

Treaty of Bucharest.

The role of Romania in the end of Balkan War II

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From the first moment of the declaration of Balkan War I against the Ottoman Empire, Greece sought to confer with its allies on a just partition of the territories, which would be liberated from the Ottoman rule. However, the allies – especially Bulgaria, which pursued the vision of creating a *Great Bulgaria* – were unwilling to discuss the matter. She adopted the same stance towards Serbia's demand for a revision of the Treaty of 1912, under which they had settled territorial issues between them. For this reason, Serbia conferred with Greece and the two countries exchanged relevant draft agreements. Long discussions on the agreements followed and finally, on 22 April 1913, the Greek Minister of Foreign affairs and the Serbian Ambassador to Athens signed a preliminary alliance protocol, which was complemented by a military agreement on 1 May 1913. After further discussions, the preliminary protocol led to a final treaty of alliance, which was signed on 12 May in Thessalonica. On the same day a revised military treaty was also signed. The treaty and the military alliance provided for a ten-year defensive alliance between Greece and Serbia, which thus united, would confront Bulgaria's excessive territorial demands. The same treaty specified the Serbo-Bulgarian and Greco-Bulgarian borders that the two countries would propose; in the event that Bulgaria refused to accept them, they would seek arbitration. If Bulgaria were to resort to arms, the two countries would act in common to crush their opponent. The treaty and the agreements were sanctioned by the Greek government in Athens, on 8 June 1913 and were immediately implemented.

Greece and Serbia never ceased to seek a peaceful solution of their differences with Bulgaria, but they always met with intransigence: Bulgaria had already decided to launch a surprise, simultaneous attack in Macedonia.

Putting their plans into effect, they moved the bulk of their forces opposite the Greek and Serbian armies, the redeployment completed by mid-June. At the same time however, in an attempt to counter the threat, Greece and Serbia advanced their strategic concentration. While carrying out their strategic concentration, the Bulgarians adopted delaying tactics in the ongoing negotiations with Greece and Serbia to settle their differences. At the same time, the Bulgarians avoided any major dispute that could cause a war at such a critical point in time and endanger their strategic concentration.

On 27 June, the Ministry of the Army informed the General Headquarters that Romania would declare war on Bulgaria on the following day, and that the Bulgarians were seeking ways to come to an understanding with Serbia and Greece for the termination of hostilities. The General Headquarters reported to the Government that, according to information provided by the Greek liaison officer at Serbian Headquarters, the Romanian army had crossed the Danube 1913 and was advancing within Bulgarian territory. Furthermore, on the same day, the Ottoman army once again began war operations against the Bulgarians in eastern Thrace.¹ Romania wanted to be present in the decisive moments of the Balkan Peninsula, as being a neighbor of the Balkan allies having social and economic interests for keeping a constant balance.

At length, faced with the Romanian invasion and the possibility of Bulgaria's annihilation, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Sazonov, supported by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Pichon, invited the Greek and Serbian Governments to cease hostilities, to conclude an armistice and to send delegates to St. Petersburg to settle the dispute through Russian mediation. This invitation was unwelcome to Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, who had always suspected that the increased Russian influence over a conference held in St. Petersburg would benefit Bulgaria. On his return from Nish, where negotiations were taking place, Venizelos found a message from the Romanian Minister of Interior Take Ionescu, asking him to prolong the war by opposing the Russo - Austria-Hungarian wish to leave Kavala to

¹ Hellenic Army General Staff / Army History Directorate, *A Concise History of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913*, Athens 1998, p.p. 265, 269, 275, 297.

Bulgaria. On 29 June, only two days after the Romanian invasion from the north, Ottoman troops had begun an advance into Thrace; they proceeded unhindered, the Bulgarians retreating to the north-east. Military disaster and disillusionment with Russian support, had forced the formation of a new Government in Bulgaria, with Genadiev as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The new administration adopted the Russian advice to profit from the presence of the Greek and Serbian Premiers at Nish by sending delegates there in order to negotiate an armistice and to appeal to Romania for a cessation of hostilities.

The General Headquarters was also informed for the occupation of Vratsa by the Romanians. At the same time, the Romanian government sent the confidential note to Venizelos that also advised Greece to take a more conciliatory tone so that Greece's aspirations would not act against its territorial claims. On 7 July, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lambros Koromilas, announced to the King Constantine the following telegram, concerning the confidential announcement made by Ionescu, to Venizelos: *"...It is known that England more than any other Great Power will oppose the annexation of Kavala by Greece and it will be of benefit to all if the Balkan States agree to peace in a spirit of reconciliation, otherwise Europe will intervene emphatically and impose its own terms that include the idea of autonomy for Macedonia. Today Bulgaria proposed to Romania to draw up a peace accord and will concede territorial lines to Romania, but Romania refused. The position of Romania has been somewhat uncertain for days now, and it is still undecided whether its Army will advance as was previously announced by a Romanian Major. I suppose that Mr. Ionescu is following the same policy as before, subject to proposals made by Russia."*²

On 8 July, Genadiev asked the Romanian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs T. Majorescu, directly for a cessation of hostilities to be followed by peace negotiations and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria sent a personal message to King Carol of Romania to the same effect. The

² Telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Athens 7-7-13, to His Majesty the King – General High Command. AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1420.

Romanians halted their advance and sent a delegation to Nish. Meanwhile, it was proposed that the peace conference should be held in Bucharest. The plan had the support of Austria-Hungary and Germany, who wielded considerable influence in the Romanian capital. Venizelos agreed that the peace conference could be held in Bucharest, insisting nevertheless that the preliminaries should first be signed at Nish. All the belligerents, with the exception of Greece, agreed to sign an armistice. Venizelos, who feared that the reoccupation of Adrianople by the Ottoman troops and rumors that Greece and the Ottoman Empire were contriving to proclaim the autonomy of Thrace would invite European intervention, was eager to begin negotiations. King Constantine's reasons for refusing to sign an armistice were both strategic and political: an armistice would allow the Bulgarian army to recuperate, whereas total victory would enable Greece to increase her territorial claims so as to include Alexandroupolis (Dedeagach). Besides, King Constantine feared, an armistice would give the Great Powers the opportunity to intervene. Russia, Austria-Hungary and Romania were making representations against the strangulation of Bulgaria, while France was urging the Greek Government to moderate its claims, as a lesser evil compared to Austria-Hungary's intervention.³

On 10 July, Majorescu invited the Serb Prime Minister Pashich and Venizelos to send their delegates to Bucharest for the peace preliminaries, while the armistice would be signed at Nish. Pashich, who feared that Majorescu would conclude a separate peace, immediately accepted the invitation, but Venizelos was prepared to accept only on condition that the peace delegations would sign both the armistice and the peace preliminaries in the Romanian capital. On the same day, Venizelos informed King Constantine that Russia had expressed a strong desire to end the war and that the King of Bulgaria had contacted the King of Romania requesting termination of hostilities. He added that Romania accepted the truce and that Serbia would probably bow to the pressure exerted by Russia for a truce and recommended that Greece should also assent to it. Romania had agreed to the conclusion of

³ Gardikas - Katsiadakis Helen, *Greece and the Balkan Imbroglia, Greek Foreign Policy, 1911-1913*, Athens 1995, p.225-230.

an armistice, which Serbia, yielding to Russian pressure, probably would accept: *“Mr. Demidov came to inform me of Mr. Sozonov’s telegram expressing his strong desire for the signing of an armistice. He also informed me of King Ferdinand’s telegram to King Carol, requesting that the advance of the Hellenic-Serbian troops cease, otherwise Sofia will be threatened with a crisis that Demidov interprets as a danger of dynastic overthrow. I explained to Mr. Demidov the reasons why we cannot agree to an armistice without the signing of preliminary peace conditions, as well as how distrustful I am of the sincerity of Ferdinand’s fears. Nevertheless, Romania accepts the armistice and I do not know whether Serbia will withstand Russian pressure till the end. In any case, I was thinking that, considering the sacrifices caused by the gradual contestation of the territory as well as the dangers from cholera, it would be opportune perhaps to state that we accept an armistice where Romania undertakes to support our territorial and other claims, so that it is henceforth in solidarity with the rest of the allies. Securing this solidarity would be sufficient compensation for the losses due to the armistice; besides, before the armistice we could demand the concession of several positions of the Bulgarian Army. The issue of armistice is definitely, for the time being at least, purely military and therefore it is up to Your Majesty to notify me of your decisions thereupon.”*⁴ Obviously, he left the final decision in the hands of the Commander in Chief and King, due to the purely military nature of the matter. The King however, refused the arrangement of a truce, as he wanted a more complete military imposition against Bulgaria and the continuation of all operations until the signing of the preliminary accord for peace: *“I am surprised the Ambassador of Russia should inform us of the telegram of the King of Bulgaria to his counterpart of Romania begging for the cessation of the advance of the Hellenic and Serbian armies. I have no relation either with the King of Romania or with Russia. If King Ferdinand is threatened with a crisis because of our advance, he can telegraph directly to the King of Serbia and myself; whether Romania agrees to an armistice is completely indifferent to us; it plays no role in the present war. I know of Bulgaria’s bad faith from bitter experience and I have no intention to give it a new opportunity to flaunt*

⁴ Telegram from the Prime Minister Venizelos: Athens 10-7-13, to His Majesty the King, General Headquarters. AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1524.

*itself once more. Serbia cannot sign an armistice without our approval and not appear unfaithful. The sacrifices caused by our advance are not excessive; on the contrary, they are equal to the object we are pursuing and only one percent of our troops fall victim to cholera. Therefore, these are not strong reasons for the cessation of hostilities. Finally, please tell the Ambassador of Russia that under no circumstances do I accept armistice. Should Bulgaria consent to sign preliminary peace on the battlefield, accepting my conditions, then I shall accept immediate armistice.*⁵

Despite Russia's failure to prevent war between the Balkan states, Moscow never ceased pursuing a policy to put an end to it, especially after the initial defeats of the Bulgarian forces. Austria-Hungary and Romania also made overtures to end the hostilities. On 11 July 1913, Austria-Hungary proposed an armistice and the opening of negotiations in Bucharest for the signing of a peace treaty. The belligerent countries accepted the Austro-Hungarian recommendations for negotiations without the cessation of hostilities and dispatched delegations to Bucharest. Venizelos had also informed the King that the Austro-Hungarian ambassador had conveyed to him a telegram from his government recommending that representatives of the belligerents be sent to Nish for the conclusion of an armistice, while negotiations for peace would be conducted in Bucharest. Following this, the Prime Minister expressed the opinion that it would be advisable for Greece to accept the conclusion of the armistice, leaving the final decision to Commander in Chief, King Constantine, because of the clearly military nature of the issue⁶: *"The Ambassador of Austria-Hungary informed me of the telegram sent by Count Werchtol, who after setting out the proposal made by Romania that delegates be sent to Nish to conclude peace and that peace negotiations be held in Bucharest, added to Baron Brown: - Please insist on the Romanian proposal being accepted and make the observation that a refusal shall not improve the position of the two allied states. We shall be obliged to see in an eventual refusal the proof that Greece and Serbia seek to suffocate Bulgaria, which we shall not permit -. I*

⁵ Telegram from the King Constantine, Commander in Chief: Livounovo 10-7-13, to the Prime Minister Venizelos, Athens. AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1525.

⁶ HAGS / AHD, *Consice...*, o.c., p.309

*told Mr. Brown that his proceeding is so serious that I cannot give an official reply before I consult with the Ministerial Cabinet and receive the King's approval. However, I cannot but protest over the perception that we seek to suffocate Bulgaria since we aim at nothing else than securing the equilibrium and we simply refuse to be deceived by Bulgaria. The thoughts of the Ministerial Cabinet shall be conveyed to Your Majesty by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.*⁷

Telegrams, sent by Koromilas and the General High Command, regarding Greece's representatives for the peace talks in Bucharest, followed the same day: *"A short time ago the Romanian Ambassador informed me as to the following telegram⁸ sent by the Romanian Government. It made no mention of the meeting of the Prime Ministers in Bucharest, but we telegraphed Mr. Alexandropoulos to report that Mr. Venizelos would gladly travel there if Mr. Pashich would also be prepared to make the trip. I replied to Mr. Filodor that our representatives would travel to Bucharest to resolve all the issues that arose from the war, both political and territorial as well as military, and that the truce would automatically follow the drawing up of the preliminary peace accord. During the timely verbal announcement made to me by the Serbian Ambassador, Mr. Pashich, he made it known that it would be possible for him to accept the proposal by Russia and Romania on condition that the two conferences be carried out concurrently and that the ceasing of all hostilities would not take place at the Conference at Bucharest until it was indubitably proved that Bulgaria truly and sincerely wanted peace."*⁹ The following day, 11 July, the Minister of Foreign affairs once again informs the King after a

⁷ Telegram from the Prime Minister Venizelos: Athens 11-7-13, to His Majesty the King, General Headquarters. AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1563.

⁸ A copy of the telegram sent from Bucharest to the Romanian Embassy: *"In the name of the Romanian Embassy could you please invite the Hellenic government to send its representatives to Bucharest to discuss preliminary peace terms and the final peace accord? With respect to the truce, it is advisable that with respect to the serious situation in Sofia we should previously discuss in Nish all the preliminary and urgent military measures with the other representatives of the warring nations. Our Colonel Christesko is today already in Nish and will be followed the day after tomorrow by General Coanda; they are our representatives for these measures."* Majorescu.

⁹ Telegram from the Minister of Foreign Affairs: Athens 11-7-13 to His Majesty the King, General Headquarters. AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1623.

meeting with the Romanian Ambassador and asks for his orders concerning the Greek delegation to Bucharest: "...After some time he showed me the invitation from the Romanian government to the Prime Ministers of Serbia, Montenegro and Greece asking them to travel to Bucharest. Mr. Panas will again be the second representative. Mr. Papadiamantopoulos will not take part in the conference. The officers who will be appointed by Your Highness will be obliged to travel there as technical representatives. We decided to send the military officers to Nish so as not to become involved in any new issues. I await Your Highness' decision concerning the officer who will accompany and be under the command of Captain Rangabe. I must receive your reply as soon as possible so as to prepare the proxies."¹⁰

Nevertheless, the diplomatic thoughts and the background hidden behind the above mentioned decisions seemed to be rather complicated. Deciding on the scope and tactics to be followed in Bucharest proved exceedingly difficult. For King Constantine, the Bucharest conference was an opportunity for Greece to secure a durable peace based on the balance of powers and on a closer understanding between Greece and Romania, the two non-Slav states of the peninsula. He believed that, in a spirit of reconciliation, Pashich was likely to renounce his claims to the zone south-east of the rivers Struma and Nestos. If this happened, Constantine's claim to Alexandroupolis (Dedeagach) would appear even more excessive. It would cost Greece, not only the support of Serbia, but also the desired rapprochement with Romania. He proposed that Greece should reduce her claim from Alexandroupolis to that of Porto Lagos. If, however, military operations continued and Bulgaria sustained a crushing defeat, Greece might increase her claims. Venizelos' insistence on a conciliatory attitude was founded on his fear that Serbia and Romania would sign a separate peace. To avoid isolation and to gain Romanian support, Greece must accept an armistice, a policy which Constantine rejected out of hand. He agreed to the Porto Lagos line only if negotiations in Bucharest reached a deadlock.

¹⁰ Telegram from the Minister of Foreign Affairs: Athens 12-7-13 to His Majesty the King, General Headquarters. AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1623.

Finally, on 12 July, when Majorescu expressed the wish that he might attend the conference, Venizelos decided to head the peace delegation, which included N. Politis, A. Pallis and D. Panas, who was to join them at Belgrade. Venizelos left for Bucharest on 13 July, dissatisfied with his arrangement with Constantine on the question of the armistice. He intended to communicate the Greek peace terms to the Bulgarian delegation upon his arrival. If the Bulgarian reply left room for hope, he would instruct Alexandropoulos and Rangabe, who had remained at Nish, to sign the armistice.

After having refused for eighteen days to accept an armistice, on 15 July, King Constantine instructed Venizelos to sign it. As soon as Venizelos arrived in Bucharest on the 16 July, he communicated to the Bulgarians his intention. He had also informed the Commander in Chief that Majorescu had agreed to propose in the first session, which was to take place that day, the signing of a five-day suspension of hostilities, which would take effect the following day. On 17 July, the first plenary session of the conference accepted Venizelos' proposal of a five-day suspension of hostilities.

On the next day, the peace delegations in Bucharest agreed to have separate private meetings with the Bulgarians, so that only irreconcilable differences would be brought to the conference. The Bulgarians and Romanians had no great difficulty in reaching an agreement. By 18 July, most of the points of their agreement had been settled and Bulgaria was hoping for a separate Bulgaro-Romanian peace treaty. Majorescu, however, declared to the conference that the agreement between the Romanian and Bulgarian delegations was not a separate treaty, but only the first step towards a general settlement.

The major obstacle of the conference was the question of Kavala and owing to its importance as the center of tobacco commerce, this question aroused international interest. On his arrival at Bucharest, Venizelos discovered that none of the Great Powers would support him actively on the question of Kavala. In order to gain use of Kaiser Wilhelm's influence on King Carol,

Queen Sophia of Greece, telegraphed Constantine's request for '*ein gutes Wort*' about Kavala to her brother Kaiser Wilhelm and he, in turn, communicated it to King Carol. The Romanian King offered to mediate for a frontier beginning between Kavala and Porto Lagos, which was acceptable to Venizelos.

The conference meeting of 22 July coincided with the end of the five-day cease-fire. King Constantine, although dreading the possibility of a renewal of hostilities without Serbian and Romanian support, was not prepared to grant Bulgarian demands or to ask for an extension of the cease-fire. To do this, he believed, would expose the weakness of his position. He hoped that the other belligerents would have failed to reach an agreement with the Bulgarians and that one of them would propose the extension of the cease-fire. At the meeting, however, Majorescu announced that Bulgaria and Romania had reached an agreement and that at the expiry of cease-fire the Bulgarians hoped to continue the war against Serbia and Greece. He hastened to explain that Romania would not sign a separate treaty, but would support her cobelligerents. He then communicated the Austria-Hungarian and British communications concerning Kavala and proposed the extension of the cease-fire for three more days. Majorescu's declaration concerning the conditional character of the Romano-Bulgarian agreement shattered Bulgarian hopes of isolating Greece and Serbia. The Bulgarian delegation accepted the renewal of the cease-fire.¹¹

The Greek delegation to Bucharest encountered fierce resistance to its territorial demands, and the Prime Minister informed the King that it was not possible to satisfy the Greek demand for a boundary east of the river Nestos. In reply, the King approved the line of the Nestos River as Greece's minimum position. Meanwhile, some of the Great Powers, especially Austria-Hungary, insisted that Kavala ought to be adjudged to Bulgaria. The Greek side was unyielding on the issue and succeeded in gaining the support of France and Germany and, a little later, Italy.

¹¹ Gardikas, *Greece...*, o.c., p. 236-238.

Venizelos responded immediately to Majorescu's show of solidarity in the question of Kavala. On 23 July, without prior consultation with either the King or his government, he granted Majorescu's request concerning the autonomy of Vlach¹² schools and churches and the creation of a Vlach bishopric in the territories annexed by Greece. Romania was given permission to subsidize these institutions. Though the concession had been recorded in an exchange of informal letters¹³ between the two Premiers and remained inoperative, the mere recognition of Vlach minority rights aroused strong criticism in Greece. Venizelos was accused of having created a non-existent question. The recently appointed Governor General of Macedonia, Stefanos Dragoumis, resigned in protest.¹⁴

Venizelos, however, was in particular hurry to obtain a favorable decision by the Balkan peace conference of Bucharest. On 24 July, he had yet another fruitless discussion with the Bulgarian delegates. At the conference meeting which followed, Majorescu announced the conclusion of the Serbo-Bulgarian

¹² The co-called Vlachs or Koutsovlachs, were settled throughout Macedonia and were indigenous Greek people who changed their language during the period of the Roman occupation. Along with the Greek, they spoke a dialect which has similarities with the Romanian language in that both are descended from Latin. This however does not suggest any ethnic relationship with the Romanians. They were concentrated between the Pindos mountain range and Thessaly, as well as between Olympus mountain and Beroea. In other areas, they were dispersed in cities and large villages, e.g. in Monastir, Kitsevo, Krusovo, Kleissoura, Pisoderi, Neveska and Petritsi. They were mainly nomadic livestock-breeders, animal transporters, innkeepers, craftsmen and merchants. Some of the basic bibliography, in Greek, includes : Katsougiannes M. T., *The Vlachs in the Greek Regions*, Thessalonica, 1964; Keramopoulos Antonios, *Who are the Koutsovlachs*, Athens, 1939; Aravantinos P., *A Study of the Koutsovlachs*, Athens, 1905; Krystalles C., *On the Vlachs of the Pindos*, Averoff Evangelos, *The Political Aspect of the Koutsovlach Issue*, Athens, 1948.

¹³ In Bucharest, 23 July (5 August) 1913. T. Majorescu to E. Venizelos: *As was agreed during the negotiations, I have the honour of asking Your Excellency to respond to my announcement and to verify that: Greece agrees to grant autonomy to the Koutsovlach School and Church that are situated in lands that will revert to Greece in the future and to permit the establishment of an Episcopate for the Koutsovlachs, as Romania will cede the prescribed present and future religious and educational institutions under the supervision of the Hellenic Government. As President of the Ministerial Council, please be so kind as to accept my esteemed regards.*

E. Venizelos to T. Majorescu: *In response to the note delivered to me today from Your Excellency, I have the honour of confirming to Your Excellency that: Greece agrees to grant autonomy to the Koutsovlach School and Church that are situated in lands that will revert to Greece in the future and to permit the establishment of an Episcopate for the Koutsovlachs, as Romania will cede the pacifistic present and future religious and educational institutions under the supervision of the Hellenic Government. As President of the Ministerial Council, please be so kind as to accept my esteemed regards.* AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1926.

¹⁴ Gardikas, *Greece...*, o.c., p. 239

agreement and stated that, if Bulgaria rejected the Greek claim on Kavala, Romania and Serbia would cancel their agreements and would resume hostilities. Subsequently, the Romanian prime minister proposed the suspension of the sessions and the holding of bilateral talks between the Greek and Bulgarian delegations. The Bulgarians withdrew for one more private talk with Venizelos. They told him that, if they secured a small concession along the northern frontier, they would give in. Venizelos rejected this offer professing that to accept it would exceed his instructions. At that moment, the French Minister Blondel, who arrived to ask about the progress of the conference, supported by Majorescu, implored Venizelos not to prolong the war unnecessarily. As a result of the mediation of the Romanian delegate General Coanda, Venizelos accepted a small rectification of the eastern frontier, in order to facilitate Bulgaria's railroad connection to Porto-Lagos. In the afternoon, when the meeting was resumed, Majorescu announced the conclusion of the Greek-Bulgarian agreement, which secured Kavala for Greece.¹⁵

On 25 July, the above-mentioned agreement was initialed and three days later, on 28 July 1913, the peace treaty ending the state of war between the Balkan states was signed¹⁶. On 30 July, a mutual assistance protocol was signed in Bucharest, providing for military and diplomatic cooperation between the four Balkan allies (Romania, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro)¹⁷.

Prime Minister Venizelos mainly depended on personal connections and secret negotiations. His presence in Bucharest and his intimacy with Take Ionescu, contributed to the success of the Greek diplomacy. It is a tribute to the stability of Greek politics that he was the only Balkan premier who both prepared the 1912 agreements and remained in power to witness their consequences through to the Treaty of Bucharest. On 30 July the Greek delegation departed from Bucharest and returned to Athens.

¹⁵ HAGS /AHD, *The Greek Army in the Balkan Wars 1912-1913, Military Operations against the Bulgarians, vol. III*, (in Greek), Athens 1992, p.293-297.

¹⁶ AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1923, 1927.

¹⁷ AHD Archive, F. 1699b/A/1928a.

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