

NEWSPAPER *POLITIKA* ON THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE KINGDOMS OF SERBIA AND BULGARIA IN 1904-1905

Abstract: *A considerable amount of the historical material has been preserved for the study of the political relations of the Balkan countries in the first two decades of the 20th century. We are acquainted with the details of these relations based on the documents of the governments of the Balkan countries or the governments of the great powers, the correspondence of ministers, official notes, decisions and commands of officers, the reports of Serbian and foreign newspapers, etc. The subject of this paper is the course and intensity of political and economic relations between the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Bulgaria during 1904 and 1905. This paper resulted from the analysis of newspaper articles and reports published in the daily newspaper Politika, but also from archival materials and relevant literature. The paper also contains the analysis of the media response related to the signing of the Serbian-Bulgarian Alliance Agreement in 1904, as well as the signing of the Customs Alliance Agreement in 1905 between Belgrade and Sofia. The Macedonian issue, as a topic that placed emphasis on the relations between the two neighbors, is also an inevitable part of the research corpus of this paper.*

Key Words: *Politika, Serbia, Bulgaria, the Customs Agreement, Macedonia*

1. Introduction

After Peter I became the monarch of the Kingdom of Serbia and all dynastic upheavals, the development of the political press also continued. During 1904, there were thirteen daily newspapers published in Belgrade, the latest of which was *Politika*. Its existence was a turning point for Serbian journalism because with its objectivity, informativeness and diversity this newspaper rose above other Belgrade newspapers. The use of new technologies was of special importance since the editorial staff of *Politika* started using the telegraph as a means of obtaining information. Unlike *Politika*, the editorial offices of other daily newspapers were still using the translation of foreign press when informing the public, which was the main reason why they were falling behind the news published in *Politika*. Regarding the daily political conflicts and struggles in Serbia, *Politika* remained neutral which contributed to the objectivity of information. However, in terms of national politics it was often determined and blunt which is why on May 1, 1906, its sale was banned on the territory of Austria-Hungary.

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The daily newspaper *Politika* was founded and owned by Vladislav Ribnikar³. The daily *Politika* was published every working day. Political topics and information were covered in the following sections: *Telegrams, Foreign Affairs, Feature Article, Short News, from our Region, the Last Telegram*. Although the data published in these sections do not represent the primary historical source, their importance lies in the further clarification of the difficulties in relations between the two countries, Serbia and Bulgaria, which were indisputable and crucial. By analyzing the reports from *Politika*, we obtained a clearer and more complete picture of the events in the Balkans at the beginning of the 20th century (Бјелица, Јевтовић 2006: 307-308).

2. The Newspaper *Politika* on Serbian-Bulgarian Relations during 1904-1905

After the unsuccessful Ilinden Uprising and the adoption of the Mürzsteg Reform Program, the position of the revolutionists-supremacists was extremely difficult and the further implementation of the pro-Bulgarian national ideas on the territory of the Bitola and Salonica Vilayet was seriously endangered. It was a time of the gradual weakening of the presence of Bulgarian ideas in the mentioned provinces (Екмечић 1989: 629). The ruling circles of the Balkan countries, including Serbia and Greece, as well as the great powers such as Russia and Austria-Hungary, demanded the calming of the situation caused by the armed uprising and the establishment of order and peace in the country. The High Porte was convinced that the main support for the insurgents came from Bulgaria, which was the cause of increasingly conspicuous conflict between Sofia and Constantinople, after the suppression of the Ilinden Uprising (Pandevski 1980: 28). Almost one year after the uprising, along with the pressure from the foreign forces, this conflict was resolved by signing the Bulgarian-Turkish agreement on April 8, 1904, about which the daily *Politika*⁴ reported minutely in the *Foreign Affairs* section. The agreement obliged the Principality of Bulgaria to prevent the formation of the Komitas gangs, punish all rebels who sought refuge on its territory after the suppression of the uprising and prevent the import of explosives and similar products into Turkish provinces, etc. On the other hand, the Porte pledged to grant an amnesty to participants of the armed uprising, to help financially the renovation of burned houses and properties, to introduce tax relief for the war-affected population, as well as to carry out the

³ Vladislav Ribnikar was born in 1871 in Trstenik as the eldest son of Dr. Franjo Ribnikar and Milica, b. Srnčić. He was educated in Jagodina and Belgrade. He studied at the Department of History and Philology at the Faculty of Philosophy, the Great School in Belgrade. He graduated in 1892, after which he left the country and continued his studies in Germany and France. After the May Coup in 1903, he returned to Serbia. At the beginning of 1904, he founded the daily newspaper *Politika* and was its first editor. He participated in the defense of the country at the beginning of the First World War, where he died on September 1, 1914 on the battle front in Western Serbia.

⁴ All dates from the issues of *Politika* or information taken from its newspaper articles that we quote are according to the Julian calendar.

reforms⁵ adopted by the Turkish government in the agreement with Austria-Hungary and Turkey (the Mürzsteg Reform Program). The agreement reached between Bulgaria and Turkey was accepted neither in Sofia nor in Constantinople. Both sides had only partially complied with its regulations. However, in the *Telegram* section, *Politika* reported on the implementation of the agreement and the amnesty, which included over a thousand Bulgarians⁶. Nevertheless, the right wing of the IMRO regarded the agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey as an act passed due to the inability of Bulgaria to fight war against Turkey at a given moment. According to them, Bulgaria had agreed to sign such an act because otherwise Bulgaria-oriented propaganda institutions in Macedonia would be in danger. The intention to protect these institutions from the attacks of the Turkish authorities and the desire to bring the Thracian and Macedonian refugees back to the territory of the Bitola and Salonica Vilayet influenced Bulgaria to reach the agreement (Pandevski 1980: 31-32). Such a perception of the agreement by the pro-Bulgarian revolutionaries meant that their struggle in Macedonia was not over, but only temporarily postponed. In the middle of 1904, the Komitas became active again.

In order to protect their people from the Komitas gangs and the pro-Bulgarian element, both Serbs and Greeks began forming and arming their troops. In its issue, published on March 2, 1904, *Politika* brought an article on the Greek organization of the "Macedonian anti-Bulgarian Committee", whose purpose was to create an internal organization of Macedonian Greeks (according to the Sofia model), which would be supported by the entire Greek population. In the declaration of this committee, all "Hellenic patriots" were invited to join the orders of the Komitas⁷. As for Belgrade, it did not immediately take part in organizing and arming Serbian troops. The troops were formed by the local Serbian population from the Kumanovo, Skopje, Kičevo, Ohrid and Kratovo districts, since it suffered the most from the Exarchate's agents. The eternal suffering of the Serbian population in the Vilayets of Salonica and Bitola lead to the growing support of Serbia and its people for the formed troops (Јовановић 1938: 157).

During 1904, the IMRO continued its revolutionary activities and its troops had brutally applied the policy of the bulgarization of Macedonia. In such cases, the Serbian villages were often targeted and attacked by the pro-Bulgarian troop leaders. Nevertheless, the Serbian side wanted a compromise in resolving the Macedonian issue and offered the Bulgarians the division of the spheres of interest in Macedonia (Јовановић 1938: 154). The essence of the Serbian-Bulgarian relations on the threshold of the 20th century lay in the question of the independence of the Balkans from the great powers and Turkey. Whether the political-territorial problem of Macedonia would be solved by the external European forces or by the internal Balkan forces depended only on the Balkan countries which played the crucial role. The Bulgarian government wanted to ensure autonomy to Macedonia with its

⁵ Политика, 30. март 1904, бр. 77, 2, Турско-бугарски споразум.

⁶ Политика, 8. април 1904, бр 86, 1, Амнестија Бугара.

⁷ Политика, 3. март 1904, бр. 52, 1, Грци се мигоље.

activities, after which it would take the opportunity and work on its annexation to the Principality, as was the case with Eastern Rumelia. However, Serbia was against such a scenario and emphasized its right to the Old Serbia territory, Northern and northwestern Macedonia. Regardless of the different attitudes, both Belgrade and Sofia were aware that the internationalization of the Macedonian issue opened the possibility for the territory of Macedonia to become the prey of Russian, or more likely, Austrian-Hungarian interests. In addition, the Bulgarian government accepted the conclusion of a secret agreement with Serbia, which signified the recognition of Serbian interests in Macedonia and the inseparability of resolving the issues of Macedonia and Old Serbia. In March 1904, two treaties were signed, the first being a secret “alliance treaty” and the latter being a public, “friendly treaty” concerning the economic cooperation (Ђорђевић 1995: 125).

The Serbian-Bulgarian agreement stated, “in the event that, due to internal and external difficulties, that would emerge for Turkey, the maintenance of the status quo of the Balkan Peninsula is brought into question – the contracting party that is the first to become firmly convinced of starting an armed operation, will address the other party with a proposition, after which the other party is obliged to begin an exchange of views and, in the case of disagreeing with its ally, give a detailed explanation.” As it was stated in the agreement, if a mutual solution could not be reached, both contracting parties had to seek the opinion of Russia, which would be mandatory for them. Also, this document provided a picture of the territorial divisions of interest in Macedonia. According to the document, Serbia and Bulgaria agreed that the border of the spheres of interest should be the line starting from the Turkish-Bulgarian border of Golem Vrh (north of Kriva Palanka) and extending in the south-west direction to Lake Ohrid unless “His Imperial Majesty the Russian Tsar is asked to be the Supreme Arbitrator on the matter and decide in favor of that line⁸.” After reaching the agreement in 1904, the mutual visits of Prince Ferdinand to Serbia and King Peter I to Bulgaria followed. The daily *Politika* wrote about the visit of the Bulgarian Prince to Niš in May, 1904, as one of the most significant events in the new history of Serbian and Bulgarian people and emphasized: “*After the former enmity, after aimless journeys, there is a hardly found, but the right path, that both Serbian and Bulgarian people should follow, if we want to preserve what we intend to and to get what we need to get*”⁹. It is clear that under the last implication the territory of Macedonia was stressed, which should have been divided into the spheres of interest according to the intercession of Belgrade. However, in the same issue, in the *Daily News* section, *Politika* reported on the impressions of the press in Vienna concerning the meeting of the two monarchs, where it said that the opposing interests of Serbia and Bulgaria on the Macedonian issue would never ensure a sincere agreement between Belgrade and Sofia.¹⁰ King Peter visited Sofia in October, 1904, and the visit caused a sharp polemic

⁸ Знаменита документа за историју српског народа 1538 – 1918, приредили: Д. Микавица, В. Гавриловић, Г. Васин, Нови Сад 2007, док. бр 69, стр. 344-346.

⁹ Политика, 2. мај 1904, бр. 110, 1, Састанак владара.

¹⁰ Политика, 2. мај 1904, бр. 110, 2, Бечки листови о нишком састанку.

both in the press of Sofia and Belgrade. The issue of *Politika*, published on October 2, 1904, after weekly speculations of the king's cancellation of the visit to Bulgaria, reported: "King travelling to Sofia."; "As it has been officially confirmed this morning, after numerous denials, the King will visit Sofia."¹¹

It should be emphasized that since the visit of Prince Ferdinand to Niš until October 1904, horrible crimes took place on the Macedonian territory, despite the mutual agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria. One of those crimes that preceded the King's visit to Sofia was the massacre of the Serbian population in the village of Kokošinj committed by the Bulgarian Komitas. The Belgrade *Samouprava* expressed the opinion that the crime could not have been committed by revolutionaries, but by "revolutionary marauders to whom nothing is sacred". Bulgarian newspapers reported precisely what had earlier been written in Serbian newspapers, which only complicated the situation (Јовановић 1938: 153).

In spite of that, the Serbian monarch stayed in Sofia. After his return, the Belgrade press reported that the Bulgarian government did everything in its power to ensure that the reception was successful and sumptuous, while the citizens of Sofia remained reserved on the matter of the visit of the Serbian king.¹² Such an atmosphere was not surprising if we considered the reputation the former Bulgarian government had among its people, but also the permanent international conflicts in the Vilayets of Bitola and Salonica. These chaotic conflicts were probably best illustrated in the article in *Politika* published on November 16, 1904, under the title *The Greek Komitas*. In the introductory part of the article it was written: "a man is no longer able to say with certainty which one will join the other in order to attack their opponent. In Prilep and Kičevo, the Greek unites with the Bulgarian (and vice versa) against the Serb; here in Bitola, the Bulgarians and the Romanians against the Greeks; the Greeks and the Turks against others everywhere. It must be stated with regret that such narrow-mindedness and exclusivity have dominated that nobody notices the important interests of the Christian population anymore, which so far have expected salvation from its compatriots in vain¹³." That was the real picture of Macedonia in 1904, which was further supported by the text in *Politika* under the title *The Balkan War*, which stated that Bulgarians were constantly sending their troops who were fighting against the Turkish army, plundering Turkish villages and killing everything that was not Bulgarian. Their actions provoked the rest of the population and caused chaos in the provinces for which Turkey was responsible before Europe. The text emphasized the following: "No peace. No stop. Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian troops are crushing over each other, but all of them should be prosecuted by the Turkish army. Trade stagnated. Fear on all sides."¹⁴ This was the description of the European part of the Ottoman Empire after 1904.

¹¹ Политика, 2. октобар 1904, бр. 261, 2, Краљ иде у Софију.

¹² Политика, 21. октобар 1904, бр. 280, 1, После Софије.

¹³ Политика, 16. новембар 1904, бр. 305, 2, Грчке комите.

¹⁴ Политика, 12. август 1905, бр. 568, 1, Рат на Балкану.

Although the Serbian government in 1903 was not ready to take an active part in the conflicts of the Komitas gangs in Macedonia, fearing that it would provoke the intervention of the great powers, one year later the situation changed (Јовановић 1998: 195). Due to the circumstances, the Serbian population had to organize in order to resist the Bulgarians, Arnauts and other armed gangs. According to the historian Jovan Hadži Vasiljević, the first Serbian troop¹⁵ dispatched by the Central Committee from Belgrade, which arrived on the territory of the Ottoman Empire in May, 1904, was the troop of Anđelko Aleksić. On the other hand, Aleksa Jovanović believed that the Serbian Chetnik action began in April, 1904, when the commander Micko Krstić became the leader of the first troop in Poreč (Вучетић 2006: 362-363). Furthermore, the beginning of 1904 marked the formation of an organized defense of the Serbian national corpus from suffering and assimilation on the territory of the Bitola, Salonica and Kosovo Vilayets. It was organized by the National Committee in Belgrade, the committee in Vranje and sub-committees in Leskovac and Niš. Over time, the government in Belgrade began to support the actions of Serbian troops, especially the organization “the Serbian defense” which was created on the field in the areas of Skopje and Bitola.

“The Serbian defense” was operated by the two boards; one was located in Macedonia, the other was on the territory of Old Serbia. The Mountain Headquarters, in charge of the commands over the troops, classified its territorial organization according to the system of committees and subcommittees created in boroughs. In the early stages, the troops included only local residents, but they quickly began to form in Serbia, as well (Ђорђевић 1995: 124). Their presence, as well as the arrival of the Greek armed troops had significantly reduced the Bulgarian influence in Macedonia.

In the introductory text of *Politika*, published on August 4, 1905, the editorial office of this newspaper gave a comprehensive analysis of the Serbian and Bulgarian positions during the first years of the 20th century, in relation to the Macedonian issue. An extensive article spoke about the unlikely chances of a new uprising in Macedonia by the Bulgarian revolutionaries, since their positions weakened after the failed Ilinden uprising. In addition, the leaders of the pro-Bulgarian forces in Macedonia were also aware of that, but were guided by the opinion that the world should be misled. According to that issue of *Politika*, the only thing acknowledged in relation to Bulgarians was that, until the dynastic changes in Serbia and the arrival of Karađorđević, they had better positions in Macedonia than the Serbs. They used the Exarchate firstly as a way of struggle against the Patriarchate, then it very quickly turned into a means of fighting for the realization of the Great Bulgarian ideas and the assimilation of the non-Bulgarian population. It was acknowledged that shortly before the Serbs, they started the national and educational work in the Vilayets of Salonica and Bitola, as well as that their influence was powerful in terms of creating

¹⁵ The Serbian Chetnik Organization was formed on a private initiative in 1903. Until 1905, the Serbian government refused to publicly support the guerilla type of struggle for the freedom of Serbian people in Turkey. However, in Bulgarian and Serbian literature the existence of Serbian troops in some parts of Old Serbia and Macedonia is mentioned as early as in 1899 and 1900. For more information on the mentioned troops see (Јагодић 2012: 111-129).

cultural and political opportunities in those areas. However, after 1903, the positions of the Bulgarians changed.¹⁶ Fyodor Uspensky made similar observations about the Serbian-Bulgarian relations in Macedonia and believed that the leading role on the Balkan Peninsula should belong to both Serbia and Bulgaria. According to Uspensky, the Bulgarians had already understood that before Serbia, so they used their skillful propaganda within the purview of the Exarchate in Constantinople in order to expand the idea of the Bulgarian political influence in Macedonia. Shortly afterwards, the Serbian people began to do the work and encountered the Bulgarian influence. Nevertheless, they succeeded in attracting a great number of adherents and in many cities and villages they established separate parishes of “patriarchists” as opposed to “exarchists”, so the Serbian anti-Bulgarian activity was taking place successfully (Успенски 2003: 208,209). One of the most important moments in the strengthening of the anti-Bulgarian activity was the arrival of the Metropolitan Firmilijan to the head of the Metropolitanate of Skopje, since he was of Serbian descent, which particularly upset the pro-Bulgarian forces in Macedonia. Moreover, with the support of Saint Petersburg and with his own efforts, the Serbian government managed to achieve his consecration in 1902. This event had negative consequences on the development of the Russian-Bulgarian cooperation, while for Serbian people it represented a positive move in resolving the Macedonian issue.¹⁷

Politika reported the following on the weakening of the pro-Bulgarian positions in Macedonia and the strengthening of Serbian positions: “In the year of 1904 everything has turned upside down. In the organization there is a split, a disorder. Open conflicts between both organizations. People are disappointed and deceived. The Committee is taking drastic actions: all prominent people who are not supporting Bulgarian ideas are being removed. Brutality over their brothers who do not share the same beliefs is worse than that done by the Turks themselves. In the end, everything erupted! Both Serbs and Greeks stand up to defend themselves and protect the monotheistic enemy. Our people in this area take weapons to protect themselves from the freedom’s enemy and defend their own rights. In less than a year, more has been done with weapons than with the church and school for decades. In a short time, the Bulgarians were driven off to their natural borders. Our people have secured their spheres of interest, which is undoubtedly their right and every attempt of Bulgarians to regain what they lost will be in vain. Through the fault of their own, they missed a convenient moment for their interests. The good old days are no longer possible. What they did not accept in the past, they will have to do now by force: the spheres of our and their interest are secured and determined. With the same right they had, we also lay claim to Macedonia. Like them, we educated our people with the help of the church and school. Like them, we sacrificed our lives and for centuries fought on the place that once had been the land soaked with our sons’ blood.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Политика, 4. август 1905, бр. 560, 1, Македонија.

¹⁷ Државен архив на Република Македонија, Фонд: Министерство за надворешни работи на Велика Британија – Foreign Office, Микрофилм – 418, Public Record Office Foreign Office 78/5191.

¹⁸ Политика, 4. август 1905, бр. 560, 1, Македонија.

Such a comprehensive report of *Politika* was inspired by the actions and successes of Serbian troops in Macedonia during 1904 and 1905, which, through their active work, improved the influence of the Kingdom of Serbia in those areas. As far as the conflicts between Serbian Chetniks and Turks were concerned, there was a lot of information. For instance, the troop of Anđelko Aleksić confronted the Turkish forces on the river Pčinja, near the village of Četirac. Also, the troop of Arsa Gavrilović Gostivarac crossed the border and together with the Bulgarian Komitas, under the command of Pushkarev, clashed with the Turks near Djuriški Manastir. The Captain Veselinović's troop of 25 people clashed with the Turks near Tabanovac in the Kumanovo District (Јовановић 1938: 168-169). A Serbian troop of about 100 people fought the Turkish army on the Čelopek plateau, on April 16. In that battle, the Chetniks caused heavy losses to Turkish troops led by reform officers and assisted by Arnauts. The number of casualties was over 200, of both Turks and Arnauts (Илић 2006: 55).

The number of similar troops who succeeded in crossing the Serbian-Turkish border was continually growing. The Serbian consul in Skopje, Mihajlo Ristić, was initially surprised to hear about the incursions of Serbian troops. In addition, he received the news that the Chetniks were organized by the doctor Milorad Gođevac, who sent and followed them to Vranje, where they were taken over by Captain Živojin Rafailović. They were transported from the interior of Serbia to Vranjska Banja, by rail, in third class wagons with closed windows. In Vranje, they received weapons, equipment and money, and from that place, led by the retired officers, they were transported to the territory of Turkey. According to Ristić, the Serbian people in Macedonia needed the support of the armed troops that would protect them, but he believed that troops had to be composed of Serbs, the residents in Turkey. In addition, he justified such an attitude with the opinion that the local population is better acquainted with the situation in Turkey than the volunteers from Serbia, as well as that the same population was constantly near their homes, which represented an important factor in removing the pressure and attacks by the Bulgarian Komitas. On the other hand, he criticized the public and open way of conducting the Chetnik action and believed that it could jeopardize the position of Belgrade. On the work of Živojin Rafailović, Ristić indicated the following: "his work is harmful because it has been undertaken too late, because the mechanics is not worth a dime, it is led by people who, if not at all, have little knowledge about these matters; that it is unforgivably leaked, open and public, that every moment is revealed and known even before the person who should be the only one informed about it, which happens always after the Turkish consuls in Vranje and Niš. He is dangerous because he can imperil the entire position of the Kingdom of Serbia concerning the reforms in Turkey; he will instigate Muslims to take measures against our group which will be nothing in comparison to what our people have experienced so far." At the end of his report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Serbia, Ristić expressed the opinion that conducting the foreign policy of Serbia should remain in the domain of the aforementioned ministry and should not involve patriotic associations.¹⁹

¹⁹ Архив Србије, Министарство иностраних дела, Просветно-политичко одељење, 1903, У/1, бр. 3641, ПП. број 1242, Генерални конзулат Краљевине Србије, Скопље – МИД-у, 26. VIII/8. IX 1903; Документи о спољној политици Краљевине Србије 1903-1914, књ. I/1, 29.мај/11.јун 1903-

During 1905, despite the incursions and conflicts of the Komitas bands on the territories of the Ottoman Empire, there was an economic connection between Serbia and Bulgaria. The political agreement of 1904, was completed by the Customs Alliance Agreement one year later, due to the increasing difficulties and the policy of agrarian protectionism of the great industrial powers. This was not the only case when small agrarian exporters united in order to reduce the discrepancy of their forces towards the great powers; the association meant the defense of its economic field and its expansion. When it comes to Serbia, its interest in the customs agreement was the release from the economic tutorship of Austria-Hungary. However, Bulgaria wanted the liberation from the Turkish trade deals that prevented its independence in the field of trade policy. Such ambitions encouraged the two sides to conclude the agreement on customs alliance, which lay the foundation for a mutual economic field. According to the agreement, domestic goods, whether Serbian or Bulgarian, were exempted from the custom fees in mutual traffic, while special custom fees and trade agreements were kept for foreign countries. Until 1917, the signatories had a deadline to coordinate the differences in monetary, railway, custom and legal issues in order to prepare the ground for the conclusion of the customs alliance (Ђорђевић 1995: 125-126). What was particularly important about this agreement was that it was concluded secretly, in order to avoid endangering the relation between Serbia and the Dual Monarchy, because it directly disrupted the principle of the greatest economic privilege that Austria-Hungary believed to have in Serbia. Prior to signing the agreement on July 9, 1905, the Serbian government sent a note to Sofia and emphasized that they considered they were not obliged to respect the content of the document if it caused the non-ratification of Serbia's agreement with other countries (Ђорђевић 1962: 124-125). Such an attitude of the Serbian government indicated that Belgrade was concerned that the agreement with Bulgaria could jeopardize its economic interests, which were mainly achieved through trade and export on the territory of the Dual monarchy.

Due to the difficulties it encountered in trading with Turkey, the Bulgarian government wanted to strengthen the agreement reached with Serbia. Although Serbia insisted on the secrecy of this document, in December, 1905, Bulgaria submitted the draft agreement to the Parliament for ratification. Moreover, the news quickly spread across Europe and caused a strong reaction in Austria-Hungary, which cooled relations between Belgrade and Vienna. Furthermore, when the Customs War broke out, Serbia had to find new markets for the export of goods and the survival of its own economy (Ђорђевић 1962: 141). The viewpoint of the authors of *The History of Bulgaria* was interesting, since it was believed that the idea of the Serbian-Bulgarian customs alliance was not realized because Austria-Hungary disliked it and interpreted the economic cooperation between Serbia and Bulgaria as the beginning of a new cultural and political integration of the Balkan countries in which even the Macedonian issue could no longer be regarded as a problem (Попов, Божилов 2008: 275).

The daily *Politika* reported on the events in December, 1905. In the introductory text under the title *The Customs War*, published on December 20th, it wrote that the news of the Bulgarian government submitting a legal proposal to the National Assembly on the customs alliance with Serbia caused confusion and disturbance in Vienna's official circles. It was surprising because of the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement itself and the fact that it had been concluded in secrecy. Vienna was not used to being uninformed about the situation in the Balkans and that was the main reason why the official circles were surprised by the secrecy of the document. Apart from the criticism coming from the representatives of Austria-Hungary, *Politika* reported on the attitude of the Vienna press that the agreement was a political act directed at the Dual Monarchy and that further negotiations with Serbia had to be suspended until all the details of its economic agreement with Bulgaria were known. Some newspapers only gave an assumption about the meaning of the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement and to what extent it could cause damage to Vienna's economic interests. Also, one of the assumptions was related to the export of livestock. According to it, Bulgarian livestock could be freely imported to Serbia and then further to Austria-Hungary. For that reason, Austria-Hungary could not control the origin of the livestock and, according to the Vienna press, it should neither engage in negotiations with Belgrade nor give Serbia a "veterinary convention". What can be concluded from the introductory part is that if the customs war happened, as threatened by Vienna, Austria-Hungary would suffer much more damage than Serbia, because its industry would be deprived of Serbian raw materials, while Germany and other European countries would take over its previous economic position in Serbia.²⁰

In the *Telegrams* section, a correspondent from Sofia informed the *Politika* editorial office of the details of the ratified Customs Alliance Agreement, notifying that the agreement was titled as "The Customs Alliance Agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria", that it was signed on July 9, 1905 by Serbian and Bulgarian delegates, contained 19 articles and that one protocol explained certain articles of the agreement, one declaration and one note²¹. Under such circumstances, Serbia again found itself in the economic war with Austria-Hungary caused by the secret conclusion of the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement, from which it managed to escape unnoticed. In the years of blockade and the unsuccessful economic-trade relations with Vienna, it began to use new ways for the export of its products. It achieved the railway connection with Thessaloniki and from there placed its goods on the European market, but also used the Danube waterways. Furthermore, it found new partners in Germany, Egypt, France, Russia and England. In this way, it managed to reduce the economic independence of Vienna to a minimum. The custom conflicts between Serbia and Austria-Hungary ended with the signing of a new trade agreement between the opposing parties on July 14, 1910 (Жанин Чалић 2004: 163).

As for Serbian-Bulgarian relations, Belgrade and Sofia contributed to the development of mutual cooperation in the economic and political areas, about which

²⁰ Политика, 20. децембар 1905, бр. 698, 1, Царински рат.

²¹ Политика, 22. децембар 1905, бр. 700, 2, Царински савез између Србије и Бугарске.

Politika reported in detail. Yet, what drew the attention of the public, political elites and the newspapers in both countries were the events in Old Serbia and Macedonia. These territories became the places of frequent armed conflicts of the Komita bands. The actions of armed groups used to be directed at the Turks and they were often motivated by the mutual struggle of Serbian and Bulgarian Chetniks. In such conflicts, the moral code of warfare was rarely respected and threatened to grow into something far more complex.

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ИЗ ПРОШЛОСТИ ПОЛИТИЧКО - ЕКОНОМСКИХ ОДНОСА КРАЉЕВИНА СРБИЈЕ И БУГАРСКЕ 1904/1905. ГОДИНЕ У ЛИСТУ ПОЛИТИКА

Апстракт: За проучавање политичких односа балканских земаља током прве две деценије XX века сачуван је добар део грађе и историјског материјала. О детаљима тих односа знамо на основу докумената влада балканских земаља или влада великих сила, прейиски министара, службених бележака, одлука и команди официра, писања домаће и стране штампе итд. Ток и интензивност политичко-економских односа Краљевине Србије и Краљевине Бугарске током 1904. и 1905. године тема су овог рада. Рад је настао на основу анализе новинских текстова и извештаја објављених у дневном листу Политика, архивске грађе и релевантне литературе. Пажљиво је анализиран медијски одјек политичког односа Српско-бугарског споразума о савезу из 1904. године, као и Уговора о царинском савезу између Београда и Софије од 1905. године. И македонско питање као тема која је интересовала односе двају суседа у наведеном периоду незаобилазан је део истраживачког кориса овог рада.

Кључне речи: Политика, Србија, Бугарска, Царински савез, Македонија