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## **THE RELATIONS BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND BULGARIA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1939-1945): GENERAL REVIEWS AND ANALYSES**

*ABSTRACT: With reference to the unpublished archival materials, the published sources and relevant literature, the article gives a general outline of the relations between two neighboring Balkan states during the Second World War. The first part of the text gives a general overview of how Yugoslavia and Bulgaria found themselves on opposite sides. Then, in the second part, attention is dedicated to the Bulgarian military and civilian apparatus in the annexed and occupied area and to the war crimes against the civilians. In the specific circumstances of the Second World War in the Balkans, the influence of the great powers was decisive, so third segment of the work analyzes their very complex relations towards institutions, groups and individuals from Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The last part of the article shows the rapprochement of the two countries and the establishment of the diplomatic relations on the end of the Second World War.*

**KEYWORDS:** Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Second World War, Occupation, War Crimes, Axis Powers, Allies

Since the coming to power of the Nazi party (NSDAP) in Germany, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were first economically, and then politically, under the attack of the expansionist policy of the Third Reich. Internally weak, with an undefined foreign policy, both countries began to slowly give in under the pressure of Berlin, which assigned the Balkan countries a subordinate role in the new world order. Often imposing ideas of the territorial aspirations, the leader of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, managed little by little to convince first Bulgaria and then Yugoslavia to sign the Tripartite Pact (September 27, 1940). In that diplomatic game, which marked 1940, Germany could more easily influence Bulgaria, whose revanchist policy marked the interwar period.<sup>1</sup> With the

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<sup>1</sup> More in: Perica Hadži-Jovančić, *Treći rajh i Jugoslavija. Ekonomija straha 1933–1941* (Beograd: Društvo za urbanu istoriju, 2022); Dušan Lukač, *Treći rajh i zemlje jugoistočne Evrope.*

arrival of Bogdan Filov (Богдан Филов) as the Prime Minister and the bringing of the certain rigorous laws, Bulgaria increasingly turned to the Axis powers. However, a skilled diplomat, King Boris managed several times to delay the inevitable by playing the card of the territorial aspirations. However, since Germany secured Southern Dobrudja for Bulgaria (September 7, 1940), this country completely surrendered to the Third Reich.<sup>2</sup> Further territorial aspirations of Bulgaria were directed in order: to Western Thrace, then to Vardar Macedonia and in the end to Aegean Macedonia. For that cause, the relations with Yugoslavia that had been painstakingly built in the previous years and that resulted with the Yugoslav-Bulgarian Perpetual Friendship Pact of 24 January, 1937 began to deteriorate latently. On the other hand, certain ruling circles in Yugoslavia harbored hopes, especially after the Italian aggression against Greece, that with the help of Germany they would secure an exit to the Aegean Sea and secure supremacy over the Vardar-Moravian valley by obtaining Thessaloniki. In the same time, Germany was crushing Bulgaria: first through the visit of the Minister of Agriculture and State Property Ivan Bagryanov (Иван Багрянов) to Germany which took place in October 1940; then through the meeting between Hitler and King Boris on November 17, 1940 and after that with the conversation between the Führer and the Bulgarian Minister in Berlin Parvan Draganov (Прван Драганов) which took place later the same month. Finally, after talks between the Bulgarian Prime Minister Bogdan Filov and the German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Adolf Hitler in early January 1941, Bulgaria decided to sign the Tripartite Pact and join the Axis powers.<sup>3</sup> The Western Allies and the USSR, which at that time were trying to position themselves in the Balkans, were defeated by the accession of Bulgaria and then Yugoslavia to the Axis powers. The ideas of the United Kingdom and France (until capitulation) to organize a Balkan or a Thessaloniki front, the mission of the General Secretary of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs Alexander Sobolev, as well as the mission of the American colonel William "Wild Bill" Donovan and some other actions that were supposed to shake the Axis in the Balkans ended ingloriously.<sup>4</sup>

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*Drugi deo. 1937–1941* (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački zavod, Balkanološki institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> See: Централен државен архив (ЦДА), фонд 284к, Министерски съвет (МС), опис 2, архивна единица 100, лист 2–22. Further: ЦДА, ф. 284к, оп. 2, а.е. 100, л. 2–22.

<sup>3</sup> More in: Николай Генчев, *Външната политика на България (1938–1941)* (София: Издателство Вектор, 1998); Vanče Stojčev, „Bugarska u pripremanju za okupaciju Jugoslavije (prilog izučavanju 'velikobugarske ideje' 1939–1941)“, *Istorija 20. veka*, XII, br. 1, (1994), 177–193; Витка Тошкова, „Присъединяването на България към Тристрания пакт“, *Исторически преглед*, XXV, 4, (1969), 56–72.

<sup>4</sup> More in: Илчо Димитров, *Англия и България 1938–1941. Навечерието и началото на Втората световна война* (София: Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски“, 1996); Александар Животић, *Московски гамбит. Југославија, СССР и продор Трећег рајха на Балкан 1938–1941* (Београд: Слио, 2020). About work of Bogdan Filov see: Богдан Филов, *Дневник* (София: Отечествения фронт, 1990).

Bulgaria joined the Tripartite Pact on March 1, 1941. On the same day, parts of the German 12<sup>th</sup> Army that was on the Danube crossed the Romanian-Bulgarian border and headed for Greece. Until the end of March 1941 German units also concentrated on the Yugoslav-Bulgarian border, putting military and diplomatic pressure on Yugoslavia. With the decisions of the Yugoslav Crown Council and the Government on March 20 and 21 and the signing of the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941, Germany seemed to have achieved the desired peace in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria before the attack on the Soviet Union. However, the events of March 27, 1941 disrupted the German security system in the European Southeast, which it had been patiently building for years. Hitler's decision on March 27 to "break down" Yugoslavia and Bulgaria's dutiful adherence to the Tripartite Pact directly contributed that the two countries once again find themselves on opposite sides in a new world war.<sup>5</sup>

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Adolf Hitler's decision of March 27, 1941 to attack the Kingdom of Yugoslavia did not foresee only the destruction of the Yugoslav territory, but also the breaking up of Yugoslavia as a state. After the military defeat of Yugoslavia, the Axis Powers and their satellites went to the forcible legal acquisition of the possessed territory. It was based on the understanding of debellation. Such division of territory was unsustainable from the point of view of the international law. In addition, the Yugoslav government announced that it was continuing the war. It should be noted that, although Bulgarian troops did not participate in the aggression against Yugoslavia, the Bulgarian government allowed German troops to attack Yugoslavia from Bulgarian territory, which was considered to be waging a war of aggression according to the Hague Conventions.<sup>6</sup> Besides, the Bulgarian government, through its state bodies, behaved very harshly towards the staff of the Yugoslav diplomatic mission in Sofia, which was practically expelled from Bulgaria. At that moment, the Bulgarian government cut off the diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia (April 15, 1941).<sup>7</sup> For the duration of the German aggression in the institutions of the Third Reich on April 6, 1941, the so-called "General Plan" ("General Guidelines") was adopted. A few days later, on April 12, 1941, the "Provisional Guidelines" were issued according to Hitler's directive. These guidelines envisaged the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the annexation of Macedonia by Bulgaria. The final

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<sup>5</sup> More in: Стоян Ранчев, „Тристранният пакт и държавите от югоизточна Европа (септември 1940–март 1941 г.), *Известия*, том 47, (1989), 3–23; Борис С. Томанић, „Југославија и Бугарска 1941–1945: Између сукоба и савеза“ (докторска дисертација, Универзитет у Београду, Филозофски факултет, Одељење за историју, 2022), 56–62.

<sup>6</sup> Ferdo Čulinović, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1970), 75; Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988. Druga knjiga. Narodnooslobodilački rat i revolucija 1941–1945* (Beograd: Nolit, 1988), 25.

<sup>7</sup> More in: Miroslav Stojiljković, *Bugarska okupatorska politika u Srbiji 1941–1944* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1989), 47–50; Б. Томанић, „Југославија и Бугарска...“, 70–77.

shaping of the territories that belonged to Bulgaria happened at the Vienna Conference and later with the signing of the Clodius-Popov Agreement (April 24, 1941). In that time, Bulgaria received most of Macedonia (with the exception of the towns of Debar, Struga, Tetovo), the so-called “Western outlands” (Caribrod and Bosiljgrad municipality (srez)), the parts of the southeastern Serbia with the towns of Pirot, Vranje, Surdulica, as well as several villages in the eastern Serbia on the right side of the Timok river and the parts of the eastern Kosovo (Gnjilan and Kačanik area). In the final division, Bulgaria occupied 28,250 km<sup>2</sup>, which was 11.4% of the Yugoslav territory. 1,260,000 inhabitants lived in that territory, which, according to German estimates from 1941, was 7.9% of the total population of Yugoslavia.<sup>8</sup>

The Bulgarian occupation began with the entry of its troops into the Yugoslav territory on April 18, 1941. Soon after that, the military units were joined by a huge civilian apparatus composed mostly of persons from the pre-war borders of Bulgaria. At the end of April, Bulgaria divided the parts of Macedonia into the Skopje and the Bitola districts (област) with regional areas–municipalities (околия). The parts of the southeastern Serbia around Vranje and the parts of Kosovo entered in the Skopje district. Pirot and its surroundings and the region near Zaječar were annexed to the Sofia district. This administrative division was changed only in October 1943, when three municipalities in the eastern Macedonia were added to the newly formed Gorna Dzhumaya district. The division was made official and legalized by decrees that appeared in the Bulgarian official gazette under number 166 of July 31, 1941. The administrative division was followed by the ecclesiastical division. After the start of the operation Barbarossa, Bulgaria got a new role of protecting the *status quo* in the Balkans. To meet the demands of the Third Reich, the Bulgarian High Command mobilized new forces and reorganized existing units in July and August. The “peacetime” composition of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army was formed (the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions and the 1st Cavalry Brigade). The formation was completed on August 1, 1941. The 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions and the 1<sup>st</sup> Rapid Division were withdrawn from the annexed territory. In the same time, parts of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division of the 1<sup>st</sup> Army were stationed in the southeastern parts of Serbia. A police service was also organized on the annexed territory. There were two district (Skopje, Bitola) and three city police departments (Skopje, Bitola, Prilep) and 21 municipal police departments with over 4,000 police officers.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> More in: Slobodan Milošević, „Okupatorska podela Jugoslavije 1941–1945.“, *Istorija 20. veka*, X, br. 1–2, (1992), 125–143; Данчо Зографски, „Виенската спогодба Рибентроп–Кано 1941 (Во светлоста на автентични извори и документи), *Гласник*, XXIV, бр. 3, (1980), 21–55.

<sup>9</sup> Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), fond 370, Poslanstvo Kraljevine Jugoslavije u Turskoj – Carigrad, Ankara, fascikla 26, arhivska jedinica 75, Ankara, 21. avgust 1941. Further: AJ, 370–26–75; AJ, fond 371, Poslanstvo Kraljevine Jugoslavije u SAD – Vašington, 6–9, Ninčić – Kraljevskom jugoslovenskom poslanstvu, London, 27. oktobar 1941, pov. br. 7136; AJ, fond 378, Poslanstvo Kraljevine Jugoslavije u SSSR – Moskva, Kujbišev, 2, Ninčić, London, 27. oktobar 1941, pov. br. 7136 (unregistered fund); Vojni arhiv (VA), arhiva Emigrantske vlade, kutija

Although the Bulgarian government wanted to portray the occupation of these territories as liberation and return to the motherland, it had to organize a strong propaganda apparatus on the annexed territory and embark on a reckless Bulgarianisation of the population. The Bulgarian government justified such steps by saying that the decades-long Serbian administration in this area left traces on the Bulgarian population, to whom it was necessary to explain that they were Bulgarians. However, the Bulgarian administrative apparatus, which failed even in the pre-war borders of Bulgaria in attempts to ensure economic and social stability, in the newly annexed areas failed completely. Because of this, shortages of food and clothing, the appearance of various diseases related to war and poverty were frequent occurrences. The poor social position of citizens in the annexed territory, which the Bulgarian government viewed as second-class Bulgarians (except Serbs, Jews, Turks, Vlachs and Albanians), caused a revolt among certain pro-Bulgarian elements who very quickly became opponents of the Bulgarian occupation.<sup>10</sup>

In addition of faster and more direct Bulgarianisation, the Central Bulgarian Action Committee (“Централен акционен комитет”) began its short-term work, which “brought back to life” VMRO members, especially Dimitar Chkatrov (Димитър Чкатров) and Dimitar Gyuzelov (Димитър Гюзелов), both known from the Skopje Student Trial from 1927. These two played an important role during the Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia. After the abolition of this Committee, in order to fill the void by its dissolution, the Bulgarian government decided to establish the so-called “public clubs” (“javni klubovi”). These clubs did not take off, but a network of “cultural clubs” (committees) (“kulturni klubovi”) was established on the initiative of the Chkatrov-Gyuzelov group, and with the approval of the Bulgarian government. In September 1941, these clubs were renamed “Citizen National Clubs” (“Građanski nacionalni klubovi”). The main goal of the clubs was to control Bulgarianisation.<sup>11</sup> In May 1941, the Morava Valley Committee (“Комитет за Моравско”) was founded in Sofia with the aim of carrying out the propaganda in the eastern and the south-eastern Serbia.<sup>12</sup> “Public reading rooms” (“Narodne čitaonice”) were founded

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2796, fascikla 1, dokument 43. Further: VA, EV, k. 2796, f. 1, d. 43; VA, EV, k. 2796, f. 2, d. 37; VA, EV, k. 2796, f. 2, d. 38; *Българското управление във Вардарска Македония (1941–1944). Документален сборник*, със., Александър Гребенаров и Надя Николова (София: Главно управление на архивите при Министерския съвет, 2011); Boris Tomanić, “The Bulgarian occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941“, in: *Repeating history 1941–1991? Two break-ups of Yugoslavia as repeated history? Serbian perspectives*, edited by Predrag J. Marković and Bojan B. Dimitrijević (Belgrade: Institute for Contemporary History, 2021), 43–47.

<sup>10</sup> More: Растислав Терзиоски, *Денационализаторска дејност на бугарските културно-просветни институции во Македонија (скопска и битолска окупациона област) 1941–1944* (Скопје: Институт за национална историја, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> More: Димитър Минчев, *Българските акционни комитети в Македония–1941* (София: Македонски научен институт, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> AJ, fond 103, Emigrantska vlada Kraljevine Jugoslavije, 160–582, „Стање у крајевима Југославије под бугарском окупацијом. Јужна и источна Србија“, стр. 22–23; VA, EV, k. 2796, f. 1, d. 28; VA, EV, k. 2796, f. 1, d. 30.

for a similar purpose. The institutionalization of Bulgarianisation was carried out through the Directorate for National Propaganda with the headquarters in Sofia and the main branch in Skopje.<sup>13</sup>

The direct influence on the population was realized through educational and publishing activities also. Although the Bulgarian occupier created a better school network, which must be attributed to the specific conditions of wartime, it had only one primary task—the fastest possible Bulgarianisation. The foundation of the University of Skopje in 1943 was supposed to represent the crown of Bulgarian educational activity in the annexed territory.<sup>14</sup> Similar to the schools, the Bulgarian occupier invested great efforts in publishing. New publishing houses were founded and libraries were filled with the Bulgarian propaganda literature. New newspapers were founded, such as “Celokupna Bulgaria” („Целокупна България“, „Цѣлокупна България“) which was the most circulated newspaper in the annexed territory.<sup>15</sup>

Various nationalist and youth organizations were also supposed to serve the stated purpose. The youth organization “Branik” stood out as the most massive and populous, which was founded by copying the Hitler Youth (“Hitlerjugend“).<sup>16</sup> In addition to it, the organizations “Father Paisius” („Отец Паисий“), “Union of Bulgarian National Legions” („Съюз на българските национални легиони“) and “Fighters for the Bulgarian National Spirit” („Ратници за напредька на българщината“) should be singled out. Bulgarian institutionalization of the power was implemented through legislation. The population of these areas and the destinies of the individuals were directly linked to these laws, which were rigorous and backward character. The visits of various scientific and cultural workers, members of the Bulgarian government and court, as well as the opening of cinemas, theaters and similar institutions also had an assimilating role. In addition to all these institutions, it is worth mentioning the establishment of the “Public Force” („Општестената сила“) in the summer of 1943, which had the role of gathering all “national” pro-Bulgarian forces from the municipal level. This organization, which did not take deep root, was founded as a response to the growing propaganda and the activities of the partisan movement.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> АЈ, 103–160–582, „Стање у крајевима Југославије под бугарском окупацијом. Јужна и источна Србија“, стр. 20; *Българското управление...*, 43–44, 262; Б. Томанић, „Југославија и Бугарска...“, 108.

<sup>14</sup> More: Danilo Kilibarda, „Bugarska politika u oblasti prosvete i kulture na okupiranom delu Srbije za vreme Drugog svetskog rata“, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 1, (1986), 75–101. More about the establishment and work of the University in Skopje. Државен архив на Република Северна Македонија (ДАРСМ), фонд 324 – Универзитет „Цар Борис Трети“; *Българското управление...*, 264, 306–309, 318–320, 338–339.

<sup>15</sup> *Български периодичен печат 1844–1944. Анотиран библиографски указател. Том II. Н–Я* (София: Наука и изкуство, 1966), 485.

<sup>16</sup> More in: Ѓорѓи Малковски, *Бугарската фашистичка организација „Браник“ во Македонија (1941–1944)*, (Скопје: Институт за национална историја, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Ѓорѓи Малковски, *Профашистичките и колаборационистичките организации и групи во Македонија 1941–1944 година* (Скопје: Институт за национална историја, 1995); Николай

The specificity and complexity of the Yugoslav space during the Second World War meant that the Bulgarian occupation had a dual character. Bulgaria actually annexed the territories it received by the decisions of the Vienna Conference. Although the Third Reich did not formally recognize the annexations of its satellites and left the final demarcation for after the war, Bulgaria annexed this territory by implementing a series of laws and introducing various measures. The second type of occupation was carried out by Bulgaria at the beginning of 1942 at the behest of Germany. The 1<sup>st</sup> Occupation (Army) Corps was formed and its units entered in the southern, the eastern and the central Serbia and took the places of German infantry divisions that had moved to the western parts of Yugoslavia. In terms of command, these units were subordinated to the Military Commander of Serbia and had a securing role. During its stay in Serbia, the 1<sup>st</sup> Occupation Corps expanded its occupation zone three times, so in the middle of 1943, the Bulgarian occupation zone covered almost all of Serbia. The corps was usually composed of three infantry divisions, but with the final expansion of its occupation zone, another division was added. In August 1944, the corps received another division, so it had five divisions. From January to July 1942, the Corps included the 6<sup>th</sup>, the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Divisions. From July 1942 to March 1943, the Corps consisted of the 7<sup>th</sup>, the 9<sup>th</sup>, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Divisions. Then from March 1943 until July 1943, the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the 24<sup>th</sup>, and the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions were engaged, and from July 1943, the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division joined the Corps. The composition was supplemented in August 1944, when the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the 24<sup>th</sup>, the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> Divisions were joined by the 6<sup>th</sup> Division. Due to changes on the European and World battlefields, the 5<sup>th</sup> Army also underwent reorganization. In the fall of 1943, the Army was assigned the 17th Infantry Division. Since the Army barely maintained order even with these changes, especially from the beginning of 1944, in April of the same year, the newly formed 29th Infantry Division was added to it. For the sake of “maintaining order”, the Bulgarian occupier formed certain special detachments, such as „Kontračetnici“, the Gendarmerie and the “Benkovski” and the “Vardar” detachments, and together with the Germans – the “Birman” detachment. The reorganization also affected the police. The units of the Bulgarian army remained on the territory of Yugoslavia until the beginning of September 1944, when they began to withdraw to Bulgaria due to the decision of the Bulgarian government to break diplomatic relations with Germany and to sign an armistice with the Allies (order to withdraw from Serbia on August 17 and order to withdraw from Macedonia on September 6).<sup>18</sup>

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Поппетров, „Идейно-политическите схващания на 'Съюз на българските национални легиони' и „Ратници за напредъка на българщината’ в годините на Втората световна война“, *Исторически преглед*, XLVII, 6, (1991), 53–67; Ванче Стојчев, „Формирањето и соработката на колаборационистичките организации во Македонија 1941–1944 година“, *Гласник*, XLVIII, бр. 1–2, (2004), 65–82.

<sup>18</sup> Boro Mitrovski, Venceslav Glišić i Tomo Ristovski, *Bugaraska vojska u Jugoslaviji 1941–1945* (Beograd: Međunarodna politika, 1971); M. Stojiljković, *op. cit.*, 119–220; Ванче Стојчев, *Бугарскиот окупациски систем во Македонија 1941–1944* (Скопје: ИП „Григор

The complex and the numerous Bulgarian occupation apparatus and the emergence of resistance caused numerous war crimes. Some of the crimes such as forcible nationalization has already been mentioned. Forced relocation went with them. Immediately after arrival, the Bulgarian occupier began to persecute the “non-Bulgarian” population, primarily the Serbs. Between 25,000 and 45,000 Serbs were evicted from the territory of Macedonia. The property of evicted Serbs was confiscated and nationalized.<sup>19</sup> In addition to forced persecution, the population in the annexed area also fled to Serbia due to fear of Bulgarian reprisals. However, certain persons could not avoid Bulgarian reprisals. The most typical example of war crimes was the mass killing of the civilians. Although compared to the First World War the Bulgarians committed significantly fewer crimes of this nature. However, the brutality with which they were carried out and in the places where civilians were killed tells us that the animosity of certain groups towards Serbs was not an isolated case but the policy of the Bulgarian ruling groups. It is difficult to determine exactly how many civilians were killed by the Bulgarian occupier, but consulting the archival materials we can say with certainty that the number does not exceed 12,000–13,000. The War crimes in the form of killing civilians began with the appearance of civil and then organized resistance. Many citizens who were arrested at the end of 1941 were sentenced to death. With the arrival of the 1<sup>st</sup> Occupation Corps, the number of crimes increased and they took on a mass character. The following crimes stood out: the crimes in Bojnik and the surrounding villages (February 13–18, 1942), in Gornja Stražava (February 20, 1942); the crimes during the offensive on Jastrebac (June 1942); in Vitkovac–Cерово (January 9, 1943); the crimes in the villages around Vladičin Han (February 1943); in Miokovci (mid-February 1943); the crimes in Zaglav, Lužnica, and Nišava municipalities (October 1943), etc., as well as crimes in which they were accomplices with German units (Kriva Reka, October 12, 1942). In addition, the Bulgarian occupier imprisoned, tortured and killed prisoners in various prisons and camps in the occupied territory and in the interior of Bulgaria. Another type of war crimes that was often applied were forced labor and deportation of citizens, forced mobilization, destruction and burning of settlements, looting of public and private property, etc. The deportation of Jews from the annexed territory in March 1943 stood out as a special type of crime. As in the case of evicted Serbs, property of the Jews was confiscated and nationalized.<sup>20</sup>

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Прличев“, 1996), 47–176. See more: Държавен военноисторически архив (ДВИА), фонд 51, 5-та отделна армия; ДВИА, фонд 318, 1 български окупационен корпус.

<sup>19</sup> More about deportations of the population in the Yugoslav territory: Dušan Lukač, „Denacionalizacija, iseljavanje i genocid na Balkanu u toku Drugog svetskog rata“, *Istorija 20. veka*, VI, br. 1–2, (1988), 53–85; Slobodan Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945. godine* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> See: AJ, fond 110 – Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njegovih pomagača. Especially look at the files: odluka za Nikolova, f. br. 481; odluka za Asena Bogdanova, f. br. 781; odluka za Simeona Simova, f. br. 3710; odluka za Stojanova, f. br. 7759; odluka za Todorica Stanimirova, f. br. 661; odluka za Aleksandra Konstantinova Apostolova, f. br. 717; Odluka



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The relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in the Second World War are impossible to see without an insight into the actions of the great powers. In the specific and complicated circumstances that the Second World War brought to the Balkans, these influences were refracted on several levels and appeared in different forms. After the end of the aggression against Yugoslavia and Greece, Germany completely mastered the Bulgarian economic and political space (including the new districts). Economic arrangements were made to the detriment of Bulgaria. In return for receiving territorial expansions, “without a drop of spilled blood”, Bulgaria had to play the role of “Hitler’s Balkan policeman”, especially since it did not send troops to the Eastern Front. In return, the Germans gave the Bulgarians armament (often outdated and trophy ones), while their commandos trained Bulgarian soldiers and officers in special schools. One of these was opened in Niš. According to the orders from Berlin, Bulgaria had to play the role of a buffer zone towards Turkey. The strong connections between Berlin and Sofia began to weaken with the defeats of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front and in the African front. Since then, the Bulgarian political elite, shyly and then increasingly openly, began to seek a way out of the Rome–Berlin Axis through contacts with the Western Allies (Portugal, Switzerland, Turkey). The death of King Boris (August 1943) and the capitulation of Italy (September 1943) caused new changes and direct German interference in the election of the new Bulgarian government and the Regency. However, Germany slowly weakened, and Bulgaria began to establish direct ties with representatives of the Western Allies. At the beginning of September 1944, relations between Bulgaria and Germany were first cut off (September 6), and soon Bulgaria also declared war on Germany (September 8). Germany’s attempts to create the Bulgarian government-in-exile headed by far-right politician Aleksandar Tsankov (Александър Цанков) and the project of “Independent Macedonia” were unrealistic.<sup>21</sup>

Bulgaria had more level relations with the other Axis great power – Italy. However, the relations between these two countries were burdened by the Macedonian territorial issue and could not develop in a friendly spirit. Italy constantly wanted to expand its protectorate of “Greater Albania” more to the

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za Handžijeva, f. br. 483. Димитрије Кулић, *Бугарска окупација Србије 1941–1944. Злочини геноцида Првог бугарског окупационог корпуса у Србији. Том други* (Београд: Јустисија, 1993). More about the atrocities against the Jews: Жамила Колономос и Вера Весковиќ-Вангели, прир., *Евреите во Македонија во Втората светска војна (1941–1945). Зборник на документи. I–II* (Скопје: Македонска академија на науките и уметностите, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> Dušan Lukač, *Treći Rajh i zemlje jugoistočne Evrope. Treći deo. 1941–1945* (Београд: Војноиздавачки и новински центар, Балканолошки институт Српске академије наука и уметности, 1987); Витка Тошкова, *България и Третиот райх (1941–1944), (политически отношения)* (София: Наука и изкуство, 1975); Роберто Трајковски, *Вермахтот и Македонија (1943–1944 година)* (Битола: Аз-Буки, 2018).

east all the way to the Vardar River, while Bulgaria claimed the entire Yugoslav Macedonia for itself. The demarcation line changed several times, but only slightly. After the capitulation of Italy, Germany took control of the territory of “Greater Albania”. Bulgaria again tried to unite all of Macedonia. Nevertheless, the fear of new military and economic engagements made it impossible for Bulgarian statesmen, as Bulgarian historiography claims, to understand the difference between the actions of the 1st Occupation Corps in Serbia and the eventual annexation of Western Macedonia. However, the capitulation of Italy was used to a certain measure, so Bulgaria managed to enter the Prespa area and the border near Ohrid was also corrected.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the relations with the two major Axis powers, we should also mention the relations that Bulgaria had with the two Governments that emerged on the territory of the fragmented Yugoslavia, one quisling that was located in Zagreb and one collaborationist puppet that was located in Belgrade. The relations with The Commissioner Government headed by Milan Aćimović, and later with The Government of National Salvation headed by Milan Nedić, were minimal and in most cases they were realized through the German administration, that is, through the Military Commander of Serbia. The Third Reich gave the Serbian collaborationist puppet administration a semblance of independence in occupied Serbia, and through it increased the level of control and carried out the main occupation and exploitative tasks, so accordingly, the Government of National Salvation did not need a department of foreign affairs. The fact that the Bulgarian consular representation in Belgrade (former Legation) was in contact with the German authorities, while their contact with representatives of the Government of National Salvation was prohibited, speaks volumes about this. However, there were certain indications of foreign policy action, such as the regulation of border railway traffic between occupied Serbia (the territory of the Military commander of Serbia) and Bulgaria.<sup>23</sup> The attitude of the Government of National Salvation towards Bulgaria in the majority of cases was reduced to joint actions of Serbian and Bulgarian armed detachments against the resistance movements. In these military operations, the relations between the units were clearly specified, in which the military units of the Serbian government were in the last place in the terms of the command. On the other hand, due to the pronounced national sentiment among the members of the administrative authorities and military units of the Nedić’s government and the traditional animosity towards the Bulgarians, incidents often broke out between these two groups (over 70 according to the author's research). A few ended with a fatal outcome.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> More in: Илчо Димитров, *Българо-италиански политически отношения* (София: Тилна, 1996); Николай Кочанков, *От надежда към покруса. Западна Македония в Българската външна политика 1941–1944* (София: Херон Прес, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> About regulation of railway traffic see: VA, Nedićeva arhiva (NdA), k. 24A, f. 2, d. 1; VA, arhiva NDH, k. 302, f. 3, d. 9.

<sup>24</sup> More in: Б. Томанић, „Југославија и Бугарска...“, 493–520.

The relation between Bulgaria and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was one of the most cordial relations in the Axis bloc. Bulgaria was among the first to recognize the NDH as a sovereign state on April 19, 1941. Shortly after that, in July 1941, the permanent diplomatic mission of the NDH in Sofia and the Bulgarian in Zagreb began to operate. Strengthening of the relations was permeated by constant visits of social and cultural workers, mutual celebrations of national holidays, military and economic cooperation, etc. Nevertheless, the NDH and Bulgaria achieved the best relations in foreign policy, where they regularly took joint positions, among other things, due to the subordination to German foreign policy. The close cooperation between them was channeled in several directions. First, Bulgaria and the NDH opposed the concept that the Balkans were handed over to the subordination of Italy. Second, the NDH tried to strengthen its position towards Hungary with the help of Bulgaria, while Bulgaria wanted to do the same towards Romania with the help of the NDH. Third, the NDH and Bulgaria identified Serbia as a general threat to the security of the new order and reached a complete agreement that it should be isolated as much as possible and ultimately destroyed. However, the relations were not uniform. Ivan Mihajlov's (Иван Михайлов–Ванчо) stay in Zagreb and his activities brought distrust and complicated relations between Sofia and Zagreb. King Boris's cautious attitudes towards terrorists such as Ante Pavelić also strained the relations to a certain measure that were cut off on September 6, 1944, the same day Bulgaria cut off diplomatic relations with Germany.<sup>25</sup>

The actions and the viewpoints of the Allies were no less complicated. In the crucial days of March 1941, the United Kingdom experienced the failure of its Balkan policy. Diplomatic relations with Bulgaria were cut off on March 5, 1941 and Yugoslavia was torn apart in April 1941. However, the Yugoslav government was located on its territory, and through its intelligence services, the United Kingdom managed to get out left-leaning Bulgarian politicians out of their country. The appearance of the Royalist resistance in Yugoslavia, which was led by Colonel Dragoljub Mihailović, cheered up the British leading circles who, through this and other resistance movements, tried to shake Hitler's European fortress. Bulgaria's declaration of war on the United States and the United Kingdom on December 13, 1941 reversed the previous diplomacy of the two Western powers. Since then, they have taken a tougher stance towards this Balkan country. The United Kingdom declared war on Bulgaria on December 27, 1941, while the United States did the same on June 6, 1942. However, all attempts to shake Bulgaria from the outside remained at a initial level. Attempts were made through Georgi Dimitrov–Gemeto (Георги Димитров–Гемето) the leader of the Bulgarian Agrarian party and Nikola Momchilov (Никола Момчилов) the former Bulgarian diplomatic representative in the United Kingdom, then by throwing leaf-

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<sup>25</sup> More in: Nada Kisić Kolanović, *Zagreb–Sofija. Prijateljstvo po mjeri ratnog vremena 1941–1945* (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, Dom i svijet, 2003); Николай Кочанков, *България и Независимата Хърватска държава 1941–1944. Политически и дипломатически отношения* (София: Херон Прес, 2000).

lets, offering territorial concessions to Bulgarian neighbors, landing allied military missions and opening the Macedonian question and finally, most importantly, bombing Bulgaria (including the annexed territories). Nothing was forced, so the Western Allies had to wait for Bulgaria to open up to them on its own. Armistice negotiations were conducted and were almost brought to an end, but the skillful diplomatic game of the Soviet Union put the Western Allies in a checkmate position. Moscow, after declaring war on Bulgaria and occupying its territory, gained a decisive role in dictating the terms of the armistice. The United Kingdom also gave in, as it was important to achieve its influence in Greece (which it achieved very quickly, but with greater effort).<sup>26</sup>

Directly related to the policy of the Western Allies was the Yugoslav government-in-exile and its Minister of War from 1942, Colonel, then General Dragoljub Mihailović, who led the Yugoslav army in the homeland (Chetniks). Through these institutions, the United Kingdom made efforts to establish stronger ties with like-minded Bulgarians. Before that, the Yugoslav government condemned the Bulgarian occupation of parts of Yugoslavia by announcing on May 4, 1941 that it had been at war with Bulgaria since April 6, 1941.<sup>27</sup> Since then the campaign that has been waged against the Bulgarian occupation has been tepid and superficial and has been reduced to issuing circulars about Bulgarian crimes. Information about committed crimes came from the country from General Mihailović.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the Government has shown much greater involvement in the matter of the Balkan Federation. Although the idea was traced, through the Yugoslav-Greek Balkan Union (supported by the United Kingdom), the final form regarding the establishment of a large South Slavic state stopped in its initial form and was diluted in the philosophical thoughts and conflicts of Bulgarian and Yugoslav emigrants. Yugoslav politicians Momčilo Ninčić, Milan Gavrilović and Milan Grol took the lead in these thoughts (each with his own point of view).<sup>29</sup>

It was similar with General Mihailović, who tried to establish ties with like-minded Bulgarians through contacts with the Bulgarian occupation officers

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Barker, *Britanska politika na Balkanu u II svjetskom ratu* (Zagreb: Globus, 1978); Витка Тошкова, *България в балканската политика на САЩ 1939/1944* (София: Държавно издателство наука и изкуство, 1985). About attempts to sign an armistice with the Western Allies, see: Стойчо Мошанов, *Моята мисия в Кайро* (София: Издателска къща „Български писател“, Издателска къща „Петекс – Ретех“, 1991), 225–386; Slobodan Nešović, *Na žeravici. Pokušaj Bugarske da se povuče iz rata (1943–1944)* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1983).

<sup>27</sup> AJ, 103–24–160, Ninčić – Kraljevskom poslanstvu: London, Bern, Viši, Madrid, Lisabon, Stokholm, Ankara, Kairo, Vašington, Jerusalem, 29. maj 1941, pov. br. 636; AJ, 103–60–280, Вербална нота југословенског амбасадора пов. бр. 824/41.

<sup>28</sup> AJ, 103–114–425, Komisija za istraživanje ratnih zločina, 11. februar 1944, br. 53. See more, e. g.: AJ, 371–22–32, London, 8th of February 1943; AJ, 371–22–32, London, 4th of June, 1943.

<sup>29</sup> See: Милан Гавриловић, *Лондонски дневник* (Београд: Жагор, 2013); Milan Grol, *London-ski dnevnik 1941–1945* (Beograd: „Filip Višnjić“, 1990); Veselin Đuretić, *Vlada na bespuću. Internacionalizacija jugoslovenskih protivrječnosti 1941–1944* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1983).

and “agrarian” politicians who remained in the homeland (some of them he met while he was a military attache in Sofia). At the same time, the relation was established with the “agrarian” leader Georgi Dimitrov–Gemeto. In the occupied country, attempts were made to establish contacts across eastern Serbia. The Bulgarian emigrants who had been in Yugoslavia since the murder of Alexander Stamboliyski (Александър Стамболийски) in 1923 and who were his like-minded were supposed to work towards this goal. Then the Chetnik commanders in those regions Ljubomir Jovanović, Radoslav Đurić and Siniša Ocofoljić were also engaged in these attempts. One of the leaders of the Yugoslav Agrarian Party, Lazar Trklja, was sent to the eastern Serbia especially on this issue. During 1943, General Mihailović expanded the potential circle of friends from Bulgaria and included members of the Political Circle “Zveno” and the faction of IMRO (Вътрешна Македонска Револуционна Организација (ВМРО)) “protogerovisti”. All these contacts remained at the initial level. All contacts ceased after the “9 September *coup d'état*”, when certain people whom Mihailović wanted to rely on, such as Damyan Velchev (Дамјан Велчев) and Ivan Marinov (Ivan Marinov), became influential people in the army.<sup>30</sup>

Much more success in realizing its ambitions was achieved by the Soviet Union, which through its institutions shaped the activities of the Yugoslav and the Bulgarian communist parties. Another circumstance worked in favor of the Soviet Union, namely that during almost the entire war (except for the beginning of September 1944), the diplomatic relations with Bulgaria were not interrupted. On the other hand, the USSR considered that it was actually at war with Bulgaria, since its territory served as a polygon for the German attacks. Therefore, the USSR to a certain measure reorganized the work of the legation in Sofia in a more intelligence way, and went to drop special sabotage groups by parachutes on the Bulgarian territory, but they were all captured. On the other hand, the USSR exerted enormous pressure on the members of the Bulgarian diplomatic mission in Moscow/Kuybyshev. This is also indicated by the fact that certain members of the Bulgarian legation had to withdraw due to “mental disorder”. After barely surviving the operation Barbarossa, Moscow consolidated its ranks and began to pressure the Bulgarians through legal channels and also through subversive activities. The Soviet Union began to realize the military initiative in the Eastern Europe after the battles at Stalingrad and Kursk, skilfully hiding its cards, which it finally opened at the end of the summer of 1944, bringing the Western Allies to a *fait accompli*. Securing military and political superiority in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in September and October 1944, the Kremlin ensured that armistice negotiations took place in the Soviet capital,

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<sup>30</sup> More in: Milan Ristović, „Dragoljub Draža Mihailović i bugarska građanska opozicija (1941–1944)“, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 3, (1984), 183–202; Борис Томанић, „Сарадња равногорског покрета са бугарским организацијама и појединцима“, у: *Други светски рат 75 година касније. Том 1*, уредници Далибор Денда, Бојан Димитријевић и Дмитар Тасић (Београд: Институт за стратегијска истраживања, Институт за новију историју Србије, Институт за савремену историју, Универзитет у Бањој Луци, 2021), 261–283.

rather than in Cairo. Representatives of the Yugoslav and the Greek governments did not participate in these negotiations, despite their great desires. Delegates of the new government of the Fatherland Front signed the armistice on October 28, 1944.<sup>31</sup>

The relations between the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) and the Communist Party of Bulgaria (CPB) developed under Moscow's wing and during the Second World War they suffered several ups and downs. At the epicenter of the relations between these two parties was disagreement over the solving of the “unsolvable” Macedonian question. Although the Comintern sided with the Yugoslav communists, the Macedonian question was far from resolved and failed to be closed, partly due to the attitude of Georgi Dimitrov (Георги Димитров) who, in addition of acting as the general secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, also acted as a Bulgarian.<sup>32</sup> The Macedonian question was closed to a certain measure when the federal status of Macedonia in the frame of Yugoslavia was regulated at the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia and later by the decisions in Vis on June 24, 1944. The relations between the two parties was also marked by the question of the establishment of the Balkan Headquarters, which the Comintern initiated in the fall of 1942 in response to the potential landing of the Western Allies in the Balkans and to the formation of Army Group E in the southern Greece by Germany. Communist special operative Svetozar Vukmanović was sent to Macedonia because of this. Although certain results were achieved, at the end of 1943 Moscow abandoned this idea, which, in addition to the military, also had a political dimension, and left it for after the war. Svetozar Vukmanović remained in the southern parts of Yugoslavia with a different role that the CPY got after the descent of the Soviet mission in the communist headquarters. Since then, the main activity of the CPY, in the context of the relations between the two parties, has been reduced to the formation of partisan units composed of Bulgarians, their arming and sending to Bulgaria.<sup>33</sup> These units, as well as various partisan detachments, fought dozens of bat-

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<sup>31</sup> More in: *Коминтерн и Вторая мировая война. Часть II, после 22 июня 1941 г.*, сос., Н. С. Лебедева и М. М. Наринский (Москва: „Памятники исторической мысли“, 1998); Елена Любомировна Валева, „България в годы второй мировой войны“, в: *България в XX век. Очерки политической истории*, редакция Елена Любомировна Валева (Москва: Институт Славяноведения, 2003), 262–301; Петя Димитрова, „Българската легация в СССР (1940–1941) – поглед отвътре“, в: *Призвание и всеотдайност. В чест на 70-годишния юбилей и 40-годишната научна дейност на проф. д.и.н. Витка Тошкова*, съставители Луиза Ревякина и др. (София: Академично издателство „Проф. Марин Дринов“, 2011), 230–241.

<sup>32</sup> See: Георги Димитров, *Дневник (9 март 1933–6 февруари 1949)* (София: Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски“, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> *БКП, Коминтернът и македонският въпрос (1917–1946). Том втори*, със., Чочо Билярски и Ива Бурилкова (София: Главно управление на архивите при Министерския съвет, 1999); Костадин Палешутски, *Югославската комунистическа партия и македонският въпрос 1919–1945* (София: Издателство на Българската академия на науките, 1985); Svetozar Vukmanović *Tempo, Revolucija koja teče. Memoari. Knjiga druga–Knjiga treća* (Zagreb: Globus, 1982).

tles with the Bulgarian occupying units. The author identified over 370 major battles between the partisans and the Bulgarian units; two numbers of the victims of the Bulgarian army are given. The first number was obtained primarily from the analysis of “partisan” sources. According to them about 5,300 Bulgarian officers and soldiers were killed or fallen. The second number given represents the analysis made by the Bulgarian People's Court, most likely at the beginning of 1946. According to these data, the 1st Occupation Corps had 4,628 hors de combat: 968 killed, 384 wounded, 3,276 missing. The Bulgarian 5<sup>th</sup> Army in Macedonia had 3,912 hors de combat: 698 killed, 934 wounded and 2,280 missing. It should be added that the numbers given by the Bulgarian People's Court also include those who were killed by the Yugoslav Royalist Resistance (Chetniks).<sup>34</sup>

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With the arrival of the Fatherland Front in power in Bulgaria and the securing of Josip Broz's position in Yugoslavia, the conditions were created for the two neighbor countries to start again on the path of rapprochement. However, the inherited problems and events from the occupation period made the Yugoslav side distrustful of rapprochement with Bulgaria. However, everything was quickly smoothed by the Soviet Union. In the months at the end of the Second World War, the relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were first marked by military cooperation, which was given official form by the Craiova Agreement on October 5, 1944. The Bulgarian People's Army (BPA) in Yugoslavia engaged the 1<sup>st</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> Army in the first part of the “Patriotic War”, while in the second phase of the “Patriotic War” the BPA sent the newly formed 1<sup>st</sup> Army (with six divisions).<sup>35</sup> At the end of the Second World War, according to the data prepared for the Paris Peace Conference, the BPA had over 30,000 officers and soldiers hors de combat.<sup>36</sup>

Behind the military cooperation in the southern parts of Yugoslavia, and then on the Strymian front, a far more serious story was hidden – the creation of the Balkan Federation. The idea, which at one point was within reach of realization, was soon abandoned due to the opposition of the Western Allies, but also due to the raising of a series of questions regarding the internal organization of the Federation. In addition, the Macedonian question was reopened. For Bulgarians, Macedonia represented a national ideal, so they approached this issue very vigorously. On the other hand, the Yugoslav state

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<sup>34</sup> ЦДА, фонд 1476, Васил Петров Коларов (1877–1950), опис. 3, архивна единица 1661, лист. 1; Б. Томанић, „Југославија и Бугарска...“, 805–866.

<sup>35</sup> Kaloyan Matev, *Red Wind over the Balkanas. The Soviet offensive south of the Danube, September–October 1944* (Warwick: Helion & Company Ltd, 2019); Slobodan Nešović, *Jugoslavija–Bugarska, ratno vreme 1941–1945* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, Prosveta, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1978), 25–238.

<sup>36</sup> ЦДА, ф. 1476, оп. 3, а.е. 1661, л. 1; ЦДА, фонд 1484, Министерство на външните работи – Парижка мирна конференција, оп. 1, а.е. 25, л. 4, 6.

leadership, which considered itself a unique revolutionary force, did not want to give in to the Bulgarians. On this issue, Svetozar Vukmanović was particularly harsh. He spent most of the war in Macedonia building the Yugoslav party organization and massing the movement in military form. The question of the unification of the Yugoslav and the Bulgarian parts of Macedonia was practically ended when the Bulgarians raised a counter-question – obtaining the Caribrod and Bosiljgrad municipalities. Also, the enormous diplomatic pressure of the USA and the United Kingdom was successful, so the border between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria remained unchanged, which was confirmed at the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>37</sup>

In the months when the Second World War was entering its final phase, the cooperation between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria began to be built through mutual visits, and on December 1, 1944, it took official form. Former Minister of Finance Petar Todorov (Петър Тодоров) was then appointed as the political representative and the extraordinary emissary of Bulgaria in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, General-major Vladimir Popović, who came to the capital of Bulgaria on January 12, 1945, performed the informal ministerial function in Bulgaria.<sup>38</sup> The new Bulgarian government sent material and financial aid to Yugoslavia. A very important act in the context of Bulgarian aid was the reception of Yugoslav children in Bulgaria. These were socially vulnerable children from the territory of Yugoslavia (war orphans, children from the poor families, refugees etc.). Over 11,200 children passed through various Bulgarian shelters from January to October 1945.<sup>39</sup> At the end of 1944, in accordance with the terms of the armistice, the trials of the war criminals began in Bulgaria. The Yugoslav public followed these trials with special attention. According to the data of the Bulgarian People's Court, probably since the beginning of 1946, a total of 2,850 people were sentenced to death, 1,366 to life imprisonment, 4,652 to one to 20 years in prison, and 690 were sentenced to one year probation. It should be added that, according to the estimates of Bulgarian historians, around 3,000 people were killed without trials, most of them for ideological reasons. A certain number of persons were extradited to Yugoslavia as war criminals, which was positively evaluated by the Yugoslav side.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See: Živko Avramovski, „Devet projekata ugovora o jugoslovensko-bugarskom savezu i federaciji (1944–1947)“, *Istorija 20. veka*, I, br. 2, (1983), 91–124; Branko Petranović, *Balkanska federacija: 1943–1948* (Šabac: Zaslona, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> AJ, fond 112, Novinska agencija „Tanjug“, 782–783, Пласти билтен, 1. 12. 1944, „Петар Тодоров наименован за посланика при влади маршала Тита“; AJ, 112–783–784, Пласти билтен, 21. 1. 1945, „Бугарски намесници примили генерала Поповић“; *Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije* (DA MSP), Poverljiva arhiva, godina 1945, država Bugarska, fascikla 5, dosije 14, dokument 1123. Further: DA MSP, PA, 1945, Bugarska, f. 5, dos. 14, dok. 1123.

<sup>39</sup> More in: Petar Dragišić, „Zbrinjavanje jugoslovenske dece u Bugarskoj 1945. godine“, *Istorija 20. veka*, XIX, br. 2, (2001), 103–110.

<sup>40</sup> ЦДА, ф. 1476, оп. 3, а.е. 1661, л. 1; *История на съвременна България. Сборник документи. Том 1 (1944–1947)*, със., Любомир Огнянов (София: Главно управление на архивите при Министерския съвет, 2016), 6, 42–45, 97–101.



In 1945, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria began to achieve full momentum in their relations, which was crowned in May of the same year by the establishment of formal diplomatic relations. The Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted Petar Todorov as the Minister and on May 8 gave approval for his appointment. On the same day, Nikola Kovačević was appointed as the Yugoslav Minister in Sofia, He hand over his credentials to the Bulgarian regents upon his arrival in Sofia on May 22, 1945.<sup>41</sup> The cooperation of the two countries, which were already part of the Eastern Bloc at the time, was also shown at the Paris Peace Conference (July 25–October 15, 1946), although the Yugoslav delegation constantly complained about the Bulgarians bad behavior. However, the instructions from Belgrade and Moscow were clear, so the Yugoslav delegation took Bulgaria under its protection, while the main blade was directed towards to the Western powers and their allies. Bulgaria signed the peace treaty on February 10, 1947, which put an end to the country's participation in the Second World War. Good relations between the two countries continued until the Yugoslav conflict with the Cominform in 1948, which again brought the Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations to a boiling point.<sup>42</sup>

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THE RELATIONS BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND BULGARIA  
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1939-1945):  
GENERAL REVIEWS AND ANALYSES

*Summary*

The article covers the period from the beginning of the negotiations for the accession of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to the Axis Powers and the beginning of the German aggression in the Balkans in 1939/1941 until the coming to power of new political actors in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and the end of the Second World War in 1944/1945. The issue of the Bulgarian occupation of parts of Yugoslavia in the period 1941-1944 was analyzed in particular. Its character and intensity appeared in various destructive forms, from Bulgarisation carried out through various propaganda and educational institutions to the war crimes against humanity. The relations between the two countries, as well as the Bulgarian occupation of parts of Yugoslavia, are impossible to see without an insight into the actions of the great powers. Thus, the involvement of the USA, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Germany and Italy in this matter represented another important moment in the shaping of the events in the Balkans. The influence of the great powers was particularly reflected in the activities of the Royalist (Chetniks) and National Liberation movement (Partisans) and the Yugoslav government-in-exile. The final phase of the Second World War brought a change in the balance of power in the military and political sense. With the coming to power of the pro-Soviet-oriented governments in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in the final months of the war, the conditions were created for the two neighboring countries to start again on the path of rapprochement. In this sense, special attention was given to the analysis of the joint action of the two countries in the military, cultural, economic and diplomatic fields.

**KEYWORDS:** Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Second World War, Occupation, War Crimes, Axis Powers, Allies