars*, *op. cit.* In addition, the fair amount of the committed crimes has been described in the report of the Carnegie Commission. In order to avoid repeating the already mentioned examples of said crimes, I have imagined this part as being a new analysis of a sort. Those interested in other examples could make use of my book about the Balkan wars.
 34. Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo, kratka povijest* [Kosovo, A Short History], Sarajevo: Dani, 2000, pp. 299–300.
 35. Kočan, *Bitka za Makedonija*, *op. cit.*, pp. 165, 166.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
 37. For an example for the conversion in Bulgaria see Državen arhiv na Makedonija (DAM) State Archives of Macedonia), Public Record Office, 2145, 82. The letter of the Ambassador Bax Ironside to the Foreign Secretary Grey dated February 11th, 1913. For conversion in the areas conquered by Serbs and Montenigrins see Malcolm, *Kosovo*, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
 38. *TsDLA*, 176, 2, 1213-I.
 39. *TsDLA*, 176, 2, 1213-I, 47.
 40. Leon Trotsky, *The Balkan Wars 1912–13*, Marrickville-New York: Monad Press, 1980, p. 121.
 41. DAM, Public Record Office, 2145, 5. The British Ambassador to Serbia, Ralph Paget, in his letter to the Foreign Secretary Edward Grey dated 9th January 1913 claimed that his hosts had assured him that all irregular troops were dismissed after the Kumanovo battle and that there were no Serbian

- bands anymore. Also, they assured him that the Muslim population was welcome in the areas under the Serbian control.
42. DAM, Public Record Office, 2145, 165.
 43. This work doesn't treat with special attention the different circles of power within individual states. Although nominally prime ministers Pašić, Venizelos and Geshov, and later Danev, represented government, military circles around the Crown Prince Aleksandar, Crown Prince and later King Konstantin and Emperor Ferdinand often had their own specific targets and exploited the Komitadji, among others, for their own purposes.
 44. Hakan Yavuz, "Orientalism, The 'Terrible Turk' and Genocide", *Middle East Critique*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2014, p. 112.
 45. Josip Horvat, *Prvi svjetski rat* [The First World War], Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1967, p. 94.
 46. Marija Todorova, *Imaginarni Balkan* [Imagining the Balkans], Beograd: Biblioteka XX. vek, 2006, pp. 17–22.
 47. *Ibid.*
 48. Regarding the behavior of the Belgians in Africa see the chapter "His Majesty and Mister Morel", in the book by Philipp Blom *The Vertigo Years: Change and Culture in The West, 1900–1914*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Orion Books, 2008 (Croatian edition: *Vrtoglave godine, Europa, 1900–1914*, Zagreb: Fraktura, 2015).
 49. Jasna Čapo Žmegač, "Pogled izvana: Hrvatska i model balkanske obitelji" [Look Outside: Croatia and the Model of the Balkan Family], in *Između roda i naroda* [In between Kin and Nation], ed. Jambrešić Kirin, Renata, Škokić, Tea, Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Centar za ženske studije, 2004.
 50. Arhiv Srbije (AS). Ministarstvo inostranih dela (MID), Političko odeljenje (PO) [Archives of Serbia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Political Department], f- XV, d-6, 55.
 51. Kiril Kosev, *Podvigat 1912, 1913* [Achievements 1912, 1913], Sofia: Voenno izdatelstvo, 1986, p. 223.
 52. *Ibid.*, pp. 225–229.
 53. Kiselinovski, *Etničkrite promeni vo Makedonija*, *op. cit.* p. 34.
 54. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
 55. *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 38.
 56. *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 39.
 57. *Ibid.*, p. 42. While walking around Thessaloniki, one is constantly aware of the existence of this assimilation of the peoples. Not even a hundred meters away from Mustafa Kemal-paşa Atatürk's birth house, there is an inn that belongs to the Greeks from Asia Minor, that leaves one with a feeling of not being in Europe at all.
 58. *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 47.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
 60. The "millet" system—according to which statistics were kept—existed in the Ottoman Empire ever since 1453, and its application onto the non-Muslim communities started from the beginning of the 19th century. The term has many meanings and explanations and was understood in different ways during different times by different political and national factions. "millet" was translated both as a nation as well as a religious community. Although "millet" doubtlessly emanates from the religious communities, the neighboring Balkan countries have used *millets* as national guidelines at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. During that time, there was a separate Egzarhist (Bulgarian) "millet" as well as *Rum-millet* where all the other orthodox believers who were under the Constantinople patriarchy belonged to.