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Sold to the highest bidder? : An investigation of the diplomacy regarding Bulgaria's entry into World War I

Matthew A. Yokell

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Abstract

SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER? AN INVESTIGATION OF DIPLOMACY REGARDING BULGARIA’S ENTRY INTO WORLD WAR I

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This thesis explores the multi-faceted and complex negotiations that took place between Bulgaria and Europe’s major alliance systems at the start of World War I as both groups attempted to convince Bulgaria to enter the conflict on their side. Drawing on published document collections from the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary) and the Allies (Great Britain, France, and Russia), as well as unpublished materials from the German Foreign Office, this work explores the evolution of the interest of both power groups in Bulgaria and the nature of their negotiations for an alliance with it, looking at the reasons why Bulgaria ultimately joined the Central Powers in September 1915.
SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER? AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DIPLOMACY REGARDING BULGARIA’S ENTRY INTO WORLD WAR I

BY

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in
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Dedicated to my mother, Patricia, and to the loving memory of my father, Marshall, III.
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To my colleagues and fellow students, colleagues, co-workers, and teachers at both the University of Richmond and Texas A&M University, I am most appreciative of the support, encouragement, and probing questions and insights they offered me throughout this process; this work has reached greater heights as a result.

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Introduction

In July 1915, as the realities of a prolonged European conflict set in, Gustav Michahelles, the German ambassador to Sofia, attended the State funeral of the Bulgarian Exarch.¹ According to tradition, the diplomatic staffs of the countries represented in Bulgaria took part in the funeral procession. What transpired, however, was anything but traditional. As the staffs lined up, Michahelles arranged for the German and Austrian Legations, dressed in their smart military uniforms, to stand in front of those from Britain, France, Russia and Italy, and directly behind the ministers of all the states present. Quite pleased with the visual effect of Germany and Austria leading the Entente powers, Michahelles hoped Tsar Ferdinand, the ruler of Bulgaria, would take note.

The first to perceive what Michahelles had planned, however, were those who found themselves marching behind the Germans and the Austrians. Believing it most undesirable they should lose ground to the Central Powers, the Entente legations waited for an opportune time to outflank their rivals. As they came to a bend in the road hidden from view, the procession, led by the staffs of the Central Powers, bogged down. Leading the Allied charge, Sir Henry Napier, the British military attaché, guided the Entente legations as they edged forward and around those of the Central Powers. By the time the procession emerged into the sight of the populace, the Entente was now in the lead. Infuriated and annoyed that he had been beaten at his own game, Michahelles

¹ Joeseph I was the Bulgarian Exarch from 1877 to 1915. The Bulgarian Exarchate was the official name of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which officially broke from the Greek Patriarchate in 1872. The Exarch was a bishop who served the head of the Church. Richard J. Crampton, Bulgaria (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2007, pp. 63-81.
rushed to find a way to turn the tables back in his favor. Fortunately, he later discovered that the majority of the photographs taken of this parade did not show the Entente at the head of the march of legations, but rather Germany and Austria. It was these photos that Michahelles showed Ferdinand and Prime Minister Vasil Radoslavov as proof the Central Powers were in the lead for Bulgaria’s support in the war.²

This long-forgotten story from the reminiscences of Gustav Michahelles, itself buried in the archives of the German Foreign Office, is emblematic of the rivalry between alliance systems that dominated Bulgaria’s interactions with the Great Powers in the first year of World War I. During this period, both Berlin and London expended considerable time and diplomatic effort to gain Bulgarian support, and it was only after a year of many political and diplomatic reversals that Sofia finally joined the Central Powers. This thesis explores the multi-faceted and complex negotiations that took place during 1914-1915 as both alliance groups attempted to convince Bulgaria to enter the conflict on their side. In doing so, it will draw attention to the importance of intermediate powers such as Bulgaria in the politics of both alliance camps and better place the Balkans in the overall narrative.

² Gustav Michahelles, *Im kaiserlichen Dienst: Erlebnisse des kaiserlichen Gesandten a. D. wirklichen geheimen Rates* (unpublished manuscript), p. 148. A copy of this manuscript is located at the Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts in Berlin. See also, H.D. Napier, *Experiences of a Military Attaché in the Balkans* (London: Drane’s, 1924), pp. 169-170. A career diplomat who made his mark as a kind of diplomatic fireman in the Imperial service by representing German interests in strategically important areas at critical times (Zanzibar in 1890, when Britain and Germany agreed to a swap of the African island for Helgoland as part of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1890; Bolivia in 1902, when Germany first opened diplomatic relations with La Paz; and Brazil in 1910, following a scandal involving his predecessor and the disappearance of important Foreign Ministry documents), Michahelles had been dispatched to Sofia in 1914 with the important task of securing Bulgaria’s attachment to the Central Powers. Additional details of his career are contained in his autobiography, cited above.
of the Great War, showing that the Balkans and Bulgaria played a major role in the war plans of both blocs and that both sides expended considerable effort in trying to secure its support. Bulgaria’s entry into the war was not inevitable either in timing or form, and the manner in which it did join this conflict reveals a great deal about the relative diplomatic weaknesses of both sides in the first year of the war and the important value mid-size powers held. Consequently, this thesis seeks to determine how Germany succeeded where Britain failed and, ultimately, why Bulgaria chose to join the Central Powers.

This is a point that remains largely unexamined by scholars of World War I, whose works subordinate the Eastern theatre to a secondary role. Indeed Richard Crampton, the leading western historian on Bulgaria, readily admits that Bulgaria during the First World War remains understudied. Even in general histories of the Balkans, the role of Bulgaria and the other Balkan states during the conflict is given little attention.

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While several scholars have given some consideration to the Balkans in the early war period, none have provided a truly comprehensive examination. Lynn Curtright’s *Muddle, Indecision and Setback*, offers an excellent discussion of Britain’s Eastern policy in the early days of the war, but only touches upon the complexities of Whitehall’s Bulgarian policy.6 No comparable work exists that discusses the German side of this subject. Richard Hall’s excellent monograph *Bulgaria’s Entry into the First World War* is the only secondary source that examines this topic more generally, but he treats it more as a domestic and political issue rather than a diplomatic one.7 To be sure, scholars have tackled the diplomacy regarding Sofia joining the conflict, notably Simeon Damianov in his article “Bulgaria’s Decision to Enter the War: Diplomatic Negotiations, 1913-15.” Damianov makes use of primary sources, such as Bulgarian document collections, but his article is relatively short. His goal is, in his own words, to set in motion the “adopt[ion] of a more comprehensive approach to this question [of Bulgaria siding with the Central Powers], taking into consideration the objective situation,” something that was ignored for a long time, in particular by Bulgarian and other Balkan scholars.8

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Some studies have been written that examine the existence of a rivalry over Bulgaria, yet they do not investigate Bulgaria’s entry in much detail. Richard Crampton’s *The Hollow Détente*, for example, discusses the emergence of an Anglo-German rivalry in the Balkans, but Bulgaria does not play a central role in this study.\(^9\) Luigi Albertini’s massive three-volume work, *The Origins of the War of 1914*, focuses on the conflict from a more Balkan perspective and thus discusses the important role that Sofia played in the plans of the two power groups. As his work examines only the origins and early days of the hostilities, however, he admits “it lies outside the scope of the present work to trace the efforts of the two belligerent groups to win Bulgaria over.”\(^10\)

Studies of World War I diplomacy give limited attention to Bulgaria and the complex negotiations to win its support. David Dutton examines British and French policy in the Balkans during the First World War in his excellent work, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, but he begins just as Bulgaria has cast its lot with the Central Powers. Consequently, its entry into the conflict is reduced to a few pages.\(^11\) Renée Albrecht Carrié’s celebrated *Diplomatic History of Europe since the Congress of Vienna* mentions this topic only briefly as well, largely due to the broad scope of this seminal work.\(^12\)

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Perhaps the best study of the diplomatic side of Bulgaria’s entry into this conflict is *Bulgaria’s Entrance into the First World War*, a diplomatic study by Anne Holden. Since its publication in 1976, however, the intervening years have left much open to new study and interpretation. Her monograph is an excellent start, but it only scratches the surface of this complicated issue. Its strongest point is the discussion of the loan negotiations of 1914, but many diplomatic angles remain neglected.

Building upon the sources Holden and others have consulted, this thesis draws upon the *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, one of the best published sources on British diplomacy, as well as unpublished document collections from the archives of Germany’s Auswärtiges Amt. Of particular relevance are the unpublished memoirs of Gustav Michahelles, the German ambassador to Bulgaria during this period. His memoirs, seldom looked at by scholars, provide a first-hand look at the evolution of German policy during this period and fills out the somewhat terse diplomatic exchanges in official correspondence.

With the success of the Russian and Bulgarian forces against the Ottomans in the Russo-Turkish War in 1878, Bulgaria began to emerge as an important piece in the Bismarckian diplomatic system. The Treaty of San Stefano, dictated by Russia in March 1878, established a large Bulgarian state (roughly one-third of the core Balkan Peninsula) whose territorial extent corresponded roughly to the boundaries of the Bulgarian exarchate grudgingly conceded by the Ottomans in 1870. Stretching from the banks of the Danube in the north to the Aegean Sea in the south, and from the Black Sea in the

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east to Lake Ohrid in the west, the new Bulgaria encompassed the ancient regions of Moesia, Macedonia and Thrace—the “traditional” Bulgarian lands—and areas in which, at least in the eyes of Bulgarians, the majority population was Bulgarian. Like the Germans and Italians before them, Bulgarian nationalists had seen their fervent desires realized, as a united Bulgaria was formed along historic and ethnic lines.

Such exuberance, however, was short-lived, due to the widespread hostility of the other Great Powers to the settlement. In particular, Britain and Austria-Hungary raised opposition, as neither was pleased with the implications of this agreement. They were afraid this new Bulgaria would be little more than a Russian puppet, jeopardizing the British route to India and placing additional pressure on the Dual Monarchy’s position in Southeastern Europe. Consequently, both demanded the treaty’s revision. As the Great Powers chose to resolve the resulting conflict through diplomacy, Bulgaria and its patron were forced to accept modification of the treaty. In June 1878, the Great Powers met in Berlin at the invitation of the German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck (1871-1890), who promised to serve as an “honest broker” in settling the disputes raised by San Stefano.

Under the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, signed 13 July 1878, the large Bulgarian polity that had been created just a few months before was reduced to an autonomous province roughly one-third of its size, truncated on all sides. In the north, parts of the Dobrudja were ceded to Romania, while areas in the Morava valley in the west were given to Serbia. In the south, the Thracian lands were organized into a separate region, Eastern Rumelia, which became a semi-autonomous province administered by the Ottomans and

\[14\] Crampton, *Bulgaria*, p. 95.
forbidden from unifying with Bulgaria. Other Bulgarian-speaking lands in the southwest were transferred to Serbia and territory in the southeast reverted to the Ottoman Empire.15

During the Berlin Congress, Bulgaria found itself at the mercy of the assembled powers, none of which stepped forward to plead its case. Bismarck was unconcerned with the affairs of the Balkan states, Russia lacked the strength and will to stand against Austria and Great Britain, and Italy was too focused on arranging its own affairs to oppose the other powers. None of Bulgaria’s Balkan neighbors was ready to stand up for Sofia either. As Serbia’s claims to Bosnia and Herzegovina were denied at Berlin (the lands were given to Austria-Hungary instead), Belgrade turned its attention to obtaining territory in the south and the east, particularly Macedonia, which was a part of the land acquired by the Bulgarians at San Stefano. Nor was Greece motivated to support Sofia, as Athens had no desire to have a large Slavic state on its northern border, particularly since no noticeable territorial compensation had been offered to Greece since it won its independence in 1832. Thus, according to Richard Crampton, when the Treaty of Berlin was finally agreed upon, the new Bulgarian state “began life with a ready-made irredentist programme and a bitter resentment at its treatment by the great powers.”16

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15 San Stefano Bulgaria was thus split into three: Bulgaria, Eastern Rumelia, and Macedonia. Now an autonomous principality within the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria was granted its own ruler (elected by the Bulgarians and confirmed by the Great Powers), but became a vassal of the Sultan, whose sovereignty it had to acknowledge. Bulgaria also had to pay tribute to the Sultan and assume the Empire’s international obligations. Eastern Rumelia was only semi-autonomous; the Sultan held direct political and military authority over the region. Day-to-day control of the province was assumed by a governor-general, who was appointed by the Sultan for a five-year period and was approved by the signatory powers at Berlin. Crampton, Bulagria, pp. 94-95.

16 Crampton, Concise History, p. 86.
While a Bulgarian state had come into being, it was not in the manner or to the extent hoped. This reversal of fortune shocked Bulgarian nationalists such as Ivan Geshov, later the minister-president of Bulgaria (1911-1913), who wrote in his memoirs:

> When in the ominous month of July 1878, we in Plovdiv read in the *Times* the first published text of this agreement, in which short sighted diplomacy in Berlin partitioned our homeland, we were left crushed and thunderstruck. Was such an injustice possible? Could such an injustice be reversed?[^17]

Restoring the boundaries of San Stefano was to become one of the prime objectives of successive Bulgarian governments, each of which sought in its own way to garner the assistance of various powers to undo the injustices of the Berlin Treaty.

In the years following the creation of the autonomous principality of Bulgaria, Sofia made use of its position in Southeastern Europe to further its designs for a unified state along the lines of the Treaty of San Stefano. Alternating between Russophilia and phobia, Bulgaria reclaimed a considerable chunk of the San Stefano lands, although various setbacks prevented Sofia from achieving its ultimate goal. Following the Serbo-Bulgarian War (1885-1886), the union of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia was officially recognized, although Prince Alexander lost his throne in the process.[^18] Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg was chosen to replace Alexander by the Great Powers and emerged as a

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[^18]: The Serbo-Bulgarian War was a war between Serbia and Bulgaria that began in response to the union of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. Although the war was fought between these two states, Austria-Hungary and Russia kept close watch in the background ready to defend their interests and those of the sides they supported (Serbia in the case of Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria in the case of Russia).
central figure in Bulgaria’s bid to restore San Stefano. The new prince recognized his country needed someone to protect its people and used all his skill and cunning to do so, avoiding confrontations with other states and playing off their interests to Bulgaria’s advantage. One of his greatest successes was taking advantage of the Young Turk uprising in 1908 to declare Bulgaria’s independence and the almost concomitant Bosnian Annexation Crisis to gain the sanction of the Great Powers. In the words of Winston Churchill, Ferdinand “combined the extremes of craft, fierceness, resolution, and miscalculation” to safeguard Bulgarian interests as he navigated the difficult minefield of Bismarckian power politics. The first three of these qualities brought considerable success, but it was the last that proved to be the undoing of Bulgaria and its monarch.

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19 Alexander was forced from the throne of Bulgaria as a result of a military coup led by a number of his officers, who felt they did not receive significant enough compensation for their service in the Serbian campaign. Although a counter-revolution briefly restored the prince, his was unable to reassert his control over the state and formally resigned his throne shortly thereafter. His replacement, Ferdinand, held the title of Prince of Bulgaria from 1887-1908. When Bulgaria achieved full independence, he then received the title of Tsar, which he retained until his forced abdication in 1918. Stephen Constant, Foxy Ferdinand, Tsar of Bulgaria (New York: Franklin Watts, 1980).

20 In September 1908, in an attempt to ease tensions in the Balkans and to enhance the standing and prestige of their respective empires, the foreign ministers of Russia and Austria-Hungary agreed to the formal annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which had administered the region since the Treaty of Berlin (1878). In exchange, Austria-Hungary would support Russia’s right of transit through the Turkish Straits. Known as the Buchlau Bargain, Moscow and Vienna did not receive the sanction of the other countries of Europe to agree to such a deal, leading Europe to the brink of war. Additionally, Russia and Austria-Hungary agreed that one of the outcomes of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was that Bulgaria should gain its independence. A. J. P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954); Plamen S. Tsvetkov, A History of the Balkans: A Regional Overview from a Bulgarian Perspective, volume 1 (San Francisco: Edward Mellen Text, 1993), Solomon Wank, In the Twilight of Empire: Count Alois Lexa von Aerenthal (1854-1912), Imperial Habsburg Patriot and Statesman (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009).

Following Bulgarian independence, Sofia moved closer to Russia, looking for more ways to strengthen its position in the Balkans and take further advantage of Turkish instability. While the Young Turks claimed they would bring peace and reform to the administration of the Balkan Peninsula, they were unable to do so. This failure was especially problematic in Albania, where the Albanians, who, like the Ottomans, were mostly Muslim, nonetheless chafed under the new, more centralized administration. As a result, the Albanians continually rose in revolt in an attempt to secure autonomy, if not independence. This behavior troubled the other Balkan states on two accounts. First, the instability there might compel one or more of the Great Powers to intervene and impose reforms that they would oversee. Second, should these troubles result in a more serious conflict, a Great Power could possibly try to secure peace through an armed intervention.

Whatever might result from the Albanian revolts, the Balkan states recognized that their chances for territorial aggrandizement would be severely curtailed. An alliance of the Balkan states, however, would make involvement by the Great Powers more difficult. Accordingly, at the instigation of Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia began discussing a possible alliance. While St. Petersburg hoped Sofia and Belgrade would form a purely defensive association, the two Balkan states had other ideas. They were not interested in an agreement merely to preserve their countries, but rather to seize as much land from Turkey as possible before the Great Powers interceded to preserve Europe’s “sick man.”

The major sticking point in the eventual agreement was Macedonia. Bulgaria and Serbia both agreed to partition the land north of the Aegean, but the exact division remained unsettled. The possibility also existed that Serbia and Bulgaria might need to
make a further arrangement with Greece, which also had a strong interest in Macedonian territory, but the topic was not broached in this pact. According to their provisional agreement, Bulgaria would receive the area east of the Rhodopes and the Struma River while Serbia would acquire the land north and west of the Shar Mountains. Both claimed the region around the Vardar and agreed to resolve this dispute following war with the Turks. If necessary, the Russian Tsar would arbitrate the allotment of land.\textsuperscript{22} Shortly thereafter, Montenegro and Greece joined the alliance, although no agreement was made regarding territorial gains if the Turks were defecated. Thus, a Balkan League directed against the Ottoman Empire came into existence in the spring of 1912.

Later that summer, the annual Albanian revolts turned especially violent, spreading into Macedonia as far as Skopje. Pressure mounted in Sofia to protect the southwestern part of the former exarchate.\textsuperscript{23} Coupled with the difficulties the Ottomans were confronting in its war with Italy (the Turco-Italian/Libyan War, 1911-1912), the opportunity seemed ripe to strike.\textsuperscript{24} With the threat of war on two fronts, the Young Turks lost a vote of confidence and were forced to step down from power. Finally, on 8 October, as the Turco-Italian war was drawing to a close, Montenegro declared war on the Ottomans. The other three members of the Balkan League followed suit a few days later.\textsuperscript{25} The First Balkan War had begun, lasting until the following May.

\textsuperscript{23} For the boundaries of the Exarchate of Bulgaria granted by the Ottomans, see pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{24} Timothy W. Childs, \textit{The War over Libya, 1911-1912} (Leiden: Brill, 1990).
\textsuperscript{25} Crampton, \textit{Bulgaria, 1878-1918}, pp. 407-411; Edward J. Erickson, \textit{Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, 1912-1913} (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), p. 86;
By December, the combined forces of the Balkan League overwhelmed Turkey. While Serbia and Montenegro pushed towards the Adriatic, hoping to annex Albania, Bulgaria and Greece marched towards Constantinople. In order to shield the Ottoman Empire from total disaster, the Great Powers induced the Balkan League to end the war. A peace conference was planned in London in December, but a coup d’état in Turkey on 23 January derailed negotiations. Fighting broke out again between the Balkan League and the Ottomans, culminating with Bulgaria and Serbia’s victory at Adrianople on 13 March. While negotiations resumed on 22 March, the Balkan League did not formally accept Great Power mediation until 20 April. All the concerned parties met again in London on 20 May, and the Treaty of London was signed ten days later.  

Although the Balkan allies achieved victory in the field relatively easily, the formal resolution of the conflict proved trickier. Romania had not participated in the war, but, viewing the enlargement of its Balkan neighbors as a threat, demanded land in order to preserve the balance of power and because it did not oppose the League during the war. Compensation could only come from Bulgaria, which was forced to surrender the southern Dobrudja from Silistria to Balchik. Further trouble arose over Salonika. In light of its losses in the north, Sofia sought land in other areas, regarding the procurement

27 Crampton, *Concise History*, p. 137.  
28 Ibid.
of an Aegean port as one of its chief objectives. The Greeks, however, had historical and ethnic claims to the city, and were the first to occupy it during the war. This dispute drew in Germany and Austria as well. Berlin favored the Greeks, as Crown Prince Constantine was Wilhelm II’s brother-in-law, while Vienna supported Bulgaria. It was not until 1913 that this matter was finally resolved in favor of Greece.\(^{29}\) Negotiations regarding the southeastern regions of the Balkans were resolved relatively easily, as Bulgaria received all the territory it had conquered north of the Enos-Midia line. While Sofia preferred territory closer to Constantinople, it was pleased with this settlement, as it would now control the Eastern Thracian cities of Adrianople and Kirk-Kilisse.\(^{30}\)

It was the issue of land gains in the west that culminated in the Second Balkan War of 1913. In the original alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria, the distribution of Macedonia had been left open to clarification following the successful completion of the war. Due to Sofia’s territorial losses in the southern Dobrudja and Serbia’s to the newly formed Albania, however, both states sought to gain as much of Macedonia as possible. Sofia now argued for a “proportional” allotment of land, namely that each country would acquire territory based on how much it had contributed to the war and the number of casualties suffered.\(^{31}\) Such a policy favored Bulgaria, as it had provided more war materials and had suffered more casualties than either Serbia or Greece. Belgrade and

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\(^{29}\) Crampton, *Bulgaria, 1878-1918*, p. 415.


\(^{31}\) Crampton, *Concise History*, p. 138.
Athens, however, pushed for an equal portioning of territory, as any settlement needed to preserve the balance of power in the Balkans. Hoping to induce the Serbs and the Greeks to make concessions, and fearing a possible attack by Belgrade, Sofia made a preemptive strike on its former allies on 29 June 1913, initiating the Second Balkan War. Although Bulgaria enjoyed early success, the tides of war turned quickly. By 10 July, Romania had mobilized and moved rapidly south. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the Ottoman Empire struck from the east, winning a major victory at Adrianople and regaining territory in Eastern Thrace. Under attack on all sides, Bulgaria was forced to sue for peace. This defeat crushed Bulgarian morale and cost Sofia a considerable chunk of land. The Treaty of Bucharest, signed 10 August 1913, settled the disputes over Macedonia to the satisfaction of the Serbs and Greeks at the expense of most of the territory Bulgaria had acquired a few months prior. Sofia retained just a sliver of Pirin Macedonia through half of the Struma River valley, small portions of Thrace around Gyumyurdjina and Kurdjali and a small portion of the Aegean coastline that included the port of Dedeagach. What perhaps hurt the most was the surrender of the port of Kavalla. According to Holden, “the Struma valley [in which Kavalla was located] provided the natural access to the Aegean for Bulgarian products, and the Macedonian hinterland had a predominately Bulgarian population.” Furthermore, the loss of Kavalla meant that Dedeagach would be Bulgaria’s only Aegean port and that any railways connected to it now meandered through foreign land. With Kavalla under its

32 Crampton, Bulgaria, p. 199; Barbara Jelavich, History of the Balkans, volume 2, The Twentieth Century, pp. 96-98.
33 Hall, The Balkan Wars, p. 112.
34 Holden, Bulgaria’s Entrance, p. 27.
control, Bulgaria would have had a network of rail lines running through its own territory, making the transport of goods cheaper and more secure. Having lost the city, Bulgaria’s best hope for regaining it came from a proposal made by Austria that the Treaty of Bucharest be revised at a later date.

The Treaty of Constantinople, signed 10 September 1913, ended the conflict between Turkey and Bulgaria, and stripped Bulgaria of even more of the land it had recently acquired. During the Second Balkan War, the Turks re-conquered much of Eastern Thrace, including Adrianople. Bulgaria was desperate to retain this city, but once again the Great Powers frustrated its wishes. Although the German government initially supported a settlement along the Enos-Midia line, Kaiser Wilhelm “hope[d] that the city would be returned to the Porte.”\textsuperscript{35} Russia and Austria-Hungary, usually adversaries on Balkan matters, were both willing to urge Turkey to withdraw from Adrianople so that it might “pull back into Asia Minor and try to consolidate herself there,” but St. Petersburg withdrew its support of Bulgaria in order to break the diplomatic stalemate.\textsuperscript{36} With its ally Germany squarely on the side of the Ottomans, Vienna’s tentative efforts came to naught. When the treaty was finally signed, Bulgaria’s border now followed the Maritsa River, resulting in the surrender not only of Adrianople, but also Kirk-Kilisse.

At the end of the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria was devastated. It had suffered immense casualties and, for the second time in its recent history, seen a partition of its territory. While its Balkan neighbors were more or less satisfied, Sofia was anything but.

\textsuperscript{35} Alfred Zimmerman to Prince Karl Max von Lichnowsky, 7 August 1913, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (hereinafter cited as AA-PA), R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14655, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
\textsuperscript{36} Lichnowsky to Theobald Bethmann-Hollweg, 13 August 1913, ibid.
Bulgaria had increased its population and territorial expanse since unification in 1885, but, according to Holden, “not as much as she had hoped, and not in the right places.”\textsuperscript{37} Southern Dobrudja, with its rich farmland had been the county’s chief source of grain for export. Its loss was an unmitigated disaster. Even the regions that Bulgaria had been permitted to retain could not compensate since they were highly underdeveloped. Bulgaria also lost control of any of river mouths that flowed through these lands. While Dedeagach was an Aegean port, it was not especially useful. If Sofia were to make full use of this city, it would need to build new rail lines and a harbor at Porto Lagos.

Despite these setbacks, Bulgaria became an important piece on the European diplomatic chessboard. The Great Powers recognized that Bulgaria, while not a strong European force, was a land of strategic importance, whose interests, actions, and desires had to be taken into consideration. Bulgaria had been engaged in two relatively major wars that further weakened Turkish power and redrew the borders of Southeastern Europe. Yet all of this came at a high price. Bulgaria was now surrounded by hostile states that had had their appetites whetted for territory and desired even more. Additionally, Sofia believed its main ally, Russia, had abandoned it, for St. Petersburg proved either unwilling or unable to support the desires of its Slavic brother. This development increased the possibility of a closer arrangement with Vienna, however, since Austria had backed Sofia’s claims to Salonika and Kavalla and had proposed a revision of the Treaty of Bucharest. Furthermore, Vienna had assisted in the negotiations at Constantinople, even though the final provisions of the treaty were not wholly

\textsuperscript{37} Holden, \textit{Bulgaria’s Entrance}, p. 29.
satisfactory. A closer connection was still a long way off, however, due to the existing alliance between Austria and Romania and Kaiser Wilhelm’s preference for his cousin the Romanian King Carol I.\(^{38}\) While an agreement with Bulgaria would not directly conflict with Austria’s commitments to Romania, it would further stress an already strained relationship, given Romania’s ambitions for Transylvania. Nevertheless, the groundwork had been laid for a possible understanding with the Triple Alliance.

On the eve of World War I, Bulgaria had been weakened by two wars and largely dissatisfied by the final settlement, with little hope for any drastic improvement in its situation. Without a dramatic change in European power politics, Sofia could do little to achieve its aspirations for Balkan predominance and unification of Bulgaria along the lines of San Stefano. The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand provided just such an opportunity. It would take considerable skill and a little bit of luck to turn things in its favor, but a new chance now appeared to undo the disasters of the Balkan Wars.

\[^{38}\text{Carol I had been the leader of Romania since 1866. As a result of the 1881 Treaty of Berlin, Romania gained its independence from the Ottomans and Carol became King until his death in September/October 1914. Carol I was a member of the House of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, a cadet branch of the House of Hohenzollern, the family to which Wilhelm II belonged. Carol was chosen to be the king of Romania due to his dynastic connections with both the powerful state of Prussia and the Bonaparte family, then in control of France. Jelavich, History of the Balkans, volume 2, pp. 23-28.}\]
Chapter I

Prelude to the Great War: The Stance of the Power Groups and the Loan of 1914

As 1913 rolled into 1914, Bulgaria lay on the periphery of the plans of both major Great Power alliance constellations. While members of the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente assayed the benefits that might accrue from Bulgaria’s support, it seemed too troublesome and unreliable to be pursued actively. Moreover, given Bulgaria’s position in the wake of the Treaty of Constantinople, Sofia felt betrayed and abandoned by the major states of Europe. Nevertheless, due to Bulgaria’s strategic location, the Great Powers could not afford to ignore this Balkan land. Despite its defeat in the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria had demonstrated considerable military prowess in both Balkan campaigns. How the powers viewed Bulgaria at this time, in particular Germany and Great Britain (as the respective leaders of their alliance systems), and how Bulgaria tried to rebuild itself after the catastrophe of the Balkan Wars is significant in understanding how the courtship of this country proceeded in the opening year of World War I.

In regards to Bulgaria, and the Balkans in general, Britain preferred to avoid decisive action, having its own concerns about Germany. Nevertheless, London did recognize Bulgaria’s importance and value. Its location on the European side of the Turkish Straits meant that, should Sofia be hostile, access to Russia could be impeded, if not blocked completely.¹ Consequently, some in the British cabinet, led by Winston Churchill, the first lord of the admiralty (1911-1915), pushed for an understanding with

Bulgaria in order to create a buffer between the Central Powers and Turkey and reduce any pressure that could be put on Russia.\textsuperscript{2} Russia’s interest in Bulgaria was also limited at this point, although St. Petersburg recognized its potential as an ally. When Alexander Savinsky was dispatched to Sofia in January 1914 to serve as the new ambassador, Serge Sazonov, the Russian minister for foreign affairs (1910-1916), warned him “not to run the risk of alienating the king and pushing Bulgaria towards the Germanic powers.”\textsuperscript{3} Its relationship with Bulgaria may have been severely damaged by recent events, but Russia was not foolish enough to abandon its former protégé.

Despite cooler relations after the Balkan Wars, St. Petersburg remained confident in long-term Bulgarian Russophilia, believing that Bulgaria would always be grateful to Russia for helping secure its independence.\textsuperscript{4} Furthermore, as the new government in Sofia needed to secure funds to pay off its country’s debts, many Bulgarians hoped Russia would provide this aid.\textsuperscript{5} St. Petersburg, however, was slow to offer financial support, resulting in a less than favorable perception by the Bulgarian populace. This was coupled with the foreign policy of Bulgaria’s new prime minister, Vasil Radoslavov,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{2} Churchill, \textit{World Crisis}, volume 1, p. 265.
\item\textsuperscript{4} Nekiludov, \textit{Diplomatic Reminiscences}, p. 156.
\item\textsuperscript{5} Stoyan Danev, Bulgaria’s prime minister during the Second Balkan War, resigned on 17 July 1913 and was succeeded by a coalition led by Vasil Radoslavov, whose government received popular sanction in November 1913. Ilchev, \textit{Rose of the Balkans}, p. 183.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
whose policies were neither overly pro- or anti-Russian.\(^6\) This moderate position received widespread approval from Bulgarians, who supported a more independent nationalist program in the wake of the interference of the Great Powers in Bulgarian affairs during and after the Balkan Wars.\(^7\)

As Bulgaria began to pursue its own policy independent of outside influences, both France and Russia became concerned Radoslavov was beginning to favor the Dual Monarchy, as Vienna had supported Bulgarian interests during the negotiation of the Treaties of Bucharest and Constantinople.\(^8\) Radoslavov’s election as Prime Minister did little to calm these fears, as he had always supported a stronger connection with Vienna, despite his relatively neutral stance regarding Russia. Their fears only increased when military supplies from Austria arrived in Bulgaria in April 1913 amid talks between Radoslavov and Count Adam Tarnowski von Tarnow, the Habsburg minister at Sofia (1911-1917). Bulgaria’s interest in the Triple Alliance should not have come as much of

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\(^6\) Radoslavov twice served as the prime minister of Bulgaria. Educated as a lawyer in Heidelberg, Radoslavov supported Bulgaria turning away from Russian influence as early as 1886, when he became prime minister for the first time. In 1887, following a split in the Liberal party, he made friendship with Austria-Hungary a central feature of his newly formed right-wing liberal party. The party finally returned to power in March 1913, with Radoslavov as the new prime minister. He remained in office through World War I, ultimately losing power in June 1918. Tsvetkov, *A History of the Balkans*, p. 231.


a surprise, since Russia had begun to favor Serbia and, to a lesser extent, Romania.9

Furthermore, while Bulgaria’s desire for land in the southeast conflicted with Russian designs, this was not an issue for Vienna, which had territorial concerns with Bulgaria’s northern and western neighbors.

With a stronger connection developing between Sofia and Vienna, the door was open for Germany and Austria-Hungary to take advantage. That Serbia was increasingly becoming a thorn in the Dual Monarchy’s side following the Balkan Wars only served to make matters more pressing. Serbia’s recent victories and territorial gains not only gave hope to the Slavs in the Habsburg lands that they might win their freedom, but also to those outside the Empire who coveted Hapsburg land. With Radoslavov and Tsar Ferdinand not disposed to a Russian alliance, Vienna’s position was favorable.

According to Graf Leopold von Berchtold, the Austrian foreign minister (1911-1915), “Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria have a similar interest, to prevent an immense increase in the power of Serbia.” Consequently, Vienna came to believe that “if matters should once more come to the settlement of the Serbian question, then Bulgaria making common cause with the Monarchy would be—in this respect—of even greater value.”10

It was Sofia that first attempted to reach an understanding with Vienna. As soon as he came to power in March 1913, Radoslavov made a formal offer of alliance.11

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10 Graf von Berchtold to Graf von Jagow, 2 May 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J Series 14656, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr, band 1.
Another proposal came in late July of the same year when Nikola Genadiev, Bulgaria’s foreign secretary (1913-1914), approached Tarnowski:12

In case Austria-Hungary is still interested in a permanent and formal alliance with Bulgaria, the Bulgarian government considers the present moment to be favorable to act, not only because at present Russia is falling in public esteem, but also because in the current painful crisis Bulgaria has to know that its salvation must come from Vienna.13

The Ballhausplatz was receptive, but only up to a point. Tarnowski informed Genadiev that he had to consult with the other members of the Triple Alliance before proceeding. As a sign of good faith, Tarnowski recommended that Bulgaria should come to some sort of an understanding with Romania.14 While a Bulgarian-Romanian agreement would benefit the Dual Monarchy by limiting Russian influence, Vienna did not regard a treaty between Sofia and Bucharest as a prerequisite for an Austro-Bulgarian pact.

The prospect of a stronger connection with Bulgaria was also appealing to Vienna—and thus its close partner in European affairs, Berlin—in that it might bring Constantinople closer to the Triple Alliance. Turkey certainly was attractive in that it could contain Russia by blockading the Turkish Straits, effectively cutting Russia off from its Allies. Nevertheless Turkey still appeared too weak to defend itself, placing a potentially large burden on the Dreibund. As Gottlieb von Jagow, Germany’s foreign secretary (1911-1915), informed his ambassadors in Vienna and Constantinople, an agreement with Turkey would be dangerous “because of inevitable demands, incapable of

12 Genadiev was also the head of the Stambulovist Party from 1913 to 1915. The Stambulovists were one of the most influential parties in Bulgaria at this time. The party was liberal in its orientation and its foreign policy was Russophobic in its outlook. Ilchev, *Rose of the Balkans*, pp. 193-194.
14 Tarnowski to Foreign Office, 25 July 1914, ibid., number 7964.
fulfillment, for counterperformance on our part.”¹⁵ Hans von Wangenheim, Germany’s ambassador to Constantinople (1913-1916), concurred, stating that the Triple Alliance “could not defend Turkey against everybody.”¹⁶ An agreement between Sofia and Constantinople would have to overcome recent animosity, but such a connection would be beneficial to the Triple Alliance. Since Sofia was pro-Austrian, a Bulgarian-Turkish connection would likely guarantee Turkish friendship. Berlin and Vienna did not pursue this line until July 1914, but the potential rewards of a bond between Bulgaria and Turkey was an important factor in their Balkan policy.

Tsar Ferdinand also played a leading role in promoting a closer relationship between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. It was customary in the months of August and September for Ferdinand to travel through Central Europe, and during his trip in 1913, he discussed matters of foreign policy with Berchtold and Emperor Francis Joseph while he was in Vienna. Ferdinand pushed hard for an alliance, but Austria showed little interest.¹⁷ The Bulgarian tsar even went so far as to insist Bulgaria started the Second Balkan War in defense of Bulgarian and Austrian interests, but no agreement resulted.¹⁸

Further hindering Bulgaria’s attempts to arrange an alliance with Austria was the attitude of Vienna’s main ally, Germany. Although Bismarck’s Germany had generally favored maintaining a relatively low profile in the Balkans, the accession of William II changed this policy considerably. With the threat of Germany being encircled by its

¹⁵ Jagow to Vienna and Constantinople, 14 July 1913, DD, volume 1, p. 45.
¹⁶ Wangenheim to Berlin, 23 July 1914, ibid., volume 1, p. 49.
¹⁷ Berchtold to Foreign Office, 24 November 1913, ÖUA, volume 6, number 5294.
¹⁸ Stephen Constant, Foxy Ferdinand, pp. 290-291. See Hall, Bulgaria’s Road, p. 265, which quotes correspondence between Ferdinand and Gendiev from the Archive of Tsar Ferdinand housed at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University.
enemies becoming more palpable from 1905 onwards, Berlin intensified its activities in
the east by providing military aid and training to Turkey. In doing so, Germany had been
able to build a stronger relationship with the Turks, thus safeguarding Austria-Hungary’s
flank and keeping Russia and the Entente in check. Even so, Berlin followed a policy
of limiting direct involvement in the rest of southeastern Europe. Following the Bosnian
Crisis, Berlin and London agreed to limit their interference in the affairs of the Near East
and strive to maintain peace between the Great Powers should any disputes arise.

Bulgaria was a relatively low priority for the Wilhelmstrasse, which preferred an
alliance with Greece. Berlin saw Athens as important from both a strategic and a
personal angle. Constantine, the King of Greece, was Wilhelm II’s brother-in-law, and
the kaiser hoped to avoid fighting a war against him. From a strategic perspective,
Berlin believed an alliance between Greece and the Triple Alliance “[spoke] to both the
Dreibund’s position in the Mediterranean, as well as German interests in the Near East,”
as France and Britain would have trouble moving goods and men due to its hostility.
This would also pressure Turkey to stay friendly to the Triplice, effectively cutting

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20 Crampton, *The Hollow Détente*, p. 165. See also Solomon Wank, “The Peace
Movement in Austria, 1867-1914,” in *Doves and Diplomats: Foreign Offices and Peace
Movements in Europe and America in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Solomon Wank
21 King Constantine I of Greece (1913-1917 and 1920-1922) was a member of the house
of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderberg-Glücksburg and was married to Wilhelm’s older
sister, Sophie of Prussia. Wilhelm II and many of his relations preferred to avoid fighting
each other in war. Consequently, Constantine and his wife took a strong Pro-Central
22 Jagow to Berchtold, 11 May 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J Series 14656, IA
Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
Russia off from the Entente. Consequently, Germany felt it much more in Vienna’s interest to pursue an alliance with Greece.23

Maintaining Romanian support was also more important to Germany than a Bulgarian alliance, given Romania’s position on Russia’s border and the complicated connections between Bucharest and Vienna. The loss of Romania as an ally would seriously harm the Dual Monarchy, as it would have another enemy along its long eastern border. Bulgarian-Romanian relations were certainly at a low following the Balkan Wars and Jagow felt that the Triple Alliance could not risk losing Romania at the price of Bulgaria, particularly since he found Bulgaria to be inconstant and untrustworthy.24 If, however, Bucharest and Sofia could somehow reach an agreement, a union between the Dreibund and Bulgaria might become more realistic.25 Furthermore, as in the case of Greece, Wilhelm also had a familial interest in Romania.26

While Berchtold was confident that Bulgaria could be won over without alienating Romania, other Habsburg leaders shared Jagow’s concerns. Berchtold faced opposition particularly from Count Ladislaus Szögyény, the Habsburg ambassador in Berlin. Szögyény was particularly wary of gaining one ally only to lose another, forcing Berchtold to reassure him “it would be thoroughly impossible and unsuccessful…to favor Bulgaria at the cost of [Austria’s] position in Romania.” Nevertheless, Berchtold felt a

23 Ibid.
25 Wangenheim to Jagow, 13 May 1914, ibid.
26 cf. Introduction, footnote 37.
“small affiliation on the part of Bulgaria to the Dreibund” was necessary, reminding his ambassador “there exists an agreement of our inclinations and those of Bulgaria, namely that the prevention of the achievement of a Greater Serbia is in the vital interests of both sides, a development, which we can not sit back and watch if the occasion should arise.”

The dispute became so bitter, in fact, that Berchtold informed Szögyény that prolonging this disagreement would endanger the Triple Alliance itself since Germany was receiving mixed messages about Vienna’s policy regarding Bulgaria.

Compelling though Berchtold’s arguments might have been, Szögyény’s doubts remained. Austria was willing to keep every option open, however, and, should Vienna be able to gain a stronger foothold in Bulgaria, it would discuss an offer of alliance. If Sofia joined with Austria and the Dreibund, Romania would be more likely to stay in the fold. A rapprochement between Sofia and Bucharest had significant hurdles, but the possibility that Romania might be convinced to ease tensions with Bulgaria seemed possible. Vienna and Sofia both recognized the possibilities of an agreement, but their attempts to reach one on political grounds failed. While sharing common interests, a concrete policy had yet to develop that would make an alliance a reality.

Bulgaria’s financial needs in the wake of the Balkan Wars served as a new opportunity to win over Sofia. One of the most important tasks confronting the new Radoslavov government was procuring capital to restore Bulgaria’s fiscal health. A loan

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27 Graf Berchtold to Graf Ladislaus Szögyény, 2 January 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14656, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 1, number 13287.
28 Berchtold to Szögyény, 9 December 1913, GP, volume 35, p. 190.
29 Berchtold to Foreign Office, copy to Jagow, 13 January 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14656, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
agreement might secure Bulgarian friendship, and Russia and Austria-Hungary—which individually lacked the financial strength to offer such aid—placed considerable pressure on their allies to generate the necessary funds for Bulgaria.

As soon as the Treaty of Bucharest had been signed, the Bulgarian government began to search for a loan to help pay off the debts that had accrued as a result of the Balkan Wars, a sum totaling 250 million francs.\textsuperscript{30} Although Austria provided a short-term loan of 30 million francs, Vienna was reluctant to make further investments, particularly anything long-term. As France had had a long history of investing in Bulgaria, Dimitar Tonchev, the Bulgarian minister of finance, sought out the Banque de Paris et Pays Bas in August 1913 and asked for an advance of 75 million francs. Paris, however, was not interested in providing a loan until Bulgaria had ended its war with the Ottomans and Russia supported a French offer of financial assistance.\textsuperscript{31} The latter condition turned the Bulgarian monetary issue into a diplomatic one. While France was willing to extend a loan, St. Petersburg saw the impending financial crisis as a means of forcing Radoslavov out of power, and, perhaps, bringing Bulgaria back into closer alignment with Russia and the Entente.\textsuperscript{32} With both Austria and France unwilling to provide the terms Bulgaria sought, however, 1913 ended with its debts unresolved.

\textsuperscript{30} Crampton, \textit{Bulgaria}, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{32} Hall, \textit{Bulgaria’s Road}, p. 280.
In February 1914, Bulgaria again approached France about a loan, but Paris still attached too many unfavorable conditions. Additionally, Paris informed Sofia that the state of the French domestic market would prohibit the consideration of a foreign loan until the end of the year, at the earliest. The hard conditions were the result of Russian pressure to draw Bulgaria back to its side. Despite the efforts made by St. Petersburg and Alexander Savinsky, “this brow-beating,” in the words of Keith Robbins, “had the effect of driving the Bulgarian government once again in the direction of the Central Powers and negotiations for a large loan were opened in Berlin” at the end of February.

Austria-Hungary, meanwhile, continued to press for a financial agreement, viewing the loan as a means of achieving its goals in the Balkans while still having German support since a loan would not require a military convention. Berlin pledged to oppose attempts by France or Russia to force Bulgaria to accept unfavorable terms, and Michahelles, who admitted he was “cool and aloof towards the Bulgars,” actively engaged financiers in Hamburg in order to secure a loan agreement. By the middle of

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33 These terms included Bulgaria taking responsibility for some of the Ottoman Empire’s debts and the settlement of disputes between French and Bulgarian citizens. Bulgaria also would have to utilize French companies for the building of railroads and harbors and purchase French arms and munitions. Department note, conditions for a Bulgarian loan, 16 February 1914, *DDF 1871-1914*, volume 9, *1 Janvier-16 Mars 1914*, number 306.
34 De Margerie (Foreign Ministry official) to Panafieu, 30 March 1914, *DDF 1871-1914*, series 3, volume 10, *17 Mars-23 Juli*, number 45. Also, Hall, *Bulgaria’s Road*, p. 266.
36 Jagow to Szögyény, 10 April, 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14656, IA Deutschland 128, Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
March, the German government, recognizing that monetary aid would draw Bulgaria closer to the Triple Alliance, agreed to support a loan backed by German banks.\(^{38}\)

As much as Germany understood the benefits of a successful loan agreement, France and Russia also knew what was at stake. As Wangenheim reported to the German Foreign Office, Sofia believed the loan issue was becoming a major pawn in a bid by France and Russia to manipulate the Bulgarian government:

> There is great trepidation in Sofia that France, under the influence of Alexander Izvolsky,\(^{39}\) is eager to drive Bulgaria back into the arms of Russia. Bulgaria will oppose this pressure as long as possible. If it is not supported, there is no doubt that it will be the goal of Russia to topple the present government in Sofia in order to reach their goal.\(^{40}\)

With this in mind, Berlin redoubled its efforts to keep Sofia away from the Entente, even considering an alliance that would unite Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the three Balkan states with the closest ties to the Triple Alliance. While it would take some effort to accomplish this, Wangenheim, Michahelles, and Heinrich von Waldburg were certain they could do so.\(^{41}\) While Jagow put this plan on hold, it was clear that Bulgaria had now become a state of some importance to both Great Power alliance groups.\(^{42}\)

\(^{38}\) *Kölnische Zeitung*, 14 March 1914.

\(^{39}\) Alexander Izvolsky had been the Russian ambassador to Paris since 1910. He is perhaps best remembered for negotiating the Buchlau Bargain in 1908 with Baron Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal, which resulted in the Bosnain Annexation Crisis. Izvolsky also arranged Russia’s entente with Britain in 1907. Following his dismissal as foreign minister, he devoted himself to strengthening Russia’s bond with both France and Britain. Albertini, *Origins of the War of 1914*, volume 1, pp. 201-208.

\(^{40}\) Wangenheim to Jagow, 10 April 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14656, IA Deutschland 128, Nr. 8 secr., band 1.

\(^{41}\) Wangenheim to Jagow, 7 May 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14656, IA Deutschland 128, Nr. 8 secr., band 1. Heinrich von Waldburg zu Wolfegg und Waldsee served as the chargé d’Affaires in Bucharest from 1912 to 1916.

France and Russia did not remain idle. Both states did everything in their power to prevent a monetary agreement between Sofia and Berlin, since the failure to acquire a loan would likely force Radoslavov and his government to resign.\textsuperscript{43} Alexander Savinsky, the Russian minister in Sofia, published anonymous articles in pro-Russian Bulgarian newspapers, warning of the problems of German fiscal support, as the loss of Russian aid would be calamitous.\textsuperscript{44} Additionally, during visits with Bulgarian officials, he reminded them of the debts to Russia and France Bulgaria had incurred during the Balkan Wars. If Sofia should receive German assistance, Paris and St. Petersburg would be less forgiving regarding repayment of these financial obligations.\textsuperscript{45}

As the loan issue heated up, Sofia’s importance to the Great Powers increased as well, such that its position in mid-1914 was the opposite of what it had been just a year prior. As Noel Buxton, Member of Parliament, president of the British Balkan Committee, and one of the leading experts of Bulgaria, commented,

\begin{quote}
Bulgaria was no longer a defeated state abandoned and rejected by the Great Powers. The loan issue transformed Bulgaria into an object of desire actively courted by the Great Powers. Bulgaria’s diplomatic isolation was over. Both Great Power alliances altered their previous stances towards Sofia [making] the loan…a weapon for the Entente to wield against the Radoslavov government.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

It may not have been the manner in which it had planned, but Bulgaria was back on track to fulfilling its national ambitions. Now Sofia hoped it might find support for its


\textsuperscript{44} Alexander Savinsky, \textit{Reflections from a Russian Diplomat} (London: Hutchinson, 1927), pp. 216-217.


territorial interests. At the very least, it was in a position to push its own long-term agenda.

Despite the best efforts of Savinsky and others to discourage Bulgaria, the basic facets of a loan agreement with Germany were in place by the end of April. Michahelles had initially arranged for the Hamburg-based Warburg Firm to provide the necessary funds, but Sofia required more money than Warburg could grant. In order to bridge the financial shortcoming, Michahelles used his influence with the Diskonto Gesellschaft, which began negotiations in earnest. While these talks were progressing, the Reich maintained its distance. William, who had little interest in becoming mixed up in this affair, issued orders to the Jagow that, while the Wilhelmstrasse should remain supportive of a loan agreement, it was to give the banks a free hand in their negotiations.

In response, Savinsky made two personal visits to Ferdinand within a period of three weeks. In the first meeting on 11 May, he informed the tsar that France had agreed to offer a personal loan and forgive the repayment of earlier debts. In return, Radoslavov and his ministry were to be dismissed. Ferdinand did not dismiss Savinsky’s offer outright, but, as no money was immediately forthcoming, the tsar turned once more to Berlin, which he hoped would be raising the proposed funds. In the second visit on 5 June, the Russian minister warned Ferdinand that the loan would make Bulgaria overly dependent on Germany and proposed a new government be put into place that would

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break off negotiations with the Reich and turn to France. Savinsky assured the tsar that Paris was willing to offer favorable terms and even an advance on the debts due soon. Savinsky even made an appeal for British intercession, seeking out Sir Henry Bax-Ironside, Whitehall’s representative in Sofia, prior to meeting with Ferdinand on 11 May. Grey chose not to intervene, basing his decision on his ambassador’s observations that “the Sofia cabinet is clearly orientated to the Triple Alliance” and that “although harsh, Bulgaria would likely accept the terms of the German loan, as nothing else has been offered to them.” Instead, he asked Bax-Ironside to remind Radoslavov unofficially that acceptance of the German loan would be unwise, as this decision would hinder Bulgaria’s efforts in foreign markets under French control.

Savinsky’s interference, however, did not provoke much indignation from Radoslavov, due to the unexpectedly harsh conditions of the German offer. Under its terms, Bulgaria would receive 500 million francs in two installments, to be repaid within five years at a rate of five percent interest. To back the loan, the government would spend a significant portion of its military budget on German goods, use German

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50 Hall, *Bulgaria’s Road*, p. 268.
53 Grey to Bax-Ironside, 11 May 1914, ibid., p. 89.
54 As a result of heavy French investment in Bulgaria in the previous decade, the Paris money market became the center for Bulgarian transactions. Consequently, the German loan was paid in francs, rather than marks or leva. Silberstein, *Troubled Alliance*, p. 21.
companies to build a new rail system to Dedeagach and surrender control of the tobacco industry to Germany. The loss of this industry was the most crushing term, as tobacco was one of Bulgaria’s largest and most valuable exports, whose revenue had often been used in the past to pay off state debts.\textsuperscript{55} As a result, negotiations reached a standstill.

It was only through the tireless efforts of Jagow and Berchtold that discussions did not fall apart completely, although Michahelles clearly believed “Bulgaria was stalling, trying to force [Berlin’s] hand into relaxing some of the terms of the loan.”\textsuperscript{56} Germany felt additional pressure to close the deal since Sofia was making new overtures to Russia. Savinsky was eager for a rapprochement, as he was convinced that a loan from Berlin would only spell trouble: “Bulgaria’s joining the Triple Alliance…would undercut or neutralize Romanian adherence to the Entente.”\textsuperscript{57} Nevertheless, this courtship was short-lived. In the middle of June, Tsar Nicholas II paid a visit to Constanța in order to accept the honorary command of a local regiment, which had served with great distinction in the Second Balkan War and had occupied Silistria after Bulgaria was obliged to cede the city to Romania. Nicholas’ move was highly unpopular in Bulgaria and prompted the government to abandon its attempts to move closer to Russia.

On 12 June, after a visit to Berlin, Tonchev presented Radoslavov with a new offer whose terms were slightly softened. Germany now agreed to construct a harbor at

\textsuperscript{55} In comparison to the French and Austrian proposals, the German terms were only a slight improvement. Neither Paris nor Vienna required Bulgaria to surrender control of the tobacco industry, but Germany offered more funds at a lower interest rate. The lower rates as well as support in modernizing Bulgaria’s rail network, however, proved highly appealing; Holden, \textit{Bulgaria’s Entrance}, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{56} Michahelles, \textit{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, p. 154.

\textsuperscript{57} Savinsky to Sazonov, 13 June 1914, IB series 1, volume 3, number 233.
Porto Lagos on the Aegean coast (in April, it would only provide financing for it) and would only have privileges in the tobacco industry, rather than a monopoly.\(^{58}\) The terms were still stringent, however, and Bulgaria ran the risk of German money dominating its economy. Acceptance of the loan was delayed because of the late offer made by the French Banque Perier on 16 June as well as the assassination of Francis Ferdinand twelve days later. Although Ferdinand was pleased by the terms of the French bid, newspapers such as *The Times* of London felt that “it would be difficult…to take the Anglo-French proposals into consideration as they are so late.”\(^{59}\) As a result, Radoslavov tried to push the loan through the Bulgarian sobranje on 15 July.\(^{60}\) Acceptance of the offer, however, was anything but peaceful. Drawing upon eyewitness accounts, *The Times* reported numerous fist-fights [broke out], and Radoslavov himself was seen brandishing a revolver. The bill was not even read, but was considered passed by a show of hands; many government deputies raised both hands, and some police who were supposedly guarding the chamber were counted among those supporting the bill.\(^{61}\) Bulgaria, in desperate need of funds for the better part of a year, finally secured the money it needed.

The loan agreement was a triumph of Austro-German diplomacy that greatly pleased Jagow and Berchtold. Although Radoslavov soundly denied any political significance to the loan in interviews with the press, most believed the contrary. Not only did Sofia secure German capital, but it also formed a stronger bond with the Triple

\(^{58}\) At the urging of Tschirsky and Szögyény, Berlin accommodated Sofia regarding the tobacco industry. Rather than exert full control over it, Germany now agreed to support the construction of tobacco depots and storage warehouses and would collect a 20% duty on whatever tobacco was sold there. Holden, *Bulgaria’s Entrance*, p. 66.

\(^{59}\) *The Times* (London), 25 June 1914.

\(^{60}\) The sobranje is the unicameral national assembly of Bulgaria.

\(^{61}\) *The Times* (London), 16 July 1915.
Alliance, particularly since the conclusion of a loan meant the retention of the Radoslavov cabinet, which favored the continuation of a pro-Central Powers foreign policy. Furthermore, Bulgaria also began to receive a steady influx of horses, guns, and munitions from Vienna, significantly assisting in its rearmament. Although it still had a long way to go before joining Germany and Austria-Hungary in a formal military alliance, Sofia had certainly started along that path.

Due to France’s and Russia’s muddled policy and Britain’s inactivity, a golden opportunity slipped through the Entente’s fingers. While Ferdinand was wary of Germany’s stringent terms, Radoslavov’s Austrophilia and the lack of a strong Entente offer outweighed the tsar’s convictions. Furthermore, Russia and France had once again tried to interfere in Bulgarian internal affairs which Ferdinand and Radoslavov found distasteful, driving them further away from the Entente. Indeed, the terms of the German loan—which had been agreed to only because of strong Austrian pressure on the German government first to locate willing financiers and then soften some of their initial conditions—were more stringent. Nevertheless, throughout the negotiations, Austria-Hungary and Germany adopted a fairer, less patronizing tone, strengthening their bonds with Bulgaria in the process. As a result, on the eve of war, Bulgaria had turned away from its traditional allies and found itself more closely oriented with Berlin and Vienna.

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Chapter II

The Descent into War: The First Attempts to Draw in Bulgaria

As a result of the German loan, on the eve of Francis Ferdinand’s assassination, Bulgaria had drawn closer to the Triple Alliance. Still, it was not close to entering into a formal alliance. After the start of World War I, however, Sofia’s relationship with the Great Powers changed, as these states showed even greater interest in it. Not only did Bulgaria’s position relative to the Straits and Serbia give it great strategic value, but both sides also knew that Bulgaria’s actions would strongly influence the stances of Greece and Romania, whose ultimate allegiances were still in doubt.1 Bulgaria was in a favorable position, and made use of this situation to determine not only whether it should even join the war, but also with whom and at what price.

Although Bulgaria possibly could have asked for all of the land its desired at the outset of hostilities, the government displayed both restraint and prudence in its territorial claims, seeking lands that offered economic growth and were reasonable to expect as compensation. Furthermore, Sofia only asked for territories in which Bulgarians formed the majority of the population.2 As The Times reported, both Alliance groups recognized [that] whatever concessions Bulgaria may be induced to make in other directions, it is certain she will never abandon her claims to the districts in Western Macedonia [including Monastir, Ochrida and Dibra] already assigned to her by the Treaty [of alliance] with Serbia [in 1912]. On this point the whole nation is unanimous, from the King to the humblest peasant.3

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1 Barbara Jelavich, History of the Balkans, volume 2, pp. 117-118.
2 Simeon Danianov, “Bulgaria’s Decision to Enter the War,” p. 161.
3 The Times (London), 22 May 1913.
Bulgaria held the upper hand due to its strategic importance, but Sofia would not press for too much until it could be certain that it could gain exactly what it wanted.

During July 1914, both Berlin and Vienna made a concerted effort to shore up their position in the Balkans. Early in the month, the prevalent feeling in Germany was that any conflict would be short lived and only the Dual Monarchy and Serbia would come to blows.\textsuperscript{4} Jagow even wrote in the \textit{Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung} “that the conflict which could result between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, should remain localized.”\textsuperscript{5} By the end of July, however, it became clear the dispute might engulf a wider area.\textsuperscript{6} In the event that the war should spread, Austria recognized it would be in a much stronger position if the other Balkan states were on the side of the Central Powers. Consequently, Vienna wanted to ask Romania to clarify its stance towards the Central Powers as well as secure Bulgarian and Turkish support in order to isolate Serbia. Although William II was uncertain about a Bulgarian alliance, Alfred Zimmermann supported approaching Bulgaria about an alliance.\textsuperscript{7} He instructed Michahelles:

Your Excellency is authorized, to support any steps of your Austro-Hungarian colleagues in this regard according to their desire. It will also add to the impact, if, in the management of the matter, the eagerness on the part of the Dreieinbund is particularly avoided and if the union of Bulgaria desired by us in and of itself is portrayed as essential to Bulgarian interests.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung}, 19 July 1914.
\textsuperscript{6} Silberstein, \textit{Troubled Alliance}, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{7} Zimmerman, the under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, was acting as foreign minister while Jagow was on leave at this time.
\textsuperscript{8} Zimmerman to Michahelles, 6 July 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14657, IA Deutschland 128, Nr. 8 secr., band 1. William’s doubts are recorded in the marginalia.
Zimmerman expected an alliance would be well regarded in Sofia due to the passage of the loan offer and that most Bulgarian newspapers were anti-Serbian. Questions still remained about how Romania would respond to a Bulgarian attack on Serbia, however. Bucharest informed Vienna it would move against Bulgaria if Sofia attacked Serbia, placing the Central Powers in an awkward position vis-à-vis its current (albeit secret) associate. Nevertheless, Romania’s warning was merely viewed as posturing to force an offer territory in exchange for Romanian allegiance, particularly as Bucharest had displayed a willingness to attack Russia with a guarantee of Bulgarian neutrality.

By mid-July, Tarnowski spoke with Radoslavov about a potential alliance. Much to the surprise of the Austrian minister, Radoslavov offered a military agreement before the subject was even broached. Although pleased by this development and the promise that Radoslavov would discuss his plans with Tsar Ferdinand in short order, Radoslavov continued to delay scheduling a meeting with the tsar about a possible alliance with Vienna. More likely than not, this was a clever ploy by Radoslavov to keep Bulgaria’s options open, even at such an early stage of the Serbian crisis. The prime minister’s calm aloofness unnerved Tarnowski, who suggested Vienna make its intentions clear and secure an agreement prior to a declaration of war on Serbia. Michahelles sympathized with his Austrian counterpart and supported decisive action. In Michahelles’ estimation, Radoslavov was ready to discuss the draft of an agreement, which could be finalized

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9 Michahelles, *Im kaiserlichen Dienst*, p. 156.
10 Foreign Office Memorandum, 9 July 1914, *ÖUA*, volume 8, number 4536.
11 Jagow to Michahelles, 9 July 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14657, IA Deutschland 128, Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
12 Tarnowski to Foreign Ministry, 20 July 1914, *ÖUA*, volume 8, number 10,421.
quickly. At this juncture, however, Berchtold and Jagow overruled their ambassadors and recommended no action needed to be taken.

On 23 July, Vienna delivered its ultimatum to Serbia, which included a stipulation that Serbia must submit to a Habsburg-led inquest into the death of Francis Ferdinand. The Dual Monarchy was certain Belgrade would refuse this demand, providing the pretext for war. While anticipating a localized conflict, the Triple Alliance continued to work to make Austria-Hungary’s success more certain. Pro-Bulgarian guerrilla bands in Macedonia began wreaking havoc along the Serbo-Bulgarian border by blowing up bridges in Serbia that led east to Bulgaria and south towards Greece and Salonika. Tarnowski was authorized to help facilitate these actions and, proceeding with care and caution, planned to provide funds and rifles to these organizations once the Dual Monarchy began its assault on Serbia. As a result of the turmoil in the borderlands, increasing numbers of refugees from Macedonia poured into Bulgaria, further exciting an already tense public. The chaos that ensued made a violent uprising a real possibility, which gave the guerrillas even more license to act.

14 Jagow to Michahelles, 21 July 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14657, IA Deutschland 128, Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
15 These guerrillas, known as komitadji, originated in Aegean Macedonia during the time of the Ottomans and were committed to using violent methods to convince the local population to unify with Bulgaria. Since these paramilitary groups were sowing discontent in Serbian land, Austria-Hungary was unable to offer any official support for fear of starting a war. Nevertheless, since at least the Bosnian Annexation Crisis, Vienna secretly had been providing funds, arms, training and munitions to these organizations. Silberstein, *Troubled Alliance*, p. 28; Holden, *Bulgaria’s Entrance*, p. 83.
16 Berchtold to Tarnowski, ÖUA, Volume 8, number 10,621.
17 *The Times* (London), 19 September 1914.
Such actions did not go unnoticed by the Entente, as Sir Henry Bax-Irionside recognized that Austrian arms flowing into Bulgaria were “a clear indication that Austria and Bulgaria had reached a settlement concerning Macedonia.”\footnote{Sir Henry Bax-Irionside to Sir Edward Grey, 26 July 1914, \emph{BDFA}, part II, series H, volume, 1, p. 232.} In spite of what appeared to be the case, Sofia was still far away from an agreement with Vienna. When the Dual Monarchy finally broke off relations with Serbia on 25 July, Berlin was certain the impending war would not be localized for long, making the support of states like Bulgaria critical.\footnote{Silberstein, \emph{Troubled Alliance}, p. 28; Holden, \emph{Bulgaria’s Entrance}, p. 91; Michahelles, \emph{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, p. 155; Michahelles to Foreign Ministry, 25 July 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14657, IA Deutschland 128, Nr. 8 secr., band 1.} Accordingly, Jagow instructed Michahelles to offer an alliance to Sofia once again. While personally interested in an agreement with Germany and its allies, Radoslavov demurred, proclaiming to Michahelles in a private meeting that Bulgaria would remain neutral if war broke out.\footnote{Michahelles, \emph{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, p. 156.}

Even so, Radoslavov took the opportunity to inquire about the price Austria and Germany might pay for Bulgaria’s assistance. In ongoing discussions, Radoslavov notified Tarnowski of the areas he hoped to gain from Serbia, and also asked for German and Austrian guarantees for an agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey in order to secure Bulgaria’s claims to western Thrace.\footnote{Tarnowski to Foreign Ministry, 26 July 1914, \emph{ÖUA}, volume 8, number 10,696.} Since Austria had not yet declared war on Serbia and the Central Powers had not entered into any formal agreement with Turkey, these discussions were still preliminary. In the meantime, the Bulgarian cabinet agreed to provide tacit support and encouragement of guerrilla action on the Serbian border and
presented a copy of Michahelles’ offer to Ferdinand.22 Following Austria’s formal declaration of war on Serbia on 30 July, the Bulgarian government proclaimed Bulgaria’s neutrality and declared Sofia would keep friendly relations with Romania, even offering to relinquish Bulgarian claims to the southern Dobrudja should Bucharest acknowledge Bulgaria’s right to certain parts of Macedonia.23 While vague, this statement demonstrated Sofia’s good intentions to Romania and the Central Powers.

Following the declarations of war by Britain, France and Russia and neutrality by Greece, Italy, Romania and Turkey, Bulgaria reaffirmed its neutrality. Radoslavov saw no reason to enter the war yet, because Bulgaria had not received any proposals for military action and due to warnings of reprisals from Romania and Greece. On 2 August, Radoslavov drafted the terms of a military agreement with the Central Powers, seeking assurance on three points:

First: the Dreibund guarantees Bulgaria’s present territory from any attack, from whatever side it may come.

Second: the Dreibund promises its support for its [Bulgaria’s] ambitions for future territorial acquisitions on its borders, on which it has historic and ethnographic rights, and which are under the control of nations, which do not belong to the Dreibund.

[Third:] If Romania should join with the Dreibund, it will have nothing to fear from Bulgaria, as in later territorial changes Bulgaria will only seek acquisitions in the west. Should Romania join with Russia [however], Bulgaria would have a free hand to assert its claims on the Dobrudja again, and would be permitted to march against Romania eventually.24

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22 Tarnowski to Foreign Ministry, 27 July 1914, ibid., number 10,844.
23 Michahelles to Foreign Ministry, 31 July 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14658, IA Deutschland 128, Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
24 Michahelles to Auswärtiges Amt, 2 August 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14658 R 1922, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
Satisfaction of these points would ensure Bulgaria’s protection from attack by its neighbors, and guarantee much of the territory Sofia desired. The “loss” of the Dobrudja would sting, but if it meant ensuring Romania’s neutrality/support, Radoslavov was willing to accept this. The terms were suitable both to Jagow and German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1909-1917), and so on the following day Michahelles began negotiations along the lines of Radoslavov’s draft agreement.25

While hoping that these discussions might lead to a Bulgarian attack on Serbia, it was unclear to Michahelles whether he was bargaining for Bulgaria’s benevolent neutrality or involvement in the war.26 The German ambassador made only a single modification to Radoslavov’s proposal, adding a clause that read, “at the request of Germany, Bulgaria will use its army against any neighbors that were at war with it.”27 This would allow Berlin to fix the moment of Bulgaria’s attack. Helmuth von Moltke, the chief of the German General Staff, was particularly supportive of this addendum, and urged the war ministry to “let loose the Bulgarians against the Serbs, and let that pack strike each other dead.”28 This was a dangerous move considering Sofia’s weakened military state after the Second Balkan War, but the potential rewards were certainly worth the risk. The greatest challenge now was finding a way to consummate a deal quickly.

26 Bethmann-Hollweg to Michahelles, 3 August 1914, AA-PA, R 1922, Fiche J, Series 14658 R 1922, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 1.
27 Michahelles to Jagow, 3 August 1914, ibid.
28 Moltke to Jagow, 5 August 1914, as quoted in Norman Stone, “Moltke-Conrad: Relations between the Austro-Hungarian and German General Staffs, 1909-1914,” Historical Journal, vol. 9, no. 2 (1966), pp. 227-228. Not to be confused with his illustrious uncle, Helmuth von Moltke “the Younger” was Chief of the German General Staff from 1906-1914.
Nevertheless, Bulgaria instead reaffirmed its neutrality, a decision motivated by the unexpected appearance of the two German warships Goeben and Breslau in the Turkish Straits. While the German ships were there first and foremost out of necessity rather than to attack Russia, the fact the ships were so close to Bulgarian territory reaffirmed the possibility that the conflict might spread to Bulgaria’s doorstep.²⁹ Further progress towards an agreement with the Central Powers stalled as a result of the their slim chances of victory, the bad financial and military state of the Bulgaria due to the two Balkan wars, and the existence of a strong current of friendly sentiment towards Russia.³⁰ Sofia’s inaction at this time was probably in its best interests. Bulgaria had made strides in rebuilding itself since 1913, but it was not yet ready to make a military commitment.³¹ Radoslavov was content merely to drive up the price for Bulgaria’s neutrality, sparing it the costs of war, but still securing promises of additional territory.

Radoslavov was also willing to maintain neutrality since he had yet to receive a better, or firmer, offer from the Triple Entente. As the European powers prepared for war, securing Turkish neutrality was one of Whitehall’s chief objectives. Should Turkey join the Central Powers, as some in the cabinet feared, not only would it be difficult to supply Russia, but Turkey’s belligerency would also put increased pressure on Britain’s possessions in the Near and Middle East. David Lloyd George, H. H. Asquith’s

³¹ Crampton, Bulgaria 1878-1918, p. 121.
chancellor of the exchequer, was particularly sensitive to these problems and advocated the creation of a military confederation of Balkan states on the side of the Allies.\textsuperscript{32} This, in Lloyd George’s opinion, would resolve the dispute between Vienna and Serbia quickly, as Austria-Hungary would likely prefer not to face the all the Balkan countries in war.\textsuperscript{33} Winston Churchill, who believed that Turkey was firmly under German influence, agreed.\textsuperscript{34} In his mind, an alliance similar to the one that soundly defeated the Ottoman forces in 1912 would consolidate the Entente’s power in the region. It would threaten the Central Powers’ southern flank and perhaps deter Turkey from joining the conflict.\textsuperscript{35}

While Lloyd George and Churchill advocated the creation of a new Balkan League, Eleftherios Venizelos, the prime minister of Greece, made a similar proposal to Grey. The Greek prime minister was decidedly in favor of the Allies even in the early stages of the war, which frequently placed him at odds with the pro-Central Powers stance of the royal family.\textsuperscript{36} Nevertheless, Venizelos believed a reconstitution of the Balkan League would significantly benefit Athens, as it could be protected from attempts by Bulgaria and Turkey to seize Greek territory due to the outbreak of war.\textsuperscript{37} The plan, however, had its problems. Chief among them was the need to convince four independent states, which had many reasons to distrust each other following the Balkan

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  \item \textsuperscript{35} David Lloyd George, \textit{War Memoirs of David Lloyd George}, volume I, pp. 83-84.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} cf. chapter I, footnote 23.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Foreign Office Memorandum, \textit{BDFA}, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 72.
\end{itemize}
Wars that working together would now be to their benefit. Serbia, Greece and Romania would also have to be persuaded that it was in their interest to give up recently acquired territory in order to secure Sofia’s adherence to the new league.38

The spirited advocacy of Lloyd George, Churchill, and Venizelos convinced a skeptical Grey that the Balkan League project was a sound way to deter Turkey from entering the war.39 On 13 August, Grey authorized Bax-Ironside to discuss such an agreement with Radoslavov.40 Bax-Ironside made his best attempts to convince Bulgaria to favor this policy, but, as he perceived “Bulgaria [was] following a policy of opportunism,” the British ambassador’s overtures had little impact.41 Sensing the idea of a Balkan bloc needed help gaining traction in Sofia, the British Cabinet, at the urging of Churchill and Lloyd George, dispatched the Liberal MPs Noel Buxton and his brother Charles, widely regarded as leading experts on Bulgaria, to meet with Bulgarian leaders in an unofficial capacity to extol the benefits of a new league.42 While Lloyd George wanted this visit to be official, Grey distrusted the Buxtons’ motives and was adamant

38 Curtright, Muddle, p. 20.
40 Sir Edward Grey to Sir Henry Bax-Ironside, 13 August 1914, BDFA, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 79.
41 Bax-Ironside to Grey, 29 July 1914, ibid., p. 62.
that it remain unofficial.\textsuperscript{43} Churchill and Lloyd George offered their full support, however, and their status as members of the Asquith ministry gave greater authority to the Buxtons’ words as they tried to secure Bulgaria’s cooperation in the new project.\textsuperscript{44}

While the Buxtons prepared for their trip to Sofia, Bax-Ironside continued to win over Bulgaria on his own. Believing that Radoslavov would be more receptive to an agreement that contained definitive promises, the British ambassador suggested contacting the other Balkan powers to determine what land they might be willing to cede. Bax-Ironside was certain that, in exchange for land seized from Austria-Hungary during the war, Nikola Pašić, the prime minister of Serbia (1912-1918), would be willing to surrender parts of Macedonia, while Athens would be induced to surrender the port of Kavalla. He was uncertain what Romania might offer—perhaps some of the Dobrudja in exchange for parts of Transylvania—but felt that territory from Serbia and Greece would be sufficient enough to lure Bulgaria into an alliance. In any case, much like Grey, Bax-Ironside believed that it was up to the Balkan states themselves to reach a settlement, rather than have Britain dictate one.\textsuperscript{45} Unfortunately for Whitehall, however, not using its authority to force the Balkan states to make an agreement doomed negotiations from the start. Neither Greece nor Serbia was willing to make the concessions Bax-Ironside had anticipated. While Russia also put pressure on Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest, it, too, was unable to secure any specific promises of land that might help sway Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} David Lloyd George, \textit{War Memoirs of David Lloyd George}, volume I, p. 85.  
\textsuperscript{44} T.P. Conwall-Evans, \textit{Foreign Policy from a Back Bench}, pp. 88-90.  
\textsuperscript{45} Bax-Ironside to Grey, 15 August 1914, \textit{BDF\textit{A}}, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 84.  
As a result of these early exchanges with the Entente representatives, Radoslavov began to understand the types of offers he might expect for Bulgaria’s assistance. Consequently, he tried to push the Allies to make a firmer and better offer by stretching the truth and informing both Bax-Ironside and Savinsky that the Central Powers had extended a strong proposal. If the Entente wished to top this offer, their best bet would be to grant territory up to the uncontested zone in Macedonia in exchange for benevolent neutrality.\(^47\) Serbia was still reluctant to offer anything without a strong commitment from Sofia, however. The best the Allies could hope for was that Bulgaria would remain neutral, following a middle course until these territorial problems could be resolved.

Matters between Bulgaria and the two alliance groups were at a standstill until 19 August, when Radoslavov secured an important diplomatic victory: a Turco-Bulgarian defensive agreement. Under the terms of this treaty, Turkey and Bulgaria would support each other in the event of war, although both parties were protected from being placed in an unfavorable position. This was particularly important for Bulgaria, as it would not be compelled to go to war unless there existed a treaty between Bulgaria and Romania or between these two states and Turkey.\(^48\) This was quite a triumph for Radoslavov, as the agreement protected Bulgaria’s flank from a Turkish attack without sacrificing anything.

As Turkey had become Germany’s protégé, the Central Powers hoped they could use this agreement to draw Bulgaria closer to them. One day after the announcement of the treaty, Michahelles informed Jagow, “Radoslavov has approached me about a

\(^{47}\) Savinsky, *Reflections*, p. 245.  
meeting [and] I am eager to press forward with discussions.” Negotiations did not progress as smoothly as Berlin had hoped, as the Bulgarian prime minister proved to be a hard bargainer. In return for Sofia’s support, Radoslavov asked for Serbian Macedonia and, should Greece enter the war on the opposing side, Greek Macedonia as well. The Central Powers were willing to concede Serbian land, but as matters were uncertain regarding Greece, nothing could be guaranteed about its territory. Negotiations suffered a further blow on 24 August, when the Serbs won a stunning victory against Austria at the Jadar River. Afterwards, Tarnowski found “the trust of the Bulgarian government in my counsel and word can scarcely have been deepened in these last days.”

Meanwhile, the Entente powers continued to look for a way to draw Sofia to their side and reconstitute the Balkan League. Sazonov recommended making a special appeal to Ferdinand himself. Rather than threaten the tsar, Sazonov suggested the Allied Powers should present a friendly attitude and guarantee the safety of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha dynasty. Bax-Ironside agreed, telegraphing Whitehall, “the question of peace or war is largely in the hands of His Majesty, who has the power to change his Austrophil Cabinet whenever so disposed.” With the support of London and Paris, on 22 August St. Petersburg offered Bulgaria the uncontested zone in Macedonia and guaranteed the safety of the crown in return for its benevolent neutrality towards Serbia and the promise to

49 Michahelles to Jagow, 20 August 1914, AA-PA, R 1923, Fiche J, Series 14659 R 1922, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 2.
50 Michahelles to Jagow, 22 August 1914, ibid.
51 Tarnowski to Berchtold, 24 August 1914, as quoted in Silberstein, Troubled Alliance, p. 136.
attack Romania or Turkey should either state attack Russia.\textsuperscript{54} Given Bulgaria’s improving relations with Constantinople and Bucharest’s caution, this was a low-risk/high-reward opportunity. More would have to be offered to draw Sofia into the war, and so Russia promised Bulgaria further compensation from Serbia and Greece.\textsuperscript{55}

On 24 August, Bax-Ironside and Radoslavov resumed negotiations. Britain’s ambassador reported that Radoslavov was receptive to his proposal, although the Bulgarian prime minister preferred an offer of guaranteed territory before moving forward. Radoslavov was optimistic that Bulgaria would acquire Kavalla, but he doubted Serbia could be induced to surrender land. To that end, Radoslavov hoped the Entente might pressure the Serbian government, now headquartered in Niš, to cede the land promised to Bulgaria in 1912, with the understanding that further discussions on Mostar could occur later.\textsuperscript{56} Théophile Delcassé, the French foreign minister, supported this plan, as it would grant Sofia considerable gains at a minimal cost.\textsuperscript{57} Unfortunately, neither Greece nor Serbia was willing to make concessions and Grey was reluctant to force these states to do so, believing “territorial rearrangements must be a matter of discussion between the Balkan States themselves; I could not interfere in this; and the part we could play would be to give financial assistance when a confederation has been arranged.”\textsuperscript{58}


\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Bax-Ironside to Grey, 24 August 1914, \textit{B DFA}, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 79.


\textsuperscript{58} Grey to Francis Elliot (British Ambassador to Greece, 1903-1916), 27 August 1914, \textit{B DFA}, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 82.
This not only disappointed Radoslavov, but also members of the British cabinet. Lloyd George felt “a golden opportunity had been allowed to slip by” and Churchill laced into Grey for his “indecisiveness at a time when Britain needed to act.”

With discussions deadlocked for the Entente and the Central Powers, both sides looked for ways to push Bulgaria to sign an agreement. Jagow contemplated a heavy-handed approach, in hopes of forcing Bulgaria to take a definitive stance. Accordingly, he demanded a new clause be added to the 22 August offer that would require military action from Bulgaria or else the provisional agreement would be nullified. Moreover, he told Michahelles to inform Sofia that it had six days to accept the German proposal or negotiations would be cut off. The more cautious Michahelles never presented this ultimatum, however, as Zimmerman understood this would drive Bulgaria towards the Entente. Both Vienna and Berlin instead agreed to issue a joint statement that prompt action would be best in order for any agreement to have a beneficial effect.

A similar level of frustration existed in the Entente camp, as Serbia, Greece and Romania refused to make concessions. Delcassé tried to move things forward by proposing an offer of Thrace to the Enos-Midia line, but both Britain and Russia resisted this idea. Sazonov proposed a joint statement be issued at Niš that would pressure Serbia to give up territory for the greater good of a Bulgarian alliance. Although Grey and Delcassé had been hesitant to force Serbia to surrender territory, both now agreed

this might not be a bad idea.\textsuperscript{63} While the plan seemed like it would bear fruit, Serbia angrily rejected this proposal. Pašić warned them that the mere suggestion of territorial concessions in the skupština (parliament) would damaged Serbian morale.\textsuperscript{64} The only way in which Niš would relinquish territory would be if specific circumstances occurred: if Bulgaria aggressively opposed a joint Turkish-Romanian attack and if Serbia was guaranteed territory in Croatia, it might be willing to make concessions.\textsuperscript{65}

Despite Bax-Irons\-side’s growing doubts and the failed attempts to secure Bulgaria, the Buxtons, now in Sofia on their unofficial mission, refused to give up hope. Drawing upon his prior experiences in Bulgaria, Noel Buxton felt “it would be wrong to convey the impression that Bulgaria cannot be won and Balkan unity is a chimera.”\textsuperscript{66} The Buxtons did all they could to convince Bulgarian politicians and the tsar that Bulgaria’s greatest benefit lay with the Entente, but a lack of support from London hamstrung their efforts. Grey refused to make the mission official, limiting the weight and authority of the Buxtons’ words. While Grey’s caution in foreign policy was partly to blame, his personal feelings played a role as well. Grey resented Noel Buxton’s meddling in foreign affairs, going so far as to label him “an amiable nincompoop” at one point.\textsuperscript{67} Despite the August setbacks, the Buxtons soldiered forth, meeting with top officials at the beginning of the following month.

\textsuperscript{63} Grey, \textit{Twenty-Five Years}, p. 265. For the text of the declaration, see Curtright, \textit{Muddle}, pp. 32-33.  
\textsuperscript{64} Holden, \textit{Bulgaria’s Entrance}, p. 101.  
\textsuperscript{65} Strandtmann to Sazonov, 27 August 1914, \textit{IB}, series II, volume 6, p. 171.  
\textsuperscript{67} Robbins, “British Diplomacy,” p. 567.
The month of September saw little change in the diplomatic scene in Sofia. Radoslavov refused to commit to one side or the other, offering little more than vague assurances of support should the proper opportunity arise. On the one hand, the lack of a decisive military victory on either the Western or Eastern Front made Bulgaria straddle the fence. On the other hand, Radoslavov found it to his advantage to remain neutral, as his majority in the Bulgarian parliament was razor-thin, and, according to public opinion polls, Bulgarians still favored neutrality and/or joining with the Entente.68

In the meantime, the Allied Powers still tried to convince Niš to make some sacrifices to win over Bulgaria. Sazonov did not take Pašić’s refusals too seriously, as the Russian foreign minister recognized Serbia’s only real hope of gaining the territory it desired rested with a Bulgarian agreement. Consequently, Sazonov proposed the Entente powers issue a proclamation in St. Petersburg that “compensation would be given to her [Bulgaria] if others made substantial gains elsewhere, or will be given at the expense of anyone who has fought against us.”69 Although the Entente states gave their support, Greece and Serbia were unwilling to back a proposal that promised territory that would not come from a defeated state. Russia, fearing the imminent loss of Turkey as a potential ally, put considerable pressure on Athens to buy Sofia’s friendship with land. Venizelos, however, chafed under this heavy-handedness, threatening to resign and leave the government in the hands of pro-German factions.70 Terrified by such a prospect,

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68 Michahelles to Foreign Office 3 October 1914, AA-PA, R 1924, Fiche J, Series 14661, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 3.
69 Grey to Sazonov, 3 September 1914, BDFA, part II, series H, volume 2, p. 94
70 Savinsky, Reflections, p. 245.
Grey withdrew his support for a joint statement.\textsuperscript{71} Instead, the Entente issued a weaker declaration at Niš reaffirming its position that Serbia must make territorial concessions.\textsuperscript{72}

On 11 September, the same day the Allies made their statement at Niš, the Buxtons met with Radoslavov for the first time. Their meeting went well, as the prime minister assured the brothers Bulgaria would remain neutral, leaving open the possibility of a military convention with the Entente.\textsuperscript{73} Over the next few days, the Buxtons met with members of several Bulgarian political parties, emerging from these meetings with a sense that while most Bulgarians feared a Turkish attack should Bulgaria join the Allies, the promise of a British loan and endorsement of territorial gains elsewhere might justify a change in policy.\textsuperscript{74} While they found Radoslavov’s words encouraging, Bax-Ironside and Grey grew increasingly frustrated that the Buxton brothers’ presence in the Balkans, so carefully presented as an unofficial diplomatic mission, was characterized increasingly as an official British representation.\textsuperscript{75} In Bulgarian press reportage, Britain came off as more pro-Bulgarian than Grey preferred, thus doing potential harm to Whitehall’s delicate relationships with Romania and Greece.\textsuperscript{76} In a further attempt to secure Bulgaria, the Buxtons made excursions to Bulgaria’s northern and southern neighbors, meeting with their respective royal families. If nothing else, they earned goodwill for Britain, returning to Sofia with noncommittal words of encouragement that some kind of arrangement with Bulgaria might be reached.

\textsuperscript{71} Grey, \textit{Twenty-Five Years}, volume 2, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{72} Curtright, \textit{Muddle}, pp. 34-35.
\textsuperscript{73} Buxton and Buxton, \textit{The War and the Balkans}, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{74} Curtright, \textit{Muddle}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{75} Friedrich, \textit{Bulgaria und die Mächte}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{76} Grey, \textit{Twenty-Five Years}, volume 2, p. 190.
While London dealt with the Buxtons, the Russians created further problems. On 20 September, without the sanction of Grey or Delcassé, Sazonov reached an agreement with Bucharest promising Transylvania and southern Bukovina in return for Romania’s benevolent neutrality. Though the pact had little effect in the end, Grey was incensed by this act of Russian unilateralism. A crisis was averted when, in a cabinet meeting on 23 September, Churchill and Charles Masterman, the head of the War Propaganda Bureau, convinced Grey to accept that war with Turkey was inevitable and to use the progress Russia had made with Romania to the Entente’s advantage vis-à-vis Bulgaria.

Despite the continued pressure from Churchill and Masterman, as well as the positive efforts of the Buxtons, Grey was still unwilling to make a definite promise to Bulgaria or put additional demands on its neighbors. Instead, he asked Bax-Ironside to issue another vague statement to Radoslavov:

“You can tell Prime Minister that, though we cannot make promises about territorial arrangements in the Balkans, which depend upon contingencies not yet realized and primarily concern the Balkan states themselves, we should not be unsympathetic to Bulgarian claims if large additions of territory were acquired by other States as a result of the war.”

While Radoslavov reacted favorably, he still wanted a concrete offer before adopting a policy that might result in Bulgaria going to war. As October wore on, various members of parliament exhorted Grey to secure Bulgaria’s friendship with the territory of others, particularly Serbia, which remained uncooperative and intransigent. On 12 October, the British ambassador to Turkey, Sir Louis Mallet, reported a suggestion that his Russian

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counterpart had passed on to Sazonov: that the Entente should compel Serbia to cede Macedonia up to the Vardar River as a sign of good faith.\textsuperscript{80} The ever-cautious Grey took this suggestion “under consideration,” but did not act on it.\textsuperscript{81}

Meanwhile, Noel and Charles Buxton continued their unofficial work. Through discussions with influential Bulgarian politicians, they were able to craft a proposal that would guarantee Sofia’s neutrality as well as Romania’s participation in the war. In a memorandum sent to the Foreign Office on 21 October, they advocated a joint declaration by the Entente powers promising support for Bulgaria’s claim to the part of Macedonia agreed upon in the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance of 1912 in return for its benevolent neutrality towards Romania and Serbia and entry into the war on the side of the Entente should Turkey join the hostilities. In order to assuage Serbia, the Allies would recognize its rights to Bosnia and ports on the Dalmatian coast, should Bulgaria receive the portion of Macedonia in question.\textsuperscript{82} Within a week, each of the Allied representatives in Bulgaria voiced his support for the proposal, also agreeing that if Serbia remained recalcitrant, it would not be unreasonable to pressure Niš to accept these terms.\textsuperscript{83} Despite the growing consensus that action needed to be taken, Grey characteristically demurred, as he believed that compelling Serbia to make territorial concessions was out of the question.\textsuperscript{84} This did not deter Savinsky, however, who demanded Serbia make some concessions during a meeting with Pašić on 29 October.

\textsuperscript{80} Sir Louis Mallet to Grey, 12 October 1914, \textit{B DFA}, part II, series H, volume 2, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{81} Grey, \textit{Twenty-Five Years}, volume 2, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{82} Conwell-Evans, \textit{Foreign Policy from a Back-Bench}, pp. 93-94. See also, Friedrich, \textit{Bulgaria und die Mächte}, p. 153.
\textsuperscript{83} Foreign Office Memorandum, \textit{B DFA}, part II, series H, volume 2, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{84} Conwall-Evans, \textit{Foreign Policy from a Back-Bench}, p. 94.
The Serbian prime minister promised Savinsky that his government would consider surrendering Macedonian territory, but only as far as the Vardar.\textsuperscript{85}

Thus matters stood when, on 29 October, the status quo in the Balkans was suddenly disrupted. On that day, the German warships \textit{Goeben} and \textit{Breslau}, which by now had been transferred to the Turkish navy, while retaining their German crews, fired upon Russian military installations on the Black Sea coast.\textsuperscript{86} As a result, the Entente immediately declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The abrupt turn of events now presented Entente diplomats with the possibility of trying to win over Bulgaria with a slice of (western) Turkey. British representatives in Athens and Constantinople suggested to their Bulgarian counterparts that Bulgaria could gain Thrace and Adrianople in return for its support.\textsuperscript{87} Radoslavov seemed receptive to this proposal and indicated to the allied representatives that an understanding with the Entente might be possible.\textsuperscript{88}

On 1 November, Bax-Ironside, buoyed by the recent developments in the Near East, reported to Grey, “if Bulgaria can be prevented from attacking Serbia for three weeks or so, she will eventually come in against Turkey.”\textsuperscript{89} On 18 November, Bax-Ironside presented a new proposal, which promised specific gains in Macedonia (territory up to the Vardar), Thrace to the Enos-Midia line, and considerable financial support for a Bulgarian attack on Turkey. Nevertheless, Radoslavov rejected this offer.\textsuperscript{90} Incensed by this behavior, Romania, Serbia and Greece promptly began to renege on their territorial promises.

\textsuperscript{85} Savinsky to Sazonov, 29 October 1914, \textit{IB}, series II, volume 6, p. 387.
\textsuperscript{86} Silberstein, \textit{Troubled Alliance}, pp. 96-97.
\textsuperscript{87} Grey, \textit{Twenty-Five Years}, volume 2, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{88} Strandtmann to Sazonov, 1 November 1914, \textit{IB}, series II, volume 6, p. 424.
\textsuperscript{89} Bax-Ironside to Grey, 1 November 1914, \textit{BDFA}, part II, series H, volume 2, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{90} Bax-Ironside to Grey, 20 November 1914, ibid., p. 125.
promises. Furthermore, while Grey and Sazonov had been willing to pressure Serbia to surrender territory to Bulgaria, their growing frustration with Sofia caused them to rethink taking a hard line with Niš. As a result, the best the Allies could do was issue a joint statement on 24 November that made vague promises of territorial compensation after the war if Bulgaria remained neutral towards Serbia and Romania. Accordingly, if Bulgaria were to take military action against Austria-Hungary or Turkey, then Sofia could expect greater rewards. Without specific guarantees, however, Radoslavov refused to budge, reaffirming Bulgaria’s strict neutrality instead.

In the face of the Entente’s progress, the Central Powers did not stand idly by. While Bulgarian neutrality still benefited Germany and its Habsburg ally, Radoslavov’s negotiations with the Entente did not sit well with Berchtold or Jagow, who were afraid these talks might result in an agreement guaranteeing Sofia’s neutrality in the event Romania attacked Austria. As Austrian sources were reporting that the Entente was making more concrete proposals, Berchtold decided Vienna and Berlin needed to up the ante. In addition to promising Bulgaria Enos-Midia Thrace, the Ballhausplatz guaranteed all of Macedonia up to and including Niš. This came with a promise of Romanian support if Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece. After a mid-November meeting with Count István Tisza, the Hungarian prime minister, Jagow concluded that the best course of action would be a quick and decisive Bulgarian attack on Serbia. Consequently, he pushed for stronger efforts in Sofia. In his own words, Michahelles found himself “stuck

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93 Silberstein, Troubled Alliance, p. 139.
94 Hall, Bulgaria’s Road, p. 293.
in a difficult position...although I too distrusted Bulgaria’s motives, there was little that could be done to sway Sofia.” Michahelles did his best to reassure Jagow he was making every effort possible to secure Bulgaria.

Despite Tarnowski’s and Michahelles’ efforts, Berchtold was not certain that the Central Powers were offering Sofia sufficient territorial inducements. Wanting to make an offer that would clearly trump the Entente’s, he instructed Tarnowski to promise Bulgaria, in exchange for its neutrality, “a frontier expansion which the Entente powers can never assign her: all of Serbian Macedonia, the Pirot and Niš regions, and support for Bulgarian ambitions for Kavalla and Salonika.” While Turkey also wished to reclaim Salonika, Vienna and Berlin were confident a suitable compromise could be worked out later. Although Berchtold wanted a quick resolution, he understood only so much pressure could be put on Sofia:

We must not place the Radoslavov ministry in a difficult position and we must not drive Bulgaria into the arms of the Entente, but by promising Turkish help and presenting the advantages which Bulgaria could expect from active participation on our side we may bring the Bulgarian government in our direction.

By the end of November 1914, the Central Powers were in the same position as the Entente: both sides sought Bulgaria’s neutrality, but neither had been able to come up with the right combination of territorial (or financial) inducements in exchange. The only

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95 Michahelles, *Im kaiserlichen Dienst*, p. 156.
96 Michahelles to Jagow, 24 November 1914, AA-PA, R 1924, Fiche J, Series 14662 R 1924, Fiche J, Series 14662, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 3.
98 Berchtold to Tarnowski, 30 November 1914, enclosure, 30 November 1914, AA-PA, R 1924, Fiche J, Series 14662, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 3.
99 Ibid.
firm offers stemmed from situations in which Bulgaria would become militarily involved – but Bulgaria steadfastly avoided this. Berlin and Vienna had failed to convince Sofia to join a Balkan campaign; St. Petersburg could not persuade Bulgaria to make a decision at all; and London was unable to induce Serbia, Romania, and Greece to make the concessions necessary to reconstitute the Balkan League. Britain’s failure to force Serbia to cede territory looms as a major factor. The negotiations in November 1914 proved Bulgaria was unwilling to go to war for the sake of Enos-Midia. If Sofia could have secured that territory along with parts of Macedonia, however, matters might have been different. France and Russia supported compelling Serbia to make concessions, and British solidarity might have provided Pašić with the justification to do so, even if the Serbian populace would have been unhappy. This lack of strong coalition diplomacy made it hard for Radoslavov to understand exactly what the Entente was promising, making an agreement very difficult.

As 1914 came to an end, Bulgaria was in a relatively favorable position. It could observe the progress of the war “from afar,” in an attempt to determine which side was likely to emerge victorious. Moreover, it could afford to wait until its suitors provided the right combination of incentives in exchange for either Bulgarian neutrality or support. The Central Powers and the Entente knew they needed to do more to secure, in the words of Noel and Charles Buxton, the services of the “Judas Iscariot” of the Balkans.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{100} Buxton and Buxton, \textit{The War and the Balkans}, p. 71.
Chapter III
Driving a Hard Bargain: Specific Offers Made and Bulgaria’s Final Acceptance

With Turkey’s entry into the war, Bulgaria became an increasingly important player in the affairs of both the Triple Entente and the Central Powers. At the very least, both alliance groups sought Bulgaria’s benevolent neutrality. If either side could sway Sofia to enter the conflict, however, the tides of the war might shift drastically. By joining the Allies, Bulgaria could provide needed support to Serbia, shore up Russia’s defenses, and effectively neutralize Turkey. Siding with the Central Powers, however, would cut Russia off from its allies and deliver the finishing blow to Serbia. Sofia recognized its unique position and pushed both sides to make specific and sizeable offers. From the outset of hostilities, Radoslavov had pursued a policy of wait and bargain, and was astute in doing so. In August, he had received an offer of a military convention with Austria-Hungary that would have promised unspecified territorial gains. By December, he was entertaining proposals with similar concessions for nothing more than benevolent neutrality. Nationalists still dreamed of restoring San Stefano Bulgaria and, if Sofia continued to manage its position well, it seemed achieving this goal was possible.

Following Radoslavov’s rejection of the Entente’s vague statement of 24 November, Sazonov and Grey realized the woeful inadequacy of their offer and worked to strengthen it. On 2 December, Sazonov proposed the Allies make a series of declarations to the Balkan states that might win their individual support for a concrete offer to Bulgaria. They would promise Greece southern Albania and protection from a
Bulgarian attack if it would assist Serbia. In return for surrendering parts of Macedonia, Britain, France and Russia would guarantee Pašić access to the Adriatic Sea as well as Bosnia and a common border with Greece, while Romania would have to assure Greece’s safety. Once each of these states agreed to these proposals, a new statement would be issued in Sofia in which the Allies would make their guarantees and offer specific territory for Bulgarian neutrality: Thrace to the Enos-Midia line and Macedonia up to the Vardar River, including Ishtip and Kotschana. Should Sofia enter the war, it would gain the entire uncontested zone in Macedonia.\(^1\) In full agreement, the Entente approached Greece on 5 December and Romania the next day. Neither Athens nor Bucharest was particularly enthusiastic, however, and rejected these propositions on the grounds that they did not sufficiently guarantee Bulgaria’s neutrality.

Even without the support of Greece and Romania, the Entente powers presented their proposal to Bulgaria on 9 December. While their offer provided more specific gains than the 24 November plan, the Allies still sought a full military alliance. Consequently, Radoslavov rejected it, reporting to Panifieu and Bax-Ironsde Bulgaria needed a more substantial offer for its participation in the war.\(^2\) Sofia’s ideal aims were now becoming clear: avoiding war if at all possible and, in doing so, acquiring the portion of Macedonia promised it in the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of 1912, the Vardar River valley, the port of Kavalla, Thrace and Adrianople, and the Dobrudja.\(^3\) If the Entente wanted Bulgaria as an ally, it would have to make all of these concessions plus offer enough financial support to

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\(^1\) Savinsky, *Recollections*, p. 274.


\(^3\) Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, volume 2, p. 221.
wipe away its debts to Austria and Germany as part of their recent loan agreement. At the very least, Radoslavov told the Allied ministers, “the Bulgarian price for entry into the war was the immediate possession of Macedonia.” The first hurdle, then, was convincing Serbia to cede parts of Macedonia. To that end, Sazonov suggested promising Servia important accessions of territory giving [it] free access to Adriatic in return for...[eastern Macedonia] as far as the Vardar if Bulgaria maintains neutrality, and for part of Macedonia provided for in 1912 treaty if Bulgaria actively participated at the moment desired by the Powers.

This plan never made it past preliminary discussions, however, as Grey was unwilling to make any demands on Niš due to the immense blow Serbian national prestige suffered as a result of the loss of Belgrade, a major setback in the Austro-Hungarian campaign.

By the end of 1914, the Allies had taken no decisive action. The Entente powers reasoned that once it was clear whether Serbia could break its stalemate with Austria, they could more easily define what territory Niš would acquire. With that settled, they could then decide what land Serbia would surrender and force it to agree. Bulgaria’s neighbors still favored a new league, but progress towards that goal remained at a standstill since none were willing to offer the territory necessary to secure Sofia. Consequently, the Allies put a temporary hold on their Balkan projects, hoping the next few weeks would provide a more favorable position from which to bargain.

At the same time, the Central Powers were also encountering troubles with respect to territorial guarantees. Some of the territory Bulgaria sought was negotiable depending on what Greece and Romania did, but the amount of land needed to secure

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4 Hall, *Bulgaria’s Road*, p. 294.
5 Foreign Office Dispatch, 7 December 1914, *BDFA*, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 150.
Bulgarian military support was considerable. Further complicating matters was that on 7 December Radoslavov asked Tarnowski to provide a written guarantee of Macedonia in order to justify his rejection of the Entente’s offers.\(^7\) The Habsburg ambassador was willing to honor this request, as long as the Bulgarian prime minister made it clear who would actually see this written pledge. The Ballhausplatz, however, refused. While willing to offer Bulgaria any land its forces occupied, Berchtold believed Sofia should not be promised anything for doing nothing.\(^8\) The Habsburg foreign minister consulted Jagow on this matter and the two agreed that a written statement was unwise. While sensitive to Radoslavov’s difficult position, Jagow felt a joint oral declaration by Vienna and Berlin would be more appropriate. Bulgaria could only secure a written guarantee by agreeing to support the Central Powers.\(^9\)

Although Radoslavov understood Jagow’s position, he countered by asking for something in writing, even if it was just a secret note he alone would see. With this in hand, the prime minister could inform the parliament that he had a formal assurance of territory from Germany and Austria-Hungary that could justify rejecting the Entente.\(^10\) Despite his reservations about a formal offer, Berchtold gave his consent, but Jagow remained concerned Radoslavov would not exercise proper discretion.\(^11\) The German foreign minister was also hesitant due to a report he received from one of his attachés, General Wilhelm von der Goltz (also known as von der Goltz Pasha) who reported that,

\(^7\) Tarnowski to Berchtold, 7 December 1914, ÖUA, volume 8, number 10, 943.
\(^8\) Berchtold to Jagow and Jagow to Berchtold, 9 December 1914, AA-PA, R 1924, Fiche J, Series 14662, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 3.
\(^9\) Hohenlohe to Berchtold, 10 December 1914, ibid.
\(^10\) Michahelles to Jagow, 15 December 1914, ibid.
\(^11\) Hohenlohe to Berchtold, 17 December 1914, ibid.
while Ferdinand and his prime minister supported the Central Powers, a large majority of the Bulgarian populace opposed the war. Flouting public opinion could lead to the government’s collapse, and so, for the time being, Bulgaria had to remain neutral.12 Michahelles agreed with Jagow’s caution adding that “for some months, Herr Radoslavoff had a draft of alliance that provided more land than the Entente would grant.”13 Ultimately, however, Berlin followed Vienna’s lead and agreed to a written offer of territory for both Bulgarian neutrality and military support.

Several weeks passed before the final wording of a pledge was satisfactory, since Jagow wanted to ensure Bulgaria was not promised too much for neutrality.14 Finally, on 4 January Tarnowski presented the secret note to Radoslavov; Michahelles followed two days later: “Austria [Germany] guarantees to Bulgaria that it will obtain after the war all the territories of the Kingdom of Serbia to which Bulgaria possesses historic and ethnographic rights and which it will occupy with its own troops.”15 Although the guarantees were vague, Radoslavov had achieved a major diplomatic victory. Bulgaria had made no formal commitment to the Central Powers, and yet it now had secured a broad promise of Serbian territory for virtual inaction.

At this point, Bulgaria had now received a vaguely worded guarantee of Macedonia from the Central Powers as well as a written promise of a smaller portion of territory in exchange for neutrality from the Entente. In both cases, the gains would be substantial and come at little risk. This was the most that either the Central Powers or the

12 Von der Goltz to German Foreign Office, 15 December 1914, ibid.
13 Michahelles to Jagow, 17 December 1914, ibid.
14 Jagow, Foreign Office Memorandum, 2 January 1915, ibid.
15 Michahelles, Im kaiserlichen Dienst, pp. 157-158.
Entente could claim as a success at the beginning of 1915. As Sir William Robertson, then the Chief of Staff of the British Expeditionary Force, wrote, “since the war began, diplomacy had seriously failed to assist us with regard to Bulgaria.” The same could be said of Germany and Austria, which had expended considerable energy to secure Bulgaria, but had little to show for it. Since January was not an opportune time to launch a campaign, Sofia was able to wait and see if could secure even more Macedonian territory as well as a stronger assurance that any guarantees would be fulfilled.

While matters were a mess in Southeastern Europe, the Entente hoped it could find a way, in the words of British cabinet secretary Maurice Hankey, to “guarantee to each nation concerned that fair play should be rendered and…there ought to be no insuperable obstacle to the occupation of the Dardanelles, Constantinople, and Bosphorus.” Accordingly, Russia planned a naval maneuver in the Black Sea, and Britain considered an expedition that might draw Bulgaria and Greece into the war. Churchill, Sir John Fisher (the first sea lord), and Lloyd George were enthusiastic about a naval venture in the Dardanelles, while the Buxtons, who by this time had returned from Bulgaria, again pushed for a Balkan confederation aligned against Turkey and Austria.

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17 Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918*, p. 132.
The Buxtons also advocated for a declaration that delineated what Sofia would gain in exchange for an alliance with a full guarantee the Allies would deliver on their pledge.\textsuperscript{20}

At this time, Britain also devised plans for a relief expedition that would land at Salonika, hopefully inducing Greece to enter the war. Lloyd George strongly supported this venture, as he believed “there was no more time to be wasted dilly-dallying if the Balkans were to be saved.”\textsuperscript{21} Once he and Churchill had secured French support for this action, Lord Kitchener, the secretary of state for war, agreed to send a division of British troops; Russian forces would arrive soon thereafter.\textsuperscript{22} Nevertheless, Greek support for this project did not materialize as expected. Although London promised considerable territorial gains and protection from a counter-attack, Venizelos feared a joint assault from Turkey and Bulgaria. Without the guarantee of Romanian support, he refused to back this action.\textsuperscript{23} Consequently, the Salonika campaign had to be delayed.

Meanwhile, the Allies continued to look for diplomatic ways to break the Balkan logjam. In the middle of January Sazonov proposed a new declaration be made to Serbia promising specific territorial gains in exchange for the land that was to be surrendered to Sofia. In return for the sections of Macedonia promised in the treaty of 1912, Serbia would gain Bosnia and Hercegovina, southern Albania and a portion of southern Dalmatia.\textsuperscript{24} Nevertheless, Savinsky still doubted whether this would be enough land to

\textsuperscript{20} Conwell-Evans, \textit{Foreign Policy from a Back-Bench}, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{21} Lloyd George, \textit{War Memories of Lloyd George}, volume I, p. 245.
\textsuperscript{22} Lloyd George, ibid., p. 249.
\textsuperscript{23} Elliot to Foreign Office, 10 February 1915, \textit{BDFA}, part II, Series H, volume 1, p. 265.
\textsuperscript{24} Sir George Buchanan (British Mininster to Moscow, 1910-1919) to Foreign Office, 12 January 1915, ibid., p. 223.
sway Bulgaria to action or that Serbia would even cede this territory.\textsuperscript{25} While taking
Sazonov’s suggestions under advisement, the Allied representatives in Serbia haggled for
several days about what Niš should be asked to surrender. Finally, on 29 January, they
recommended Serbia should cede Macedonia to the Vardar in an offer for Bulgarian
neutrality and Macedonia up to the 1912 treaty line for its active participation in the war.
Recognizing this still might not be enough for Sofia, the ambassadors suggested the
Entente should also mention Kavalla and Enos-Midia.\textsuperscript{26} Finally, they advised that “the
three Powers should press the Serbian Government to make necessary concessions, and,
if it refuses, they should intimate they will take matters into their own hands and make
requisite offers to Bulgaria without further consultation with Serbia.”\textsuperscript{27}

Before presenting Pašić with anything official, Grey suggested consulting him to
ensure a favorable response. Pašić was not at all pleased by this proposal, threatening to
resign if the Entente continued formulating offers clearly favoring Sofia.\textsuperscript{28} With Serbia
still unwilling to budge, the Allies were unable to break the impasse in the Balkans.

Nevertheless, the Entente once again considered dispatching a special diplomatic
mission to Sofia to make an offer of alliance, in which Bulgaria would gain Macedonia to
the Vardar, Monastir, and the Enos-Midia line in return for war against Turkey. Both

\begin{footnotes}
\item[27] Buchanan to Grey, 29 January 1915, \textit{BDFA}, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 234.
\item[28] Charles Louis des Graz (British Ambassador to Serbia, 1914-1919) to Grey, 1 February
1915, ibid., p. 238.
\end{footnotes}
Delcassé and Grey agreed the military situation at the beginning of February was not favorable, and that it would be more prudent to delay a mission until the Entente’s position was stronger, as the prospect of victory would be a greater inducement than any land that could be offered. Consequently, St. Petersburg, London and Paris agreed they would dispatch a delegation when a good opportunity arose.

The first chance to act came on 19 February, when the Allies launched the Dardanelles Campaign. Its early successes, coupled with Russian victories in Galicia, had a clear effect, as Radoslavov recognized the attack on the Dardanelles raised Sofia’s value: “the moment has come to alter the character of the strict neutrality which Bulgaria has maintained up to now.” Such pronouncements gave Britain, France and Russia hope that a Bulgarian attachment to the Entente was imminent.

What Radoslavov had in mind, however, was quite different from what the Entente anticipated. The prime minister would only change the nature of Bulgaria’s neutrality if he could secure more territory in the process. In their latest proposal, the Allies had offered Enos-Midia, Macedonia as promised in 1912, the southern Dobrudja, Kavalla, and monetary aid and guarantees against Greek and Romanian attacks in return for an assault on Turkey. Radoslavov was willing to agree to this, but only for Bulgarian neutrality. At this time, he calculated Sofia’s value had reached a point where it could gain everything Bulgaria desired without firing a single shot. While the Entente

29 Grey, Twenty-Five Years, volume II, p. 195.
30 Hall, Bulgaria’s Road, p. 296.
32 Bax-Ironside to Grey, 6 March 1915, B DFA, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 239.
rejected Radoslavov’s counter-proposal, they took it under consideration, as it was growing desperate to gain Sofia. Although Radoslavov was flirting with the Entente at this time, the Central Powers did not ease up in their pursuit. Germany and Austria-Hungary now tried to use the 1914 loan as leverage for Sofia’s entry into the war. As one of Radoslavov’s reasons for not mobilizing was that Bulgaria still lacked the infrastructure and financial resources to go to war, Berlin offered to pay the first installment of the loan in exchange for mobilization.\footnote{Michahelles, \textit{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, pp. 157-158.} Bulgarian finance minister Dimitir Tonchev strongly opposed this suggestion, and threatened to cancel the loan if Germany persisted, frightening Vienna and Berlin greatly. By the time the loan was settled on 31 January, the Central Powers had offered 150 million francs with very favorable terms and no military strings attached.\footnote{Jagow to Burián, 28 January 1915, AA-PA, R 1925, Fiche J, Series 14663, IA Deutschland Nr. 8 secr., band 4.} Even with this agreement, however, the Central Powers doubted they could still count on Bulgaria ever fighting on their side.

At the end of February and the beginning of March, the Bulgarian ambassador in Vienna approached Graf Stephen Burián von Rajecz (who had replaced Berchtold as the Habsburg Foreign Minister in mid-January) and the German ambassador at Vienna, Heinrich von Tschirschky, about a new guarantee for Bulgaria.\footnote{Graf Heinrich Leopold von Tschirschky und Bögendorff was the German ambassador to Vienna from 1907 to 1916.} The Bulgarian ambassador told them that the Allies had recently offered the Enos-Midia line for Bulgaria’s neutrality and Sofia wanted to know if the Central Powers would make a
similar offer of territory from Serbia as a counter-proposal.\textsuperscript{36} While sensitive to the fact that the Central Powers could not afford to lose ground, neither Burián nor Tschirschky was willing to counter the Entente’s proposal, claiming that the loan agreement finalized the month before was proof of Vienna’s and Berlin’s strong commitment to Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{37}

Two weeks after Burián and Tschirschky made this declaration, Berlin began to step up its efforts in Bulgaria. Turkey was in need of relief, and so the chief of the German General Staff, Erich von Falkenhayn, agreed to a joint Austro-German campaign in northern Serbia, in which Bulgarian assistance would be crucial.\textsuperscript{38} On 16 March, Michahelles approached Radoslavov about Sofia’s support for this action, but found the prime minister had little interest since the attack would take place in a limited portion of Serbia.\textsuperscript{39} In order to convince Sofia to join the Central Powers, Falkenhayn modified the plan to a more general assault. Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, the chief of staff of the Austrian army, agreed to this, but refused to dispatch any troops unless Bulgaria was willing to mobilize. Falkenhayn believed it would be easy to secure Sofia’s support since the bulk of the forces would come from Germany and Austria, but, as Jagow reminded him, Bulgaria would not sign a military agreement without an offer of territory, which would not only include Macedonia, but also parts of Serbia up to the Morava River.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36} Memorandum to Jagow, 26 February 1915, AA-PA, R 1926, Fiche J, Series 14665 R 1926, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 5.
\textsuperscript{37} Michahelles to Foreign Office, 8 March 1915, ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Michahelles, \textit{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{39} Michahelles to Foreign Office, 17 March 1915, AA-PA, R 1927, Fiche J, Series 14668, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 6.
\textsuperscript{40} Falkenhayn to Jagow and Jagow to Falkenhayn, 31 March 1915 and 1 April 1915, AA-PA, R 1927, Fiche J, Series 14670, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 6; Michahelles, \textit{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, p. 159.
While Conrad supported Falkenhayn’s proposal, Austria-Hungary grew reluctant to undertake this campaign. Since it was becoming increasingly likely Italy would join the Allies, Burián was hesitant to begin a new military maneuver without first securing Austria’s western flank. Once Italy was neutralized, Vienna would be free to attack Serbia. As a result, the Habsburg foreign minister advised against a proposal made by Michahelles to tie Bulgarian mobilization to payment of the loan. Jagow agreed, and so the disbursement was made without any military provisions, forcing Austria and Germany to give up their financial trump card, and scrap their campaign in Serbia.

This diplomatic setback coincided with the defeat of the Habsburg army at Przemyśl, further hindering the Central Powers’ efforts in the east. This loss landed a double blow, as the victory also brought the Entente diplomatic success. Support for the Allies increased in Bulgaria and, while Radoslavov still sympathized with the Central Powers, it was growing more difficult to back them. The Entente hoped this upswing of support might force Radoslavov out of office and lead to the formation of a more pro-Allies government. The Dardanelles Campaign was also enjoying some success, and Paget believed the adherence of Bulgaria to the Allies was imminent.

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41 Michahelles, *Im kaiserlichen Dienst*, pp. 159-160.
42 Churchill, *World Crisis*, volume 2: 1914-1916, pp. 38-40. Following Russia’s success in the Galicia Offensive in 1914, Przemyśl was the only fort on the Galician frontier that remained under Habsburg control. The fortress was under siege behind Russian lines from 24 September 1914 until 22 March 1915. Maintaining control of Przemyśl was of considerable importance to Vienna and Berlin in terms of army morale, as the garrison there was the last defense against a Russian incursion into Hungary or Silesia. The loss of the fortress was a crushing blow, although no major Russian offensive followed. Later in the summer of 1915, a joint Austro-Hungarian and German attack reclaimed the fortress. Silberstein, *Troubled Alliance*, pp. 157-158.
Meanwhile, the growing need to relieve a beleaguered Turkey compelled the Central Powers to find some way to overcome their recent setbacks. As Vienna was focused on securing Italy, the Reich took an increasingly important role in negotiations, particularly because it felt the greatest need for Bulgarian aid. Falkenhayn wanted Sofia to join the conflict so that he could begin his campaign against Serbia. If this military action succeeded, Bulgaria would have even greater confidence in the Central Powers.\(^{44}\)

In early April, Colonel Erich von Leipzig, a member of Falkenhayn’s staff, made a personal visit to the Ferdinand in an attempt to win his support. Leipzig made it clear that Bulgaria could expect significant gains for its active participation, but found the tsar was willing to go to war only when the Germans and Austrians began their offensive.\(^{45}\)

Despite Ferdinand’s reluctance, Bulgaria did not close the door on cooperating with the Central Powers. Berlin continued loan payments and even promised aid to various politicians in the Bulgarian government. To Andrei Tochkov, the leader of the Macedonian Committee, Jagow made an unofficial offer of 1912 Macedonia all the way to Lake Ohrid for neutrality and stated that more would be forthcoming if Sofia would commit to a military campaign.\(^{46}\) Burián, however, was more cautious than his German counterpart, refusing to make further concessions, particularly in regards to portions of Serbia that Vienna had its eyes on. This pattern continued throughout April and May, 

\(^{44}\) Michahelles, *Im kaiserlichen Dienst*, p. 162.
\(^{45}\) Silberstein, *Troubled Alliance*, p. 157. In addition to serving as a member of the German Gernal Staff, Erich von Leipzig had previously served as the German military attaché in Constantinople from 1901 to 1907. In 1915, Leipzig returned to this post.
\(^{46}\) Jagow to Bethmann-Hollweg, 6 May 1915, AA-PA, R 1929, Fiche J, Series 14674, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 8. The Macedonian Committee was a minor party in the Bulgarian parliament, and was a part of the coalition that brought Radoslavov and his Liberal Party into power in 1913.
with Germany taking the initiative in making territorial proposals, and Austria applying a judicious brake wherever it could. With Italy’s decision on 4 May to renounce the Triple Alliance, Jagow became convinced that it was extremely important to secure Bulgarian neutrality or face a crushing blow in southeastern Europe.

Recognizing Germany was growing increasingly desperate, and bolstered by the offers the Allies were now tendering, Radoslavov now took the initiative. On 9 May, he presented Michahelles with the draft of a declaration in which Germany would guarantee the contested and uncontested zones of Macedonia in exchange for Bulgarian neutrality. If war with Greece and Romania resulted, then Bulgaria could expect further gains from those states. Both Jagow and Michahelles were willing to go ahead with this proposal, but Burián was less enthusiastic, and Berlin faced a difficult battle in trying to secure the Habsburg minister’s support. It took days of intense discussions and heated exchanges, but, in the end, Burián came around. This was due in large part to Jagow’s agreement that the pledge would promise only those areas under joint occupation at the end of the war. The guarantee would also make it clear that Sofia would receive land from Greece and Romania only if these states declared war against the Central Powers. Burián still

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48 Jagow to Burián, 5 May 1915, AA-PA, R 1929, Fiche J, Series 14674 R 1922, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 8.
49 Michahelles to Jagow, 9 May 1915, AA-PA, R 1929, Fiche J, Series 14674, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 8
51 Jagow to Tshireschky, 14 May 1915, AA-PA, R 22401 Bulgariens Haltung, band 2.
had his doubts, but the mounting crisis with Italy forced his hand, and he authorized Tarnowski to make a joint declaration with Michahelles.\textsuperscript{52}

The two ambassadors worked quickly to prepare a counter to Radoslavov’s text. When they finally presented their revisions on 21 May, it had only one significant change: no mention of the contested zone was present. If necessary, they could discuss this territory, but only if Radoslavov pressed for it.\textsuperscript{53} Unfortunately, the German military aide to the Turkish government, Colmar von der Goltz, compromised the ambassadors’ position. In a visit to Sofia at this time, he had let slip that Berlin was willing to include the contested zone in its declaration, giving Sofia room to negotiate.\textsuperscript{54}

On 22 May, Ferdinand issued his reply to the Central Powers: citing his anxiety about Italy’s recent entry on the side of the Allies as well as Bulgaria’s military unpreparedness, his country would not yet go to war.\textsuperscript{55} In reality, the tsar understood he could extract a higher price from the Central Powers, particularly with a new offer pending from the Entente. The Wilhelmstrasse and the Ballhausplatz were back to finding a new way to secure Sofia, and, in the meantime, had to hope that Turkey could continue to stave off the Allied attack in the Dardanelles.

The initial, though ultimately fleeting, successes of the naval actions in the Dardanelles in February and early March showed Sofia that the Allies could be successful in the Balkans, which did more to sway Bulgarian leaders than anything else.

\textsuperscript{52} Burián to Tarnowski, 19 May 1915, \textit{ÖUA}, volume 8, number 10,879.
\textsuperscript{54} Michahelles to Jagow, 21 May 1915, AA-PA, R 1929, Fiche J, Series 14675, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 8.
\textsuperscript{55} Radoslavov to Toshev, 21 May 1915, \textit{IB}, Series 2, volume 7, part 2, p. 269.
Further aiding the Entente was its progress in negotiating a military agreement with Italy. Once Rome’s territorial gains were outlined, the Allies could use that as a framework for compensation for Serbia and Bulgaria. As Britain and France were willing to cede Dalmatia and Bosnia to Serbia, the possibilities of offering Sofia land in accordance with its wishes seemed a likelier reality than ever before.⁵⁶

As the Entente was making headway with Rome, Grey and Delcassé suggested the Allies should present an offer of alliance to Bulgaria once Italy declared war.⁵⁷ This would bolster their position in the Balkans and underscore the likelihood of an Allied victory in the east. In the meantime, the Allied powers worked to formulate an offer the Bulgarians could not refuse. Although the Entente representatives were in agreement about how much land they should offer, they engaged in considerable debate about the price Sofia should pay for it. Ultimately, they decided to offer the Macedonian frontier of 1912 and the Enos-Midia line in exchange for Bulgaria entering the war.⁵⁸

By the end of April, the Allied proposal was complete. The final draft of the treaty provided Sofia with gains in Macedonia up to and including the line of 1912, which it would acquire at the end of the war, and Enos-Midia, which would pass into Bulgarian hands as soon as it occupied the territory. Grey also pushed for the inclusion of Kavalla, but opposition by the French government ultimately prohibited it.⁵⁹ While affairs in the Balkans were progressing well, Sazonov again suggested that the opportune

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⁵⁷ British aide-mémoire to Sazonov, 10 April 1915, IB, series 2, volume 7, part 2, p. 498.
⁵⁹ Grey to Sir Francis Bertie, 16 April 1915, BDFA, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 324 and Bertie to Grey, 18 April 1915, ibid., p. 326.
time to make this offer would be after Italy entered the war, since the Allies would be in the best position possible, and Bulgaria would be hard pressed to refuse them.60

Realizing an offer from the Allies was forthcoming and responding to pressure from his opposition, Radoslavov went on the offensive. On 8 May, he approached Bax-Ironside with his own offer of a military alliance. For the prime minister, the terms were simple: “Bulgaria cannot be denied its historical and ethnographic rights. It cannot exist without Macedonia, for which it has shed so much blood. Bulgaria wants all of Macedonia, Kavala, Seres, Drama, Dobrudzha and also Enos-Midia.”61 In effect, he was asking for all of San Stefano Bulgaria. The prime minister’s proposal was met with favor for the most part. Grey and Sazonov were amenable to including Kavalla, Seres, and Drama. While the contested zone of Macedonia was still a sticky issue, neither was completely against the idea either.62

This proposal certainly seemed to be the breakthrough the Allies had long desired, since they could now claim they had an offer from Bulgaria with which both sides could work. The Quai d’Orsay still objected to the revisions Grey and Sazonov had agreed to with Radoslavov, which delayed a formal offer for a few weeks. Delcassé found the offer of the Dobrudja problematic, preferring that Bulgaria and Romania resolve this

separately. He further questioned the wisdom of an Allied guarantee of Kavalla, considering Venizelos’s earlier objections. Consequently, the Allies agreed Sofia would have to attack Turkey directly in order to gain Kavalla. Should it refuse, then Greece could retain the city; if Bulgaria did as it was asked, and Athens refused to relinquish the city, then Greece would void its claims to land elsewhere. These modifications were enough to satisfy Delcassé, and the final text received full Allied support on 28 May.

Following the Italian declaration of war on 23 May and French approval of the final draft, the four Allied ministers in Sofia presented the proposed alliance on 29 May. In return for its full and complete participation in hostilities, Bulgaria would receive Thrace to the Enos-Midia line and the uncontested zone in Macedonia, up to and including Monastir. Bulgaria could occupy Thrace at its earliest convenience and the gains in Macedonia were contingent upon Serbia receiving land in Bosnia and on the Adriatic coast. The Allies also promised full support in pressuring Greece to cede Kavalla, and Romania to relinquish the southern Dobrudja. As in the case of Macedonia, these gains hinged on Athens and Bucharest acquiring territory elsewhere. Finally, the Allies offered generous financial assistance to help mobilize the Bulgarian army. The military situation was favorable, and the Entente hoped it had finally reached a terminus in its negotiations with Sofia. Radoslavov delayed his response, however, asking for further clarification before agreeing to anything. He had committed to nothing, yet Bulgaria was tantalizingly close to its national goals. The time had now come for

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63 Elliot to Grey, 11 May 1915, ibid., p. 362.
64 Grey to Bax-Ironside, 29 May 1915, ibid., p. 367.
Bulgaria to pledge itself to one side or the other, for neutrality or war. If Bulgaria made
the right choice, it would be the crowning achievement of decades of struggle.

On 15 June, Radoslavov finally responded to the offer extended by the Allies. Although the prime minister expressed gratitude for the Entente’s generous and fair offer, he was not ready to accept it. He asked for further clarification of Bulgaria’s exact gains, how the Allied Powers would aid in negotiations with Romania and how much land Greece and Serbia were to receive.65 Although the four powers were not completely surprised by this request, they were certainly disappointed, since they were again forced to devise a new draft to satisfy Radoslavov. Nevertheless, Britain was not ready to give up, and was prepared to strengthen its offer. On 25 June, Churchill, recently demoted to chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, wrote to Lloyd George, now the minister of munitions, “I am all for playing the game out to get Bulgaria. She is the real prize, & it is only if and when we know she will not come that we should consider Greek and Servian interests.”66 This sentiment was shared by most of the cabinet.

As London had grown desperate to secure Sofia, Whitehall showed a greater willingness to force Serbia to make concessions in favor of Bulgarian support. Bax-Ironside, long criticized for his overly pro-Serbian attitude and ineffectiveness in strengthening Bulgaria’s ties to Britain, adamantly protested this change in policy, resulting in his replacement as ambassador by Hugh O’Beirne on 17 June. O’Beirne,

66 Churchill to Lloyd George, 25 June 1915, Lloyd George Papers D/16/18/1 as quoted in Curtright, Muddle, p. 188.
who had been Councilor of the Embassy at St. Petersburg since 1906, was Bax-Ironside’s opposite in many ways and was regarded as much better suited to helping close a deal with Sofia.\textsuperscript{67} With Britain strongly in favor of soldiering forth, the other Entente powers prepared to follow suit and find some way of securing Bulgaria.

Among the options considered for strengthening the Allied offer, the one that gained the most support was one in which each of the Entente powers would pressure Greece to cede more land to Bulgaria, since it had been dragging its feet in support of the Allies. The Entente strongly considered granting Sofia specific portions of Macedonia for immediate occupation, but Grey objected. He had no desire to alienate Serbia by pressing it to do more than was necessary and was optimistic that Bulgarian support would not be necessary in the Gallipoli Campaign.\textsuperscript{68} France and Italy felt it would be wiser to ask Sofia to name what it had in mind rather than raise the ante too high, a proposal Britain agreed with in principle, although Whitehall stipulated Bulgaria must stay within the general limits set out by other Entente offers.\textsuperscript{69}

Meanwhile, a steady stream of British individuals began pouring into Bulgaria, hopeful they could pressure Sofia to finalize an agreement with the Entente. O’Beirne arrived in Sofia on 7 July, and on 18 July the Foreign Office dispatched Sir Valentine Chirol, a diplomat who was an expert on the Balkans, to meet with Ferdinand and other Bulgarian politicians. Churchill even tried to attach himself to a special mission with Lord Hankey, who arrived in Bulgaria at the end of the month. Although he ultimately

\textsuperscript{67} Napier, \textit{Experiences}, p. 167; Grey, \textit{Twenty-Five Years}, volume 2, p. 221.  
\textsuperscript{68} Elliot to Grey, 18 June 1915, \textit{BDF4}, part II, series H, volume 1, p. 245.  
\textsuperscript{69} Robbins, “British Diplomacy,” p. 578.
did not make the trip, Churchill’s attempt shows the level of seriousness with which Bulgaria’s entry into the war was being treated.\textsuperscript{70}

By the beginning of August, the pressure to respond to Radoslavov’s request had increased considerably. The tide was turning against the Allies in the Balkans and the Bulgarian army began to show signs of being capable of mobilization.\textsuperscript{71} Furthermore, Sofia and Constantinople had begun to engage in diplomatic talks that could result in military cooperation as well as changes to their shared border. On 3 August, the Entente presented its revised offer. The cities of Drama and Seres were now guaranteed as part of the offer regarding Kavalla. Furthermore, the land which Serbia and Greece would gain at the end of the war were now directly tied to the territory they would surrender to Bulgaria; a virtual pledge that every attempt would be made to give Bulgaria what it was promised.\textsuperscript{72} To strengthen this offer, Grey authorized O’Beirne to “explain to Radoslavoff that a positive reply would bring the Powers to press Servian government to accept immediate occupation of eastern Macedonia.”\textsuperscript{73} It was clear now that the Allies were prepared to do everything in their power to secure Bulgaria.


\textsuperscript{71} By August 1915, the Entente’s military position in the Balkans had become especially precarious. Any early gains in the Dardanelles had been replaced with bloody standstills and defeats in Gallipoli in April and May that resulted in many casualties for the British ANZAC forces. Furthermore, the troops on the Salonika Front were surrounded by the Central Powers and unable to move or take definitive action. Victor Rudeno, \textit{Gallipoli: Attack from the Sea} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Cyril Falls, \textit{The Great War} (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961).

\textsuperscript{72} Foreign Office Memorandum, 3 August 1915, \textit{BDFA}, part II, series H, volume 2, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{73} Grey to O’Beirne, 4 August 1915, ibid., p 88.
With an offer now extended for the immediate seizure of eastern Macedonia, the Allies turned their attention to Niš to secure Serbia’s concurrence. Both Pašić and the Serbian military, however, vehemently opposed this proposal. In order to assuage the Serbians, on 16 August, the Allied Powers made a declaration in Niš promising Serbia considerable rewards at the end of the war if it accepted their request. Land in Croatia, Albania and the Banat were mentioned, despite potential conflicts with Italy, Greece and Romania. The Allies could no longer worry about future problems, as they desperately needed Serbia’s consent to secure Bulgaria; these issues could be resolved later.

On 1 September, Pašić responded to the Allies’ request. While willing to cede most of the uncontested zone, the Serbian prime minister refused to allow strategic areas, such as Prilep and Monastir, to pass into Bulgarian hands. In return for these territorial concessions, the Allied Powers would have to grant Serbia further territorial gains from Austria, including Croatia and Slovenia, and Sofia would have to attack Turkey immediately. Furthermore, Pašić demanded that his country be given equal status with the Entente powers, including full participation at the peace conference, additional military and financial aid, and a guarantee Bulgaria would not be further compensated until Serbia had been first. The Allies accepted Pašić’s request to be a full ally, but rejected his demands for additional land, the primacy of Serbian claims, and an immediate Bulgarian attack on Turkey.

75 Foreign Office Dispatch, 1 September 1915, B DFA, part II, series H, volume 2, p. 102.
76 Foreign Office Memorandum, 5 September 1915, ibid., p. 104.
On 14 September, with Serbia’s tacit approval, the Allied ministers presented their revisions to Radoslavov. In return for a Bulgarian assault on Turkey, Sofia would receive the uncontested zones of Macedonia according to its 1912 treaty with Serbia. Although the Bulgarian prime minister reacted favorably, the Allies were uncertain whether Bulgaria would accept their modifications.

To a large extent, the Entente’s doubts stemmed from the resurgence the Central Powers enjoyed during the summer, which allowed them to renew talks with Bulgaria. Like the Entente, the Central Powers had encountered difficulties with one of its allies, Turkey, but by the middle of September, they had greater success in bringing it under control than the Allies had with Serbia. Both alliance groups had to force their partners to make territorial concessions, but Constantinople was more willing to do so than the allies of the Entente. The Allied powers had no knowledge of where Bulgaria and the Central Powers stood, but at the time of their latest offer on 14 September, they were still not confident they had done enough to secure Sofia.

During May 1915, Vienna and Berlin panicked over the news of the Allies’s proposal to Bulgaria. The firmness of the offer coupled with the pressure the Entente’s campaigns in the Straits were placing on Turkey convinced Jagow an agreement would be reached shortly. Consequently, he felt the only thing that could be done was to offer the contested and uncontested zones of Macedonia in exchange for Bulgarian neutrality, exactly what Radoslavov hoped for when he disclosed the Allies’ offer. Burián’s

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77 Grey to O’Beirne, 14 September 1915, ibid., p. 109.
79 Michahelles, *Im kaiserlichen Dienst*, p. 159.
sentiments were in line with Jagow’s, and so both foreign ministers ordered their representatives in Sofia to use all their power, influence and diplomatic skill “to keep Radoslavov from being pushed from his former policy.”

Michahelles and Tarnowski, however, did not share their superiors’ concerns. While these new developments were worrisome, both ambassadors were confident Bulgaria would not go to war based on the terms offered by the Entente. Burián and Jagow remained unconvinced, and on 6 June, they asked their ministers to present a revised offer to Radoslavov. In retrospect, the two ambassadors were correct, as the prime minister’s response to the Allies on 16 June demonstrated little progress towards a military convention had been made. Sofia, nevertheless, continued to attempt to wrest the best deal from both sides.

Although it appeared at the beginning of June that the Central Powers were making little headway in securing Bulgaria, the “crisis” initiated by the Allied offer of 29 May was the worst trouble they would endure. On 23 July, Ferdinand sent a representative to German military headquarters to draw up a military convention, largely because Germany and Austria had finally been able to outbid the Allied Powers. The tsar found the Allies’ promises vague, conditional, and uncertain, while the Central Powers extended a clear and unambiguous offer that appeared to guarantee the full integration of Macedonia into Bulgaria.

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80 Jagow to Michahelles, 1 June 1915, AA-PA, R 1931, Fiche J, Series 14680, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 10.
81 Michahelles, Im kaiserlichen Dienst, p. 160.
82 Michahelles, Im kaiserlichen Dienst, p. 161.
83 Damianov, “Bulgaria’s Decision to Enter the War,” p. 164.
As the tides of war began to shift in favor of Germany and Austria, Bulgaria also began to draw closer to the Central Powers. On 19 June, the Germans won a key victory at Lemberg, effectively pushing the Russians out of Galicia and significantly reducing the potential threat of Russian military action in Bulgaria. Coupled with the failures of the Allies at the Straits, both Ferdinand and Radoslavov again favored the Central Powers. Tarnowski also began implying at the end of June that Vienna was considering a Serbian campaign that would not require Bulgarian aid. As a joint attack on Serbia had been an earlier precondition to a military alliance, this change in military policy indicated Berlin and Vienna were serious about achieving victory in the Balkans.84

Finally pushing Radoslavov to negotiate with the Central Powers were the serious discussions with Turkey that he had been engaged in since May. Since Romania was not willing to transport the war materials Constantinople desperately needed, Vienna advised its Turkish ally to negotiate a pact with Sofia that would secure safe passage for the necessary aid. Not only was Bulgaria willing to provide this support, but Nikolai Kolushev, the Bulgarian ambassador at Constantinople, also reported that his country was willing to enter into a defensive-offensive alliance with Turkey. Knowing the Allies were offering Enos-Midia in return for Bulgarian military action, Radoslavov proposed to the Porte that it provide the same territory in return for neutrality, thus aligning Sofia’s potential gains from the Central Powers with those from the Entente.85

85 Wagenheim to Jagow, 2 June 1915, AA-PA, R 1932, Fiche J, Series 14682, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 11. See also, Hall, *Bulgaria’s Road*, p. 300.
On 7 June, however, Kolushev reported that Turkey would cede territory only up to the Maritsa River in exchange for a military alliance.\footnote{Wagenheim to Jagow, 7 June 1915, AA-PA, R 22401, Bulgariens Haltung, band 2.} This did not trouble Radoslavov, as he believed Turkey was merely engaging in diplomatic posturing in order to secure a better deal. As the prime minister explained to the \textit{Kölnische Zeitung}: 

\begin{quote}
We will gain something from the Turks, we will ask for something more, and the Turks will find this completely natural. In all seriousness, we think as little about Enos-Midia as they do. The Turks will make an offer, we will allow something less, and without the interference of the Europeans, we will reach an agreement.\footnote{\textit{Kölnische Zeitung}, 16 June 1915.}
\end{quote}

If Sofia were to join with the Central Powers, Radoslavov explained further, Turkey and Bulgaria had to reach an agreement: “we, the government, will have to become so powerful through a swift agreement with Turkey that we could attempt a monstrous thing to the people, an alliance against Russia.”\footnote{Ibid.} Acquiring Enos-Midia would not be enough to justify an attack on Russia, but it would be for benevolent neutrality, which Radoslavov formally offered at this time. If the Central Powers wanted more from Bulgaria, Turkey would need to concede additional land.

Radoslavov finally overplayed his hand. He stayed firm to his request for Enos-Midia in exchange for benevolent neutrality, but since the Turks were now repelling the Allied forces at Gallipoli, Constantinople was convinced it no longer needed Bulgarian aid. Furthermore, Turkey also informed Sofia that it would only be willing to cede land up to the Maritsa in exchange for Bulgaria’s participation in the war.\footnote{Ibid.} In order to maximize Sofia’s gains, Radoslavov had to bring Bulgaria into the conflict.

\footnote{Michahelles, \textit{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, pp. 163-164.}
Since Turkey was not willing to make any concessions in Thrace until Bulgaria entered into an agreement with the Central Powers, Radoslavov was forced to make a decision. On 3 August, Sofia dispatched Colonel Peter Ganchev, a former military attaché in Berlin, to the German military headquarters in Pless to negotiate a military convention. He had full authority to sign an agreement with the Central Powers and immediately laid down exactly what Bulgaria required for an alliance. In addition to whatever land Turkey would concede, Ganchev demanded monetary and military aid, Seres and Kavalla from Greece (if Athens entered the war), all of Macedonia and territory in Serbia up to the Morava River.  

As these discussions took place with Germany and Austria, Sofia also sped up talks with Turkey. Realizing the Porte’s reluctance to cede Enos-Midia, on 5 August Kolushev proposed a compromise: Bulgaria would gain both banks of the Maritsa, as well as Lozengrad and Karaagach, the main railheads for Adrianople on the Maritsa’s west bank. Turkey was amenable to this suggestion, and both sides agreed to a military alliance on 6 September that had only a few modifications. Constantinople would cede both banks of the Maritsa as well as the land on which the railroad to Dedeagach was located. In return, the Porte would retain Enos, Adrianople and Kirk-Kilisse. The final borders were unsettled, but both parties agreed a joint Austro-German-Swiss commission would determine them at the end of the war.  

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90 Treutler to Foreign Office, 7 August 1915, AA-PA, R 1936, Fiche J, Series 14690, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 15.
91 Silberstein, Troubled Alliance, pp. 124-126.
Meanwhile, Ganchev and the Central Powers continued their negotiations. As part of any agreement, Bulgaria required a 15-year defensive alliance and substantial military and financial aid. Territorially, Bulgaria sought immediate occupation of the land surrendered by Turkey, all of Macedonia according to the 1912 treaty with Serbia, as well as territory in Serbia up to the Morava, Kavalla from Greece, and the Dobrudja from Romania should either become a belligerent.\footnote{Treutler to Jagow, 22 August 1915, AA-PA, R 1936, Fiche J, Series 14691, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 15.} In essence, Radoslavov, in Jagow’s estimation, “believed he could demand all [Bulgaria] desired from us.”\footnote{Jagow to Michahelles, 22 August 1915, ibid.}

Both Jagow and Burián found Sofia’s demands excessive. The Ballhausplatz objected more than the Wilhelmstrasse, but Jagow convinced Burián they needed to press forward.\footnote{Jagow to Burián, 15 August 1915, ibid.} By 26 August, the German foreign minister had reduced the proposed treaty to five articles. The alliance would last five years and guaranteed German assistance if Sofia were attacked by its neighbors. Military cooperation was now an integral part of the treaty. Bulgaria received nothing for its neutrality, but hefty reward for its entry into the war: both the contested and uncontested zones of Macedonia, northeastern Serbia, and the land ceded to Greece and Romania in the Treaty of Bucharest, if either declared war on Bulgaria.\footnote{Jagow to Bethmann-Hollweg, 26 August 1915, AA-PA, R 1937, Fiche J, Series 14692, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 16.} Jagow was eager to finalize the agreement and so permitted Michahelles to present the revised draft to Radoslavov without Burián’s approval.\footnote{Michahelles, \textit{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, p. 161.} This resulted in a wave of protest in Vienna, which found the terms of the treaty too generous. Jagow

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\footnote{Treutler to Jagow, 22 August 1915, AA-PA, R 1936, Fiche J, Series 14691, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 15.}
\footnote{Jagow to Michahelles, 22 August 1915, ibid.}
\footnote{Jagow to Burián, 15 August 1915, ibid.}
\footnote{Jagow to Bethmann-Hollweg, 26 August 1915, AA-PA, R 1937, Fiche J, Series 14692, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 16.}
\footnote{Michahelles, \textit{Im kaiserlichen Dienst}, p. 161.}
found these objections baseless, but agreed to leave any problematic points open for revision, promising to support Vienna should modifications be necessary.97

On 6 September, on the heels of its alliance with Turkey, Sofia signed a military agreement with the Central Powers that would take effect the following day. Bulgaria was to attack Serbia within thirty-five days, while Vienna and Berlin would do so within thirty. As Theodor Wolff, the editor of the Berliner Tageblatt recorded in his diary, the Bulgarian government “looked forward to the dismemberment of Serbia… and receiving Macedonia and northeast Serbia and Kavalla and the Greek coast up to Orphani.”98

As the treaty’s terms were secret, the Allies had no knowledge a deal had been reached. The Entente tried to push for Serbian concessions, but Pašić again refused. The time for negotiation had passed, he reasoned, and Serbia now had to be prepared for another assault.99 The Allied Powers made a final attempt to secure Bulgaria on 14 September by offering the uncontested zone of Macedonia at war’s end, but Radoslavov did not offer a quick response. Instead, ominous signs, such as mail censorship and open discussions in the press of Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia, began to appear.

On 4 October, Radoslavov formally rejected the Allies’ final offer, claiming Sofia needed more territory than what the Entente could give.100 Although things looked bleak,

97 Jagow to Burián, 28 August 1915, AA-PA, R 1937, Fiche J, Series 14692, IA Deutschland 128 Nr. 8 secr., band 16.
99 Grey, Twenty-Five Years, volume 2, p. 232.
100 O’Beirne to Grey, 4 October 1915, BDFA, part II, series H, volume 2, p. 128.
some in the British press, such as J. D. Bourchier, the Balkan correspondent for *The Times*, and H. M. Wallis, *The Times* reporter in Sofia, tried to urge the Allied Powers to persist, as many in Bulgaria “breathe friendship to England and assure me that Bulgaria will never strike hand with Turk and Teuton to the detriment of the land of Gladstone… valiantly resisting the machinations of a Royal dictator running amok whilst his Parliament is not in session.”\(^{101}\) The Entente made one final attempt to avoid war when they presented an ultimatum to Radoslavov demanding all German officers attached to the Bulgarian army be sent back to Berlin.\(^{102}\) Sofia made no answer, and the Bulgarian ambassador to Germany, Dimitir Rizov, declared to the German press, “we will not betray our friends. Germany does not need to worry that we will abandon it, like Italy.”\(^{103}\) On 5 October, the Allied representatives asked for their passports and left Sofia, while the Serbian envoy followed the next day. On 11 October, Bulgaria attacked Serbia. By December, Serbia was crushed and the Central Powers claimed a major victory in the Balkans. The deadlock that had lasted more than a year had been broken as Bulgaria moved to fulfill its national goals.

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\(^{101}\) *The Times* (London), 3 October 1915.


\(^{103}\) *Berliner Tageblatt*, 5 October 1915.
Epilogue

The Success of the Central Powers and the Failure of the Allies

In October 1915, Bulgaria became the first of the neutral Balkan states to enter the war, doing so on the side of the Central Powers. The effect was immediate and pronounced. Not only was Bulgaria’s entry a diplomatic setback for the Entente and a boon for Austria and Germany, but it enabled the Central Powers to control an unbroken swathe of territory from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf.\(^1\) By the end of 1915, Serbia was defeated, Russian was driven back, and the Salonika Front was trapped. Much of the land promised to Sofia in its alliance with the Central Powers was under Bulgarian sway. The national goal of a large Bulgarian state more or less corresponding to the two medieval empires at their height had been achieved, if only for a few years. By the summer of 1918, the Central Powers, so close to victory three years earlier, suffered a series of reversals that culminated in their defeat. With the signing Treaty of Neuilly on 27 November 1919, Bulgaria endured another humiliating defeat, one even worse than the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913. This seems to suggest that Prime Minister Radoslavov and Tsar Ferdinand had erred in joining the Central Powers, but given the diplomatic situation at the time, they acted in what they perceived to be their country’s best interests.

Since 1878, when Bulgaria was granted autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, Sofia had followed a distinct national policy of uniting all Bulgarians, claiming the land that belonged to it historically and ethnographically. The generous terms of the Treaty of San Stefano had brought this about, but the Treaty of Berlin, engineered by Germany’s

\(^1\) Albrecht-Carrié, *Diplomatic History*, p. 341.
“honest broker,” Otto von Bismarck, overturned them. As a result, Bulgaria spent the
next forty years trying to rectify what it believed to be a major injustice. It took a step
forward in 1908 when it gained its independence, and came tantalizingly close to its goals
after the First Balkan War. Sofia grew too powerful for its allies, however, and lost much
of its new territory in 1913 in the Treaty of Bucharest. In order to restore what had been
taken away, Bulgaria sought to undermine this agreement.

As the European powers moved closer to war in 1914, Radoslavov used the
Bulgarian loan issue to showcase Bulgaria’s strategic importance and achieved a victory
that was only a prelude to his greatest challenge, Bulgaria’s role in World War I. In
August 1914, Radoslavov believed, “it seemed, that because of the situation created by
the general war, the most propitious and useful thing I could do for the Motherland was
to rectify the political errors of predecessors and serve the true interest of the Bulgarian
people with all cleverness and skill.”2 Tsar Ferdinand realized that, “as both warring
sides recognized the great injustice which was inflicted upon Bulgaria with the dastardly
business of Macedonia, and agreed that the greater part of Macedonia needs to belong to
Bulgaria,” Sofia could take a major step forward in restoring San Stefano Bulgaria.3

The diplomatic negotiations that followed demonstrated Radoslavov’s skills at
their highest level. Step by step, he played both alliance groups off each other, never
promising anything more than he had to, while garnering guarantees of more and more
territory. The protraction of the war aided him greatly, as both sides grew increasingly

3 Ferdinand 54-8 1915, “Manifest na Bulgarskite narod,” 1 October 1915 OS, as quoted in Hall, Bulgaria’s Road, p. 307.
desperate for Bulgaria’s assistance. As 1915 rolled on, Radoslavov flitted between the Allied and Central Powers as each looked to be close to victory; all the while, he pushed for more land until both sides promised what he wanted. While the Bulgarian prime minister hoped this would be the price for neutrality, he had to make a military commitment in order to secure Sofia’s desiderata. The Central Powers made the better offer, and by September 1915, appeared to be on the verge of victory. Once again, Bulgaria went to war for the sake of its national ambitions. Radoslavov played his hand nearly perfectly in securing this diplomatic victory, but the efforts, successes and failures of the Central and Allied Powers played a major role in shaping Bulgaria’s decision.

The lack of unity and clear course of action in persuading Bulgaria minimized the Allies’ effectiveness in their negotiations. Each time it appeared it was ready to take the next step, one member would object, hindering the Entente’s progress. This was particularly true of Britain, whose policy was beset by muddled approaches, indecision, and repeated setbacks. Grey and Asquith were too sensitive to Serbian sensibilities, refusing to ask too much of Niš until it was nearly too late. Pašić used these sentiments to his advantage, steadfastly refusing to make the concessions necessary to draw Bulgaria into the war. Hesitancy when opportunities did present themselves further inhibited the Entente’s efforts. Over the course of 1914-1915, Greece, Serbia and Romania either reluctantly agreed to cede territory that had been off-limits, expressed a willingness to join the Allies, or both, but the Entente failed to take advantage.

The final hindrance to the Allies, however, was their lack of military success. While having some initial good fortune with the Dardanelles Campaign and in repelling
the Austrian attack on Serbia, by the summer of 1915, the Entente had suffered a series of reversals that made the prospect of victory seem unlikely. Even the entry of Italy into the war in May 1915 failed to change things, as Rome failed to make headway in its attack on Austria. Coupled with the inability to produce an agreeable, compelling offer, the failure to style themselves as the eventual victor was the final nail in Allies’ coffin. J. D. Bourchier wrote that Ferdinand and Radoslavov “believed Germany was going to win and that if they were not with her they would lose Macedonia. The miserable blunders of [British] diplomacy no doubt confirmed this impression.”

Near the end of 1915, Lloyd George addressed Parliament and his words perhaps best capture the Entente’s failure:

> Ah! Fatal words of this war! Too late in moving here! Too late in arriving there! Too late in coming to this decision! Too late in starting with enterprises! Too late in preparing! In this war the footsteps of Allied forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of “Too Late;” and unless we quicken our movements damnation will fall on the cause for which so much gallant blood has flowed.

Vienna and Berlin also endured problems in securing Sofia. Military setbacks in 1914 did little to inspire confidence in their strength. Turkey’s entrance, however, was a major boon, as it demonstrated the Central Powers’ potential for success in the east. By May 1915, the Central Powers seemed to be on the verge of defeat, but as the summer wore on, Germany, Austria and Turkey won a series of important victories, dramatically reversing their fortunes and providing the final push to win over Bulgaria.

Nevertheless, a host of other factors also brought Sofia and the *Mittelmächte* together. Unlike the Allies, Berlin and Vienna remained focused in their bid to secure

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4 J. D. Bourchier, letter to *The Times* (London), 15 November 1915.
Bulgaria and continued to act in concert throughout this process. Berchtold, Burián, and Jagow constantly exchanged ideas that would be to the mutual benefit of their countries. Even when Austria balked at the promise of so much land in the final negotiations, it ultimately fell in line with its ally. Most importantly, the Central Powers displayed the *force majeure* necessary to compel its Balkan ally to make territorial concessions. While Turkey did not promise exactly what Radoslavov desired, he knew Germany and Austria would guarantee that land, making it clear that the Central Powers were serious about having Bulgaria as an ally.

Indeed, the territory the Central Powers offered was the tipping point in securing Sofia. While both the Allies and the Central Powers had made strong offers, the latter was able to grant more territory faster. As much as it desired Thrace, Kavalla and the southern Dobrudja, Bulgaria’s true desire was Macedonia. By the summer of 1915, Berlin was so desperate for Bulgarian aid that it was willing to offer *all* of Macedonia for *immediate* occupation, something Serbia had refused without compensation elsewhere.

In September 1915 Sofia allied itself with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Radoslavov had bargained long and hard, and Bulgaria contributed its fair share in exchange for the concessions it was promised. Although Sofia sold its services to the side that granted the most land, there was little else it could do, as Germany and its allies also offered the promise of victory. Radoslavov and Ferdinand believed the Central Powers would be able to deliver on their assurances and restore Bulgaria’s national fortunes. Sofia took a calculated gamble, but, in the end, it failed to pay off, and San Stefano Bulgaria once again became nothing more than a dream for future generations.
Appendix I
The Balkans Following the Second Balkan War, 1913

Appendix II

THE TURKISH-BULGARIAN BORDER AGREEMENT OF 1915

Source: Silberstein, Troubled Alliance, p. 125.
Appendix III
Final Offer of Territory to Bulgaria by the Entente, 1915

Source: Napier, Experiences of a Military Attaché, Map Insert.
Appendix IV

Areas promised to Bulgaria, 1915

Source: Silberstein, Troubled Alliance, p. 175.
# Appendix V
## Alternative Names of Places Mentioned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name As It Appears Herein</th>
<th>Variation(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Struma River</td>
<td>Strymónas (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vardar River</td>
<td>Axios (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrianople</td>
<td>Edirne (Turkish), Odrin (Bulgarian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enos</td>
<td>Enez (Turkish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midia</td>
<td>Kiyiköy/Midye (Turkish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk-Kilisse</td>
<td>Kirkkilisse/Kirklareli (Turkish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lozengrad (Bulgarian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silistria</td>
<td>Silistra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salonika</td>
<td>Thessaloniki (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdjali</td>
<td>Kardzhali (Bulgarian alternative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedeagach</td>
<td>Alexandroupoli (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kavalla</td>
<td>Kavala (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritsa River</td>
<td>Evros (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porto Lagos</td>
<td>Lagos/Porto Lago (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monastir</td>
<td>Bitola, Manastir (Turkish)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ochrida</td>
<td>Ohrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibra</td>
<td>Debar (Macedonian, Serbian, Bulgarian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Ohrid</td>
<td>Lake Ochrid(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seres</td>
<td>Sérres (Greek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemberg</td>
<td>Lviv (Ukrainian), Lwów (Polish)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Morava River  March (German), Morva (Hungarian)
Karaagach       Karagatch, Karaağaç (Turkish)

n.b. Where appropriate, the language in which the name variation occurs is given in parentheses. If no designation is indicated, the name that appears is a variation of the named used in this thesis and/or its modern equivalent.
Appendix VI
The Treaty of Alliance with Bulgaria

Article 1. The High Contracting Parties promise mutual peace and friendship and to enter no alliance or agreement directed against the other.

They agree to follow a policy of friendship and to offer aid in their spheres of interest.

Article 2. Germany [Austria-Hungary] guarantees the defense of Bulgarian political independence and territorial integrity against all attack which could result without provocation on the side of the Bulgarian government.

Should Germany [Austria-Hungary] be attacked by a neighboring state of Bulgaria, Bulgaria is obligated to take action against this state as soon as this is demanded of it.

Article 3. This alliance remains in force until 31 December 1920; if it has not been modified six months before it expires it will remain in being for an additional year and will continue to be renewed yearly so long as notice is not given.

Article 4. This alliance shall remain secret until a new understanding is reached.

Article 5. This treaty will be ratified and the ratifications exchanged in Sofia eight days, at the latest, after signature.

Secret Annex

1. Germany [Austria-Hungary] guarantees Bulgaria the acquisition and annexation of the following territories:

   a. Present-day Serbian-Macedonia, including the so-called contested and uncontested zones, as delineated by the Serb-Bulgarian Alliance of 29 February (13 March) 1912 and by the map accompanying this treaty.

   b. Serbian territory east of the following line: the Morava river from where it joins the Danube to a point where the Bulgarian Morava and Serbian Morava join, following the watershed of both these rivers, running through the ridge of Tschernagora, the Katchanik Pass, the ridge of Schar-Planina, until reaching the frontier of San Stefano Bulgaria. The borderline is shown on the accompanying map and constitutes an inseparable part of the agreement.

2. In the case where Romania, during the present conflict, attacks Bulgaria, its allies, or Turkey, without any provocation on the part of Bulgaria, Germany [Austria-Hungary] agrees that Bulgaria will annex the area ceded to Romania by the Treaty of
Bucharest, and to a rectification of the Bulgarian-Romanian border as delimited by the Treaty of Berlin.

3. In the case where Greece, in the course of the present war, attacks Bulgaria, its allies, or Turkey, without any provocation on the part of Bulgaria, Germany [Austria-Hungary] agrees to Bulgarian annexation of the area ceded to Greece by the Treaty of Bucharest.

4. Both of the concluding parties reserve the right of further agreements with respect to conclusion of peace.

5. Germany and Austria-Hungary mutually bind themselves to guarantee the Bulgarian government a war loan of 200 million francs, which shall be paid in four installments:

   a. the first installment of 50 million francs on the day of mobilization.
   b. The second 50 million a month later.
   c. The third 50 million two months later
   d. The fourth 50 million three months after the day of mobilization.

The detail of this loan shall be set by an agreement between the finance authorities.

If the war lasts longer than four months, Germany and Austria guarantee Bulgaria a new supplementary loan, if such proves necessary, and after previous agreement.

6. This agreement shall come into force together with the military convention.¹

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About the Author

Born 3 October 1983, Matthew Allison Yokell grew up in Atkinson, New Hampshire, with his parents, Marshall, III, and Patricia, as well as his sister, Mellissa, and his identical twin brother, Marshall, IV. Matthew attended independent schools in the New England area, until his matriculation as a University Scholar at the University of Richmond in 2001. In 2005, he took his Bachelor of Arts degree in History, Latin, and Ancient Greek. In 2007, he earned a Master of Arts degree in Classical Studies from Vanderbilt University, where he was a William S. Rankin Fellow and taught several courses. In 2006, a fellowship from the Rankin Foundation enabled him to participate in a program on the history of Bulgaria. In 2007, Matthew returned to the University of Richmond, taking his Master of Arts in History with a concentration in European diplomatic history and Central Europe in 2010. In 2009, he enrolled in the doctoral program in history at Texas A&M University as a Graduate Alumni Fellow.