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BULGARIA, FOR OR AGAINST THE ILINDEN UPRISING¹*Vančo Ćorgiev*

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Апстракт

Кон крајот на XIX и почетокот на XX век, Бугарија за реализација на својата македонска политика, иницирала востанички дејствија во Македонија. Во тој контекст двапати (во 1895 и 1902 година), таа го искористила ВМК, кој претставувал организација на македонските емигранти во Бугарија. Од друга страна, кон крајот на 1902 и почетокот на 1903 година, Бугарија, ветувајќи помош, индиректно ја потхранила идејата за востание во Македонија под водство на Тајната македоно-одринска револуционерна организација (ТМОРО), која подолго време, самостојно, морално и материјално се подготвувала за востание. Поради својата македонска политика, Бугарија во 1903 година се соочила со опасност од војна со Османлиската Империја. За избегнување на таквата опасност и враќање на довербата кон Османлиите, Бугарија, најпрво, го забранила опстојувањето на ВМК, а потоа презела чекори за да ја убеди ТМОРО да се откаже од сопствената одлука за востание. Најпосле, откако тоа не успеало, Бугарија повеле директни преговори со Османлиска Империја, притоа, нудејќи ѝ договор за сојуз и пријателство, а како причини за востаничкото движење во Македонија ги посочила ослободителните тенденции на Македонците и слабостите на османлискиот систем.

Клучни зборови: Бугарија, Македонија, Илинденско востание, ТМОРО, 1903.

The Macedonian issue monopolized the foreign policy of the Principality of Bulgaria towards the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX century. All of the Bulgarian governments, as well as the Prince Regnant, Ferdinand, strove to bring about unification of Macedonia with Bulgaria, and accordingly, all Bulgarian political factors had a single strategic objective. Various differences existed only in terms of the means to achieve this, the methods and tactics that were favoured and made use of. These differences are noticeable from one government to another, from the

¹ Статијата е објавена на македонски јазик под наслов „Бугарија, за ‘ или ‘против’ одлуката за востание во Македонија во 1903 година“ во *Зборник на трудови* на Заводот за заштита на спомениците на културата и музеј, Струмица, 2014, 221-231.

government and the Prince Regnant, the coalition partners in the government, the governing and the opposing parties. Some favoured political-diplomatic activity, others – propaganda, others, yet, militarism. Often, all of these were combined and used together. The Macedonian issue in Bulgaria was exploited both as an instrument in the internal, as well as the external politics, while the means to bring this about varied.

Bulgaria often made use of the Macedonian revolutionary movement in order to bring the Macedonian issue to the forefront, at which time the two most well-known Macedonian organizations that were used were: the Supreme Macedonian Committee (SMC), with headquarters in Sofia, and the Secret Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization (SMARO), with headquarters in Thessalonica. The Bulgarian political subjects made constant attempts to control and direct the Macedonian movement in accordance with their interests, and the influence they exerted was much more obvious upon the SMC than the SMARO, which strove to maintain its independence in terms of decision-making and operating.

The first instance where the patriotic feelings of the Macedonian emigrants in Bulgaria became the object of manipulation occurred in the summer of 1895. At this time, the SMC, having obtained discretionary support from official Bulgaria, attempted to provoke an “uprising” in northeast Macedonia. The Bulgarian encouragement of this “uprising provocation” had a specific political background, namely, to gain international recognition of the Prince Regnant, Ferdinand, as well as to gain more advantages for the Bulgarian Ecclesiastical and educational propaganda in Macedonia.² Once the first signs indicating that things were moving along in the direction of the Bulgarian endeavours came to light, the authorities in Sofia undertook rigorous measures to quell and contain the Macedonian movement.³ Thus, once Bulgaria, having first initiated the unrests in Macedonia, realized that it would attain its objectives it began to represent itself as a constructive factor in front of the large powers, as well as the Ottoman Empire. In this way, the image that Bulgaria was able to project was that the key to peace and stability in Ottoman Macedonia could be found in Sofia.

Once the Macedonian revolutionary movement started to gain in having obtained the informal support of some government circles, and that of the Prince Regnant, Ferdinand, the SMC, under the leadership of president Stojan Mihajlovski and General Ivan Tsonchev, made another attempt to provoke an uprising in Macedonia. However, due to the opposition put forth by the SMARO, this attempt achieved only partial success, primarily in the northeast regions of Macedonia, bearing the name “the uprising of Gorna Dzhumaya”.⁴ Gjorche Petrov, one of the creators and thinkers of the SMARO, had two reasons why he felt that this “varhovist” (i.e., “supremist”) uprising had been carried out with the blessing from the Bulgarian Prince Regnant and the government. The Prince Regnant planned to make use of the SMC to convey on a diplomatic level the uprising that the SMARO was organizing, while the government saw it as an easy way to gather together all the patriotic factors in order to achieve

² See: Ванчо Ѓорѓиев, *Слобода или смрт, Македонското револуционерно националноослободително движење во Солунскиот вилает (1893-1903)*, Скопје 2003, 181-204.

³ *Националноослободителното движење на македонските и тракийските българи 1878-1944*, т. 2, София 1995, 83-84.

⁴ В. Ѓорѓиев, *Слобода или смрт...*, 400-453.

its political ends.⁵ Regardless of this, politically speaking, the uprising of Gorna Dzhumaya prompted the February reforms.⁶ In fact, these reforms represented an attempt to prevent the Macedonian uprising, which the SMARO had been preparing for both psychologically and financially. On the other hand, the uprising of Gorna Dzhumaya induced repercussions by the Ottoman authorities over the Macedonian Christian population in the vulnerable regions, which led to a wave of refugees fleeing to Bulgaria. The repercussions for the Macedonian revolutionary movement under the leadership of the SMARO were even more serious. Its networks were shaken, the majority of its activists were arrested and sentenced, and a significant amount of arms that the Organisation was illegally in the possession of was discovered and confiscated. On top of everything else, the plans for the internal uprising that the SMARO had long been preparing for were partially compromised.

The propaganda circulated by the SMC that a massive uprising was taking place in Macedonia, did not cause confusion in diplomatic circles. Almost everyone saw that this was a previously set up scenario from abroad, which was neither supported by the Macedonian population, nor by the SMARO. Furthermore, this made it clear that the revolutionary potential in Macedonia had not been depleted. Thus, the Russian representative in Thessalonica Girs, wrote the following in a report dated 7 October (o.s.) 1902: “the movement that has begun ... does not come even close to having the strength that has been ascribed to the Macedonian Committee (SMC, V.G.)”.⁷ The French consul in Thessalonica, L. Steeg, in his report dated 3 December, 1902, wrote: “Today we have managed to learn more about the last uprising attempt and it is clear that it has been instigated by the Committee in Sofia ... (The SMC, V.G.), by speeding up the events, intended to take control of the leadership of the Macedonian national movement. With regards to the Committee, it is clearly Macedonian, whose internal organization remains a mystery, and, bearing completely autonomous tendencies, it opposes the annexationist tendencies of the Committee of Tsonchev. The internal organization did not simply content itself by keeping its distance from the movement, but rather energetically opposed it as a foreign premature venture, cursed to failure”. Steeg noted that “the supporters of the Macedonian revolutionary organization are far more numerous and better organized than those of the Committee in Sofia. It is justified to suppose that when they feel that the time has come to take initiative ... the uprising movement, despite not having great chances of success, will, nevertheless, have serious consequences ... According to some pieces of information, it seems that that Organization has made significant preparations for an uprising in the upcoming spring”.⁸

On the other hand, the Bulgarian diplomatic representatives were also aware of the fact that an uprising provoked from abroad, not having the support of the Macedonian

⁵ *Горче Петров, Спомени. Кореспонденција*, (вовед, редакција и коментар: Љубен Лапе), Скопје 1984, 167.

⁶ *Документи за борбата на македонскиот народ за самостојност и за национална држава, т. 1*, Скопје, 1981, 412-413.

⁷ Симон Дракул, *Македонија меѓу автономијата и дележот, т. 1*, Куманово 1995, 473.

⁸ *Френската Жлта книга по македонскиот въпрос*. (Прѣвел отъ оригинала Д. Ризовъ), София 1903, 35-37.

people, would not achieve much for the Bulgarian policy concerning the Macedonian issue. As such, the Bulgarian diplomatic representative in Belgrade, K. Velichkov, wrote the following on 18 October (o.s.) 1902: "If an uprising is necessary to bring the Macedonian issue to the forefront ... this aim would not be achieved simply through an uprising, which would begin in Macedonia, and would be organized in such a fashion as to encompass the whole country, and over a longer period in order to oppose the enemy powers".⁹ His colleague from Constantinople, I. S. Geshov, in his report dated 25 October (o.s.) 1902, wrote that some of the European diplomatic representatives in Constantinople: "did not miss the event without noting that the results of such an insurgent movement, provoked from abroad, could not have been any different ... The truth is that all of the diplomatic offices of the great powers here (Constantinople, V.G.) have a clear and precise comprehension concerning the strenuous opposition put forth by the Internal Revolutionary Organization of Macedonia against the last insurgent attempts by the Supreme Committee in Sofia; yet, not everyone admits that that is the main reason why the movement did not manage to grow in popularity within the Macedonian population".¹⁰ Geshov summarized that had the "varhovist" uprising been accepted by the Macedonian population and had it received a "local national character" and lasted longer, then the great powers would have forced the Ottoman government to sit at the "green table", where the "uninvited guest: the Macedonian question"¹¹ would have been present.

The uprising of Gorna Dzhumaya, as well as the "varhovist" threat concerning another such adventure in the upcoming spring, in its own way managed to "coax" the decision brought by the Central Committee of the SMARO concerning the uprising in Macedonia in 1903. In the autumn of 1902, when the "varhovist" movement started to subside, the Central Committee of the SMARO and the External Representative Office launched the question regarding initiating the uprising from the inside. Despite the fact that no formal decision had been made, for the CC of the SMARO and the External Representative Office, there were no quandaries. As such, in December 1902, Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, as an external representative, informed the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Stoyan Danev, and the Prince Regnant, Ferdinand, that insurgent acts were "inevitable" in Macedonia in the following year.¹²

Soon afterwards, in January 1903, the CC of the SMARO held a congress where a resolution was passed concerning an uprising in Macedonia.¹³ The then-President of the CC of the SMARO – Ivan Garvanov, advocating the idea of an uprising, noted, amongst everything else, that should the uprising last two weeks, Bulgaria would enter into a war against Turkey.¹⁴ I. Garvanov supported this with a correspondence note

⁹ Христо Силянов, *Освободителните борби на Македонија, т. I*, (фототипно издание), Софија 1983, 183.

¹⁰ *Idem.*

¹¹ *Idem.*

¹² Д-р Христо Татарчев, *Вътрешната македоно-одринска револуционна организација како митологија и реална същност*, Софија 1995, 124-125.

¹³ Ванчо Ѓорѓиев, Солунскиот конгрес на ТМОРО од 1903 година и прашањето за востание, *сп. Историја*, г. 40, бр.1-2, Скопје 2004.

¹⁴ Манол Пандевски, *Македонското ослободително дело во XIX и XX век, т.2*, Скопје 1987, 188.

from the Bulgarian Minister of War, Stefan Paprikov, sent to Boris Sarafov, in which he persistently “begged” him to not miss the opportune moment for an uprising in Macedonia, and that Bulgaria would back him up by proclaiming war against Turkey.¹⁵ The delegate from Bitola, A. Lozanchev, acted in much the same fashion, claiming that he had been authorized by Nedelko Kulushev, the secretary of the Bulgarian trade agency in Thessalonica.¹⁶ This speculation, that Bulgaria would support the uprising in Macedonia by proclaiming war against Turkey, was further passed along by Boris Sarafov at the Congress of Smilevo (May 1903), when a resolution concerning the uprising was adopted in the Revolutionary district of Bitola.¹⁷

Right after the Congress in Thessalonica had ended, Ivan Garvanov and Velko Dumev set off for Sofia in order to elaborate the resolution before the external representatives and the local Macedonian activists who had been sitting regarding this issue.¹⁸ In Sofia, Ivan Garvanov, Hristo Matov and Hristo Tatarchev (the two external representatives), held a meeting with Dimitar Petkov, the Bulgarian Minister of Internal Affairs. He promised that they would receive “moral and financial support for the upcoming uprising, on the condition that they ceased compromising the Principality...”¹⁹

Up to now, the facts indicate that the Bulgarian political factors were able to provoke uprisings in Macedonia from abroad with the help of the SMC on two occasions (in 1895 and in 1902). With the uprising of Gorna Dzhumaya, a resolution had been extracted from the CC of the SMARO for an uprising initiated from the inside. And what is more, the Bulgarian bodies (the Prince Regnant and the Government), were sounded out by certain factions of the SMARO before the resolution for an uprising had been passed, and once passed, were immediately informed. Certain government circles had even gone so far as to promise support, even by having Bulgaria enter into a war against Turkey.

The resolution for the uprising, as well as the hasty preparations made for its realization complicated Bulgaria’s international standing, especially in the eyes of the Ottoman Empire, and particularly since Bulgaria had the burden of the uprising of Gorna Dzhumaya. In such circumstances, once the issue regarding the uprising had been resolved internally, the Bulgarian government, in order to distance itself from all responsibility, undertook measures to present itself in the light of peacekeeper, so as to avoid the threat of a war with Turkey. In that context, on 30 January (o.s.) 1903, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, presided by the Prince Regnant, Ferdinand, passed a decision to ban the SMC.²⁰ Setting out from the fact that the SMC “is compromising the

¹⁵ Румен Пасков, *Борис Сарафов (1872-1907), Биография*, София 1996, 146-147.

¹⁶ *Idem*, 147.

¹⁷ Ванчо Ѓорѓиев, *Подземната република, Даме Груев и македонското револуционерно движење*, Скопје 2010, 293 f. 110.

¹⁸ *Д-р Христо Татарчев, Спомени, документи и материали*, съставител: Цочо Билярски, София, 1989, 233.

¹⁹ Жеко Попов, Димитар Петков за българската политика по македонския въпрос (1903-1907), *Македонски преглед*, XXI/2, София 1998, 59.

²⁰ *Княжество България и македонският въпрос. Протоколи од конгресите на Върховния Македоно-одрински комитет 1895-1905*, съставител: Цочо Билярски, София 2002, 333.

security of the Principality”, the government decided to: abolish the SMC and its folds in the state, to prosecute its members, and to undertake measures in order to prevent the units from crossing the borders and carrying out their weapons.²¹ The following day, the Prime Minister, S. Danev, informed the diplomatic representatives in Sofia of these measures.²² At this time, S. Danev told the Turkish commissary in Sofia, Ali Ferouk Bey, the following: “These measures serve to reaffirm our loyalty towards the Ottoman Empire”. In addition, Danev continued that Bulgaria had not undertaken, nor did it want to undertake any military preparations, but if the Ottoman Empire continued with their military preparations, then Bulgaria would not simply sit back idly and do nothing.²³

In confirmation of their decision, the Bulgarian authorities closed down the offices of the SMC that very same day, and confiscated all of its correspondence material. At the same time, they arrested Stojan Mihajlovski (the president of the SMC), Ivan Tsonchev (vice-president) and Lieutenant Anastas Yankov (a member).²⁴ These arrests were rather demagogical in nature since the afore-mentioned persons were soon afterwards released. On 8 February (o.s.) 1903, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs forbade all its employees and officials from having any contacts with the SMC, its branches or any of its members, as a result of the fact that it was illegal.²⁵ Following the accusations voiced by the opposition, that banning the SMC was an unconstitutional and illegal move, Prime Minister Danev replied that this had been done in order to protect the interests of the country, as well as to remove all doubts that Bulgaria was the centre breeding the Macedonian discontent.²⁶

However, some of the measures that were taken appear to be more of a farce than an actual political decision. This can be confirmed by the fact that the resolution to ban the SMC and to tighten up border control had been discovered even prior to its adoption, and that all affected sides had been duly informed. Thus, Pere Toshev (renowned leader of the SMARO) informed Nikola Maleshevski on 24 January (o.s.) 1903 that “rigorous measures” would be passed against the Komitadjis, which would in all probability also have an effect on the SMARO.²⁷ On 28 January (o.s.) 1903, Aleksandar Protogerov (SMC member) wrote to I. Tsonchev that the SMARO would organize an uprising in the spring, while the Bulgarian government would participate so that its activists would be able to enter Macedonia and announce the uprising from the inside, thus allowing the government to shift the responsibility from itself.²⁸ A.

²¹ *Idem.*

²² Величко Георгиев и Стайко Трифонов, *История на Българите 1878-1944 в документи, т. I, 1878 -1912, част втора*, София 1996, 402.

²³ *Idem.*

²⁴ *Idem.*

²⁵ Државен архив на Република Македонија (ДАРМ), фонд, Бугарски генерален конзулат – Солун (БГК), мф. 4278, №. 50, 8. II. 1903.

²⁶ Крсте Битоски, *Македонија и кнежеството Бугарија (1893-1903)*, Скопје 1977, 304.

²⁷ *Архив Христо Матов, Документален сборник*, съставител: Цочо Билярски, София 2004, 76-77.

²⁸ В. Георгиев и С. Трифонов, *История на Българите...*, 401.

Protogerov felt that the border controls would be weaker by 15 February (o.s.) 1903, and members of the SMARO would be able to bring the necessary materials into Macedonia. According to Protogerov, the government would immediately afterwards tighten up border control, begin to intern the members of the SMC, and even break up the Committee, in order “to prove to the great powers, mainly Russia, that it had carried out their demands, but that the uprising had been organized from the inside, by the people.”²⁹ On the basis of this information, several days later, the SMC issued an appeal to the officers of the Bulgarian army who were of Macedonian descent or from the vilayet of Adrianople to leave the army in order to participate in the upcoming uprising, giving them until 15 February (o.s.) 1903 to state their intentions.³⁰

It appears that the resolution to abolish the SMC was not discovered by accident. The discovery most probably had the aim to warn all the parties involved so that they had sufficient time to adapt to the newly-created situation. Hence, the afore-mentioned resolution is nothing more than an example of hypocrisy for the sake of the international world, and especially for the sake of the Ottoman Empire. Its aim was to reduce the political pressure that was exerted on Bulgaria, who was shown as the source in provoking the unrests in Macedonia, as well as a factor in compromising the peace in the region. On the other hand, with the resolution Bulgaria was hoping to display its loyalty towards the Ottoman Empire in order to decrease the Ottoman military presence on the Bulgarian border, as well as to avoid the danger of a war between Turkey and Bulgaria.

Banning the SMC did not decrease the pressure that was heaped on Bulgaria. Everyone felt that the threat of an uprising had not been eliminated since the internal preparations were progressing at full steam. As a result, Bulgaria found itself in a situation having to prevail on the leaders of the SMARO to abandon their planned uprising. As such, on 5 February (o.s.) 1903, the Bulgarian government tasked its trade agencies in Macedonia and Adrianople to make use of their powers of persuasion to convince to leaders of the SMARO to cease their preparations for the uprising. At the same time, they were supposed to categorically warn them that should they not abandon their plans regarding the uprising, they would not receive any support from Bulgaria.³¹ All the diplomatic representatives from the great powers stationed in Sofia were also made aware of this decision.³²

On 21 February (o.s.) 1903, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs delegated N. Kulushev in Bitola, to once again bring to the attention of the leaders of the SMARO, as well as the leaders in the Vilayet of Monastir, the possible consequences of continuing to pursue their plans for an uprising.³³ Regarding this, N. Kulushev in Bitola talked to representatives from the SMARO. They openly informed him that they were undaunted in their intentions to carry out an uprising, and that they could not, even if they had wanted to, do anything to prevent it since they had been instructed to do this by the Central

²⁹ *Idem.*

³⁰ *Княжество България и македонският въпрос...*, 334-355.

³¹ В. Георгиев и С. Трифонов, *История на Българите...*, 404.

³² К. Битоски, *Македонија и кнежеството Бугарија...*, 314.

³³ В. Георгиев и С. Трифонов, *История на Българите...*, 405.

Committee and that they would not abandon the plan without first receiving orders from them. The uprising could possibly be postponed only if there was serious evidence proving that the situation in Macedonia was improving. According to Kolushev, the leaders of the Organization were self-confident because they exerted authority over the population, who were their loyal subjects and saw them as a greater power than the Ottoman government.³⁴ In Bitola, N. Kolushev came across answers of the type: “We are Macedonians and the advice given by some Bulgarian minister is of no significance to us”.³⁵

This is just one side of the game called politics.

In any case, Bulgaria simply could not remain impassive towards Macedonia in light of the upcoming uprising. Hence, on 22 February (o.s.) 1903, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers adopted a resolution where the Bulgarian trade agency in Thessalonica had to delegate a military official as secretary. His salary was to be secured by the Ministry of War, whereas the expenses for his activities were to be covered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁶ Racho Penov was soon assigned to this post.³⁷ In such a situation, the function of such personnel should not be debated.

The political games did not end here.

On 15 February (o.s.) 1903, in an effort to smooth over the strained Turkish-Bulgarian relations, Grigor Nachovich, an experienced Bulgarian politician, set off on a special mission to Constantinople as a personal envoy of the Prince Regnant, Ferdinand. His objective was to persuade the Sublime Porte in the friendly policy of Bulgaria towards the Empire, and in general, in Bulgaria’s attempts to relax the tensions in Macedonia, even suggesting the formation of a Turkish-Bulgarian alliance.³⁸

Apart from the negotiations with official Ottoman authorities, G. Nachovich also made attempts to even win over the Young Turks. In that context, he sent a detailed Memoir to the Young Turks of Bulgarian origin,³⁹ in which he explained that the unrests in Macedonia were not the result of Bulgarian policies, but rather that “the Macedonians are striving for independence, separate from the Bulgarians and from the Principality”, that “the Macedonians are against Bulgaria as defined by the Treaty of San Stefano... their aim is to achieve Macedonian autonomy”.⁴⁰ Nachovich also posed the question as to what advantage the Sublime Porte would get out of a war between Turkey and Bulgaria, even if the Turks did manage to trample over Bulgaria, all the way to the Danube. In that case, “the Macedonians will still remain Macedonians and after the war they will continue to carry out their assassinations in the vilayets, with even greater power ... The Macedonians would continue to organize their uprisings, just like they are doing now”.⁴¹

³⁴ *Idem*, 406-408.

³⁵ К. Битоски, *Македонија и кнежеството Бугарија...*, 315.

³⁶ ДАРМ, ф. БГК- Солун, мф. 4278, №. 96, 22. II. 1903, Поверливо.

³⁷ *Idem*, №. 205, 17. III. 1903. R. Penov arrived in Thessalonica on 25 March 1903, and remained at his post until 18 October 1903, at which time he was replaced.

³⁸ Валентин Китанов, *Принос към дипломатическата история на България. Глигор Начович и българо-турското споразумение од 1904 г.*, София 2004, 19; Ж. Попов, *Димитар Петков за българската политика...*, 59-60.

³⁹ В. Китанов, *Принос към дипломатическата история на България...*, 40-43.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, 40.

⁴¹ *Idem*, 41.

On the other hand, according to Nachovich, in the event of a potential Turkish-Bulgarian war, the Russians would enter Bulgaria and send the Prince Regnant into exile, while the Austrians would enter Macedonia. In such a scenario, both sides could make use of the Macedonians against the Ottoman state. Bearing all this in mind, Nachovich saw the solution in an alliance between Turkey and Bulgaria, as well as carrying out reforms in Macedonia. "Should that happen, the Macedonians, who are today appealing to Austria to occupy them, will fight neck and neck with the Turkish nizams against Austria, and Bulgaria even, should it dare to sink its claws into Macedonia".⁴²

In the context of avoiding a Turkish-Bulgarian conflict, in connection with the Macedonian issue there is the Memorandum of the Bulgarian Prince Regnant, Ferdinand, sent to the Russian Emperor Nicholas II on 8 June (o.s.) 1903. Ferdinand, addressing the Russian Emperor as "supreme patron of Slavicity", who has the desire "to maintain the peace on the Balkans" bearing in mind that "the revolutionary movement in this unfortunate country cannot be stopped" asks Nicholas II to use his authority to bring about reforms in Macedonia.⁴³ Furthermore, Ferdinand suggests five points of reforms,⁴⁴ which he believes will be accepted with "alacrity" by the Macedonian population, who is in no way led by pan-Bulgarian ideas".⁴⁵

Banning the SMC, the Bulgarian diplomatic initiative in Constantinople, as well as Bulgaria's insistence that the SMARO delay its plans for the uprising are all clear indications of the unpleasant situation that Bulgaria had found itself in with regard to the issue of the uprising in Macedonia. On the same day (15 February (o.s.) 1903), when Nachovich left for Constantinople, Vasil Paskov (a SMARO member) writes to the External Representative Office, saying that the Bulgarian initiative to postpone the uprising should not be accepted. According to Paskov "the early halt to that premature insurgent movement, while the preparation period is still underway, and while the uprising has still not been formally announced, is vital and of great importance. On the other hand, however, that would serve to support the diplomacy ... to confirm that the revolutionary movement in Macedonia and in the vilayet of Adrianople is being organized, supported and led by Bulgaria, which is displaying military objectives in the eyes of those circles whose sympathies lie with us, the internal organization will lose the traits of being independent and autonomous, and that will compromise the liberation act".⁴⁶ This estimate by V. Paskov is a clear indication that the Bulgarian game concerning the Macedonian liberation movement had been seen through by the members of the SMARO. In the

⁴² *Idem.*

⁴³ В. Китанов, *Принос към дипломатическата история на България...*, 32-33.

⁴⁴ These are: 1. Assigning a Christian head over the three vilayets in the Turkish Empire, where the Slavic element prevailed. The following were suggested as potential candidates: Prince Regnant Mirko of Montenegro, Prince Valdemar of Denmark, and Prince Franz Joseph von Battenberg; 2) The general-gubernator to reign over the region with the help of a local assembly which would be elected by the population; 3. A special local assembly to be formed which would uphold the law and order in the land; 4. The budget and the taxes in the region to be determined by the local assembly; and 5. To offer general and complete political amnesty to all political offenders.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, 33.

⁴⁶ Д-р Х. Татарчев, *Спомени, документи и материали...*, 239-240.

beginning, Bulgaria provided incentive to the movement, and then once it found itself placed in an awkward situation as a result it tried to stop it at an attempt at self-protection. However, the SMARO's refusal to postpone the uprising upon Bulgaria's request represents an expression of independent Macedonian character.

The manipulations caused by the Bulgarian circles in connection with the Macedonian uprising in 1903 were clearly understood by Hristo Matov and Hristo Tatarchev, both of whom were involved in the contacts with the government and the Prince Regnant. On 22 July (o.s.) 1903, when the uprising in Macedonia was under way, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Racho Petrov, invited Hristo Matov to a meeting. At that time, Petrov noted that the SMARO was taking advantage of Bulgaria by announcing the uprising, and was trying to push it into war. Furthermore, he expressed displeasure that the uprising had not been postponed, since Bulgaria was not ready to go to war. H. Matov answered this in the following way: "We have informed you ... what you decide to do, that is not up to us ... We have got used to hearing and not believing all the promises made to us by ministers, who have said that they were lying and have wanted to disrespect the Macedonian work".⁴⁷ Towards the end of August 1903, the External Representative Office of the SMARO informed the Headquarters of the Revolutionary district of Bitola that "the Prince Regnant is scared to enter into a war" so as not to allow "some authoritative general-gubernator" to spoil his plans in Macedonia.⁴⁸

In the most difficult moments, the hope for help dies last, especially if that help has already been promised. The external representatives and the Headquarters, despite having received clear signals that Bulgaria had no intentions of entering into a war, during the fiercest moments of the Ottoman military initiative to suppress the uprising, though not really believing that Bulgaria would offer military intervention, nevertheless, did hope for it. As a result, on 22 August (o.s.) 1903, Hristo Tatarchev requested a meeting with the Prince Regnant, Ferdinand.⁴⁹ Soon afterwards, on 7 September (o.s.), H. Tatarchev requested a meeting with the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Racho Petrov.⁵⁰ Two days later, on 9 September (o.s.) 1903, the Headquarters of the Revolutionary district of Bitola sent a letter to the Bulgarian government, asking for concrete help by announcing war against Turkey.⁵¹ The initiator of this idea, Boris Sarafov, admitted that he expected nothing from this appeal.⁵² Obviously, the appeals for help from Bulgaria through direct military intervention were the result of previous promises. However, it is a fact that Bulgaria was more concerned about its own interests and image than the Macedonian insurgents and the fate of the insurgent Macedonian population.

⁴⁷ *Idem*, 243.

⁴⁸ *Idem*, 256.

⁴⁹ *Idem*, 254.

⁵⁰ *Вътрешната македоно-одринска револуционна организација (1893-1903). Документи на центр. раководни органи. Т. I, част I*, Софија 2007, 319.

⁵¹ *Македонија, Сборник от документи и материали*, Софија 1978, 489-495.

⁵² В. Ѓорѓиев, *Подземната република...*, 328-329.