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THE VERSAILLES ORDER
AND THE YALTA–POTSDAM SETTLEMENT
IN THE BALKANS: COMPARATIVE APPROACH

The most characteristic feature of the international situation in the Balkans in recent times was its changeability and extreme complexity. The frequency and turbulence of those changes fully authorize the naming of this region as “a barrel of powder” or “the soft abdomen of Europe”, and the permanent adoption of the term “Balkanization” by the nomenclature of international relations and diplomacy.

The transformations taking place in the Balkans predicated the main trends of the foreign policy of those states, the character of their mutual relations and those with their extra-Balkan neighbours. The international situation in this region of Europe was also in a large measure determined by the instability of the internal situation of the Balkan states and by the expansionism of their governing circles, connected with their newly gained independence and reflecting their young nationalisms. The nationalist attitudes were also fuelled by mutual animosities between the Balkan nations, nations of different origin, whose ill-feelings were based on megalomania, myths and stereotypes, which glorified themselves and slighted foreigners. Almost permanent feuds in the Balkans were additionally fostered by ethnic, political and religious separatisms.

On the other hand the political climate of South-Eastern Europe was strongly affected by the distribution of power on the European, and even the world scene, by the conflict of interests between the Great Powers and their interference in the affairs of the Balkan countries. Considerable influence on the international situation of this part of our continent was also exerted by economic factors, especially the backwardness and dependence of Balkan states on foreign markets and capitals.

At the beginning of the 19th c. almost all the Balkan countries remained under the dominion of the Ottoman Empire, and only a small part of them

stayed within the borders of the Hapsburg monarchy. The gradual shrinking of Turkish dominion in this region of Europe as a result of an internal crisis in Turkey, and its weakening by the wars with Russia, favoured the aspirations of the Balkan nations for liberation. This process, backed up by the European Great Powers, led to the revival of a number of national states in the Balkans, which gradually enlarged their area at the cost of the local Ottoman provinces. However, the complicated territorial, national and religious conflicts that soon emerged in relations between the newly-risen states, and the contradictory aspirations of their ruling circles made difficult their mutual understanding and the creation of common front of struggle against the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian invaders.

On the other hand this unfortunate state of affairs facilitated foreign interference in the internal and foreign policy of the Balkan countries. The crucial factor determining the interest of the Great Powers in this region of Europe was above all its strategic value, and precisely its situation in the close vicinity of the eastern part of the Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea Straits, which especially attracted the attention of Russia, England, Austro-Hungary and Germany. The Balkan countries as a bridge connecting Europe to the Middle-East and Asia, after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and especially after its military control was taken over by Great Britain in 1882¹, constituted a convenient base for closer (and therefore quicker and cheaper) communication with the colonial properties of England and France in Asia. Not of negligible importance to the Great Powers were also markets in the backward Balkan countries and their agricultural and rawmaterial resources.

When comparing the international situation in the Balkans after World War I and after World War II it must be stated that the above-mentioned determinants were of paramount importance to the shaping of this situation both in the first and in the second period. Thus the international situation of this part of Europe was, generally speaking, determined by the legacy of its turbulent past, with all its closer and more distant consequences, as well as by the interference of the Great Powers that was in fact a dictate. This dictate found its most telling expression in the establishment of a territorial-national order in the Balkan region both after World War I and after World War II. Thus the authorship of the political map of this region in both periods belonged to the Great Powers, and more precisely to their victorious allian-

¹ Z. Dobosiewicz, T. Olszewski, *Geografia ekonomiczna świata (World Economic Geography)*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 432-433.

ces. Thus the *status quo* of South-Eastern Europe was established not by local, but by global factors and in this events consists the fundamental analogy between two discussed period of the Balkan international situation. After World War I of constitutive character were here the resolutions of the Entente Powers: France, Great Britain and the United States, comprised in the peace treaties making up the so-called Versailles system, while after World War II — the decisions of the Great Coalition Powers: the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, embodied in the peace treaties that were included, besides other settlements, in the Yalta-Potsdam Conferences. However, in contradistinction to the period after World War I, when none of the Great Powers established its hegemony in the Balkans, the period after World War II was above all marked by the supremacy of the Soviet Union, which after 1945 dominated a major part of South-Eastern Europe.

The features most characteristic of the international situation in the Balkans after 1918 were certainly the vast and conflictogenic territorial transformations of the states in this region. They came about as the result of the downfall of the three invading empires (above all Austro-Hungary, in a considerable measure Ottoman Turkey and in a small degree — the Tsarist Russia) as well as the defeat of Bulgaria. The disintegration of the Hapsburg monarchy decided by the peace treaties in Saint Germain in September 1919 and at Trianon in June 1920 brought about the union of Rumanian lands, as the result of annexation to Rumania of Transylvania, Bukovina and the northern part of Banat². The downfall of the Austro-Hungarian empire created also premises for the rise of a new state in the Balkans, namely Yugoslavia. Earlier, however, due to the separation of the territories inhabited by Southern Slavs from Cisleithania and Transleithania, in October 1918 there came into being sovereign statehoods of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs³. Later on, in the wake of the integration of Southern-Slav nations in the Balkans on November 26, 1918, a union of Montenegro with Serbia was concluded, enlarged by the Serbian Voivodina (Western Banat). Only later, not without considerable inhibitions and hesitation, dictated on the one hand

² W. Bałcerak, *Zjednoczenie ziem rumuńskich jesienią 1918 r. (The Unification of Rumanian lands in The Autumn 1918)*, in: "Z dziejów stosunków polsko-radzieckich i rozwoju wspólnoty państw socjalistycznych" vol. XX, pp. 3–17, see also: Ch. Upson Clark, *United Roumania*, New York 1971.

³ The state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs embraced among others such lands as Slovenia, Styria, Trieste, Istria, Dalmatia, Mediumurie, Croatia and Slavonia as well as Bośnia and Heregovina. W. Bałcerak, *Powstanie państw narodowych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej (The Rise of National States in East Central Europe)*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 365–371; T. Wasilewski, J. Skowronek, M. Tanty, *Historia Słowian południowych i zachodnich (The History of Southern and Western Slavs)*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 592–596.

by a fear of the hegemony of Belgrade and on the other of Italian expansionism, the state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs decided finally in December 1918 to create together with Serbia and Montenegro a common state organism under the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes⁴

On the other hand the end of the Ottoman empire that was effected in the Balkans on the strength of the Treaty of Sèvres of August 10, 1920, resulted in the transmission of Eastern Thrace and the Anatolian region of Smyrna to Greece and a change of the status of Black Sea Straits to the disadvantage of the Turks. It should, however, be remembered that Turkey, due to the victory of the Kemal Pasha revolution, the defeat of Greece in the 1919–1922 war, and the signing in 1923 at Lausanne of a new treaty, regained these territories⁵. It is worth mentioning that this question was an exception from the principle of the ubiquitous dictate of Entente Powers in the Balkans after World War I.

Finally the downfall of Tsarist Russia brought about in the Balkans the annexation of Bessarabia to the Rumanian state. As for the territorial changes in this region resulting from the defeat of Bulgaria and the Treaty of Neuilly dictated to it in November 1919, it should be stressed that although they were not so vast and, in contradistinction to the above-mentioned modifications of the political map of the Balkans, did not create or unite any national states, they had considerable gravity too. For the loss by the Bulgarians of Western Thrace (which was their only access to open sea, i.e. Aegean Sea), in favour of Greece, the loss of Southern Dobruja in favour of Rumania and the loss of frontier territories near the cities of Zaribrod, Bosilevgrad and Strumitsa in favour of Yugoslavia, deprived the Bulgarian state of fundamental strategic and economic values, which became the source of Sofia's revisionism⁶. This revisionism lay heavy on the international situation of the Balkans most of the inter-war period, along with the revisionism of Hungary and Italy. The revisionist aspirations of the these three states went hand in hand with the irredentism and terrorism of their national minorities, which the latter demonstrated as a reaction to the compulsory resettlements and the policy of denationalization and discrimi-

⁴ T. Wasilewski, J. Skowronek, M. Tanty, *Historia Słowian*, pp. 626–628.

⁵ M. Tanty, *Bosfor i Dardanelle w polityce mocarstw (The Bosphorus and the Dardanelles in the Policy of the Great Powers)*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 330–352; T. Wituch, *Tureckie przemiany. Dzieje Turcji 1878–1923 (The Turkish Transformations. The History of Turkey 1878–1923)*, Warszawa 1980, p. 249 ff.

⁶ For a more extensive discussion of Bulgarian revisionism see: E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Sprawa Tracji Zachodniej w polityce bułgarskiej 1919–1947 (The Question of Western Thrace in Bulgarian Policy 1919–1947)*, Warszawa 1991.

nation they suffered from the authorities of the Balkan countries into which this population was absorbed⁷.

This state of affairs naturally was a danger to the stabilization in the Balkans of the *status quo* whose foundations were, anyway, weak. Although, in contrast to Central Europe, revisionism in the Balkan region took a milder form, yet one should bear in mind that apart from revisionist claims officially voiced with more or less stress by Rome, Budapest or Sofia, which constituted the basis programme of their foreign policy, also on the part of pro-Versailles Balkan countries there were strivings for various territorial changes. Thus Rumania made a claim for the shifting of its border with Hungary west up to the river Tisza, and it was in conflict with Czechoslovakia over Maramuresh. Yugoslavia, in its turn, manifested the greatest dissatisfaction because of its territorial concessions on the Dalmatian coast in favour of Italy. Nor was Belgrade satisfied with granting Rumania a major part of Banat, and to Austria the contestable part of Styria, Carniola and Carinthia. Moreover the Yugoslav leadership did not lose sight of the potential annexation of Salonika, which would give Yugoslavia free access to the Aegean Sea, and a correction of the border with Albania. Doubtless the country with most serious cause for frustration after World War I was Greece, as the lands accorded to it, as an ally of the Entente, by the Treaty of Sèvres, i.e. Eastern Thrace and part of the Western Coast of the Anatolian Peninsula, had to be returned to Turkey after a lost war. Besides Athens claimed to acquire Monastir, which was a Serbian possession, as well as some Albanian lands⁸.

The exchange of territories carried out in the Balkans after World War I differed not only in respect of their size or origin but also in the degree in which it satisfied historical justice. However, it must be stressed that in practice this criterion makes an objective assessment impossible, since the Balkan realities were too complicated for an unequivocal statement whether the given modification of the area of the given state was a justified decision or not. What to one country — a beneficiary of the given treaty — was just, to another, at whose cost this change took place, was harmful. This relativism was especially flagrant in the case of territories inhabited by several nationalities in large agglomerations, as e.g. in Transylvania, where side by

⁷ K. Manchev, E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Kwestie narodowościowo-terytorialne w polityce zagranicznej Bułgarii w latach międzywojennych (National-Territorial Problems in the Foreign Policy of Bulgaria in the Inter-War Period)*, "Kraje Socjalistyczne", vol. I, № 1-4, Warszawa 1985, p. 115 ff.

⁸ W. Balcerak, *System wersalski a państwa Bałkańskie 1919-1939 (The Versailles System and the Balkan States 1919-1939)*, in: *Państwa bałkańskie w polityce imperializmu niemieckiego (The Balkan States in the Politics of German Imperialism)*, Poznań 1982, p. 134; K. Manchev, *Jugosławiya i mezhdunarodniite otnošeniya na Balkanite 1933-1939*, Sofiya 1989, p. 15 ff.

side with uniform Rumanian blocks there lived considerable groups of population by large percentage Hungarian, or in Western Thrace, settled in similar proportions by Turks, Bulgarians and Greeks (i.e. until the moment of signing the Greek–Turkish agreement on the exchange of population after 1923)⁹. Nevertheless it would hardly be possible to consider as unjust the fact that Croats, Slovenes and Serbs from the area of the former Austro–Hungarian monarchy gained their independence, which found expression in the creation of a sovereign state of Serbia–Croatia–Slovenia, before the creation with Serbia and Montenegro of the Kingdom of Serbia–Croatia–Slovenia.

In contrast to the spectacular territorial changes that took place in the Balkans after World War I, after World War II the configuration of the borders between the states in this region remained mostly intact. Generally speaking, some small corrections were made to the political map, but they rather concerned peripheral areas. The annexations enforced by totalitarian powers during the war were for the most part annulled by adequate peace treaties. This especially concerned Albania, seized by Italy in April 1939¹⁰, Transylvania, handed over to Hungary by Rumania under the pressure of Hitler and Mussolini in August 1940, as well as Yugoslavian lands occupied by Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria, and the Greek lands occupied by Germany, Italy and Bulgaria, as the result of the assault of Yugoslavia and Greece by the Third Reich in April 1941¹¹.

However, the principle acknowledging the invalidity of the territorial changes carried out by totalitarian powers *manu militari*, or under a diplomatic pressure, during the war, had two exceptions in the Balkans, namely Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, taken by the Red Army in June 1940. They remained after World War II within the borders of the Soviet Union¹². This settlement was the result of the occupation of East Central Europe by the Soviet Army, and its recognition by the Anglo–Saxon powers as Moscow's sphere of influence. This state of affairs in a large measure contributed to the retention of Southern Dobruja by Bulgaria, although this territory was

⁹ E. Znamierowska–Rakk, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–70, Upson Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 94; H. Bałowski, *Rozpad Austro–Węgier 1914–1918 (The Disintegration of Austro–Hungary 1914–1918)*, Kraków 1982, p. 26.

¹⁰ See peace treaty with Italy signed in 1947. *European Peace Treaties after World War II. Negotiations and Texts of Treaties with Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Finland*, Washington 1954.

¹¹ E. Znamierowska–Rakk, *Bulgaria wobec napaści III Rzeszy na Jugosławię i Grecję w 1941 r. (Bulgaria in the Face of the Attack of the Third Reich on Yugoslavia and Greece in 1941)*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny" 1985, № 3, pp. 603–620.

¹² A. Koryn, *Rumunia w polityce wielkich mocarstw 1944–1947 (Rumania in the Politics of the Great Powers 1944–1947)*, Wrocław — Warszawa — Kraków — Gdańsk — Łódź 1983, p. 217 ff.

annexed to the Bulgarian state in September 1940 by force applied to Rumania by the fascist powers. The fact that after the war Bulgaria found itself in the Soviet bloc allowed Stalin to identify Bulgarian interests with his own gains. However, in contrast to the annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina by the Soviet Union, Dobruja, formally speaking, fell to Bulgaria on the strength of a Bulgarian–Rumanian agreement, acknowledged even by Great Britain¹³.

As regards the remaining modifications of the political map of the Balkans after World War II, one should mention the regaining in 1947 by Greece of the Dodecanese Islands, and by Yugoslavia of Istria, Zadar, Rijeka and Western Carniola, lost in the past to Italy. Trieste at the beginning had a status of a free city and only in 1954 its Anglo–American zone was annexed to Italy, while the remaining part — to Yugoslavia¹⁴.

A survey of territorial changes carried out in the Balkans after World War II leads to a conclusion that despite the efforts on the part of Balkan and extra-Balkan revisionist states, aimed at a substantial modification of the Balkan order, after 1945 *status quo ante bellum* was restored in principle. Thus it should be acknowledged that the process of fundamental formation of the areas and borders of the states of South–Eastern Europe took place after World War I, since the territorial settlements of the Versailles system in relation to this region turned out, generally speaking, to be enduring.

While the international situation in the Balkans after World War I was mainly determined by considerable territorial transformations, after World War II its dominant feature was a radical political transformation that took place within the four Balkan states. The systemic transformation carried out in the communist spirit in Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and Rumania was a consequence of the seizure in the last stage of war of almost the whole Balkans by the Red Army — what I mentioned above — the more or less ready consent of the United States and Great Britain to turning East Central Europe into a zone of Soviet influence. In this way Moscow ensured for itself military and political control of these four Balkan states. Although the presence of Soviet Army and the political support given by the Kremlin to the local communists created favourable conditions for intercepting by them the power in the Balkans, nevertheless this question appeared different in

¹³ E. Znamierowska–Rakk, *Sprawa Tracji Zachodniej*, pp. 153–163; Public Record Office, Foreign Office 371/24878; E. Barker, *British Policy in South–East Europe in the Second World War*, London 1976, p. 57; for the text of the peace treaty with Bulgaria see: J. J a c k o w i e z, *Traktat pokojowy z Bułgarią z 1947 r. (The Peace Treaty with Bulgaria of 1947)*, “Z dziejów stosunków polsko–radzieckich”, vol. XIV, Warszawa 1976, pp. 163–197.

¹⁴ European Peace Treaties: *The Little Oxford Dictionary of 20th Century World History*, London 1992, p. 602.

Yugoslavia and Albania than in Bulgaria and Rumania. In contrast to those latter states, to which communism was brought definitely on the bayonets of the Red Army¹⁵, the Soviet military factor was only of secondary importance to the interception of power by the communists in Yugoslavia, while it had nothing to do with Albania. Before Soviet Army appeared in the Balkans in 1944, the position of Yugoslavian and Albanian communists in their own countries had already been well-entrenched. This state of affairs was the result not only the developed and active Yugoslavian partisan organization, which supported the Albanian partisan movement (both fighting apart from their occupier also against some competitive armed formations of their native political adversaries), but also of the effective military aid provided by Great Britain, and to a smaller extent, by the United States¹⁶.

The imposition of communism on the four Balkan states and their inclusion soon after the end of World War II in the Soviet bloc on the one hand, and the defeat of the Greek communists in civil war and the granting of American assistance to Greece and Turkey after the declaration of the so-called Truman doctrine in 1947 — on the other, determined the dichotomical division of the Balkans after 1945. Thus in contrast to the politico-systemic uniformity that, generally speaking, existed in this region after World War I, after World War II the South-Eastern Europe was divided into two contrasting ideological and political system, which at the same time effected the allegiance of the given Balkan states to two antagonistic military blocs and two diametrically different economic groups. It is worth mentioning that this polarization made the Balkans lose their homogeneous regional character and caused them to become for many decades a peripheral area at the junction line of the two worlds: the communist one, given also the name of Eastern Europe, embracing Yugoslavia, Albania, Rumania and Bulgaria, and the capitalist one, called “the West”, represented by Greece and Turkey.

¹⁵ Z. Brzeziński, *Jedność czy konflikty (Unity or Conflicts)*, Londyn 1964, p. 7 ff. More extensive discussion in: Nelson Daniel N., *Balkan Imbroglia. Politics and Security in Southern Europe*, Boulder 1991; W. Griffith, *The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Detente*, Lexington 1976; H. Bartoszewicz, *Sowiecka polityka dominacji w Europie Środkowej i Południowo-Wschodniej 1944–1947 (Soviet Policy of Domination in Central and South-Eastern Europe 1944–1947)*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne”, fasc. 107, Kraków 1993, pp. 35–48.

¹⁶ M. J. Zacharias, *System stalinowski w Jugosławii w latach 1944–1949 (The Stalinist System in Yugoslavia in the Years 1944–1949)*, “Kwartalnik Historyczny”, Warszawa 1992, № 3, pp. 65–75; idem, *Powstanie i modyfikacja systemu komunistycznego w Jugosławii w latach 1941–1950 (The Rise and Modification of the Communist System in Yugoslavia in the Years 1941–1950)*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego” fasc. 107, pp. 191–196; A. Koseski emphasizes the dependence of Albania’s liberation on the victorious operations of the Red Army in the Balkans, however, this had only an indirect effect: A. Koseski, *Albania, krótki zarys dziejów (Albania: A Short Outline of History)*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 105–110.

It should be stressed that the demarcation line between those two categories of states in the Balkans, despite many events over the post-war decades that more or less blunted its acuteness, did not undergo any essential modification up to the downfall of the Yalta-Potsdam system after 1989. Neither the break of Yugoslavia with Soviet Union and its satellites in 1948, resulting in deep enmity mutual relations at least up to 1955, and in the temporary rapprochement between Belgrade and Athens and Ankara, expressed in the ephemeral Balkan Pact of 1954¹⁷, nor the exclusion *de facto* of Albania from the so-called Socialist Commonwealth in 1961¹⁸, nor the Greek-Turkish conflict over Cyprus¹⁹, did affect the dichotomy of the Balkan that appeared in this region after World War II.

Nevertheless in the later years the process of differentiation of the Balkan communist states was deepened by the fact that Belgrade turned towards the so-called Third World states and the movement of non-commitment as well as towards the West and China²⁰, Tirana made an alliance with Beijing²¹, and Bucharest no longer subordinated itself to the directives of the Kremlin that obliged its satellites at the international level. By way of example one can quote here such moves of the Rumanian leadership as: a rapprochement with Bonn before the relations between West Germany and the Soviet Union were regulated, maintenance of diplomatic relations with Israel after 1967 despite the stand of Moscow on this matter, flirtation with China or refusal to take part in the pacification of Czechoslovakia in 1968²².

All this loosened even more the already slack cohesion of the states of communist camp in the Balkans. This phenomenon was aggravated, apart from the differentiated orientations in foreign policy, also by worsening multilateral relations between communist Balkan states. Namely the relations were embittered between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria because of the Macedonian conflict that periodically got more and more publicity (which does not mean that this state of affairs was without ulterior motives)²³,

¹⁷ For the origin, function and decline of the Balkan Pact see: J. O. Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle. Birth and Decline of an Alliance across Ideological Boundaries*, The Hague 1968.

¹⁸ For more extensive discussion of Albanian politics see: W. Dziak, *Albania pomiędzy Belgradem, Moskwą i Pekinem (Albania between Belgrade, Moscow and Beijing)*, Warszawa 1991.

¹⁹ B. Nitecka-Jagiello, *Anatomia konfliktu (The Anatomy of Conflict)*, Warszawa 1975; S. G. Xydīs, *Cyprus: Reluctant Republic*, The Hague 1973.

²⁰ M. Minić, *Spolnyinapolitika Jugoslaviye 1973-1980*, Beograd 1980, II. Ognik, *Aktywne niezaintegrowanie (The Active Non-commitment)*, Warszawa 1973

²¹ W. Dziak, *op. cit.*, p. 141 ff.

²² More extensively: F. Gołembski, *Polityka zagraniczna Rumunii (The Foreign Policy of Rumania)*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe", Warszawa 1977, N° 7-8, pp. 64-79; A. Braun, *Romanian Foreign Policy since 1965*, New York 1978.

²³ J. Tomaszewski, *Trudna droga do socjalizmu. Bułgaria 1944-1971 (The Difficult Path to Socialism. Bulgaria 1944-1981)*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 243-244, 298-302, 355-360.

between Albania and Yugoslavia as a consequence of the bitter antagonism between the Albanian leadership and the Yugoslavian *verkhushka*²⁴, and the ostracism shown in politics by Tirana towards Sofia, as a faithful vassal of Moscow²⁵. Also along the Bucharest–Sofia line there were misunderstandings and clashes which could not always be toned down by the external affability of the two “brother countries”, manifested for the sake of propaganda in order to mislead the international opinion²⁶. It should, however, be stated that Rumania as well as Bulgaria, despite these or other emancipation moves of Bucharest, have formally survived within the structures imposed from on high by the Kremlin until their disassemblage after 1989. Relatively good co–operation developed only between Bucharest and Belgrade²⁷.

On the other side of the “iron curtain” in the Balkans, the Greek–Turkish relations were embittered because of a new phase of the conflict over Cyprus, and also the emergency of a controversy over the territorial waters and the continental shelf on the Aegean Sea. On the ground of these controversies the internal situation of both these countries was unsettled, as a result of which in 1967 the power in Greece was seized by the military, the so–called black colonels, who introduced a strict authoritarian regime. Turkey, on the other hand, became the scene of constant Cabinet changes and internal chaos²⁸.

In these conditions at the end of the 1960s and in the first half of the 1970s one could observe a paradoxical tendency to cooling down, and sometimes even freezing up, the mutual relations between the Balkan countries with the same ideologico–political system, as well as their looking for a rapprochement with countries belonging to the opposed international system. It transpired that national interests are in fact more important to the Balkan states than ideological considerations. The apogee of this trend in international politics in the Balkans came with signing in 1973 of an agreement about friendship and neighbourly co–operation on the one hand by Bulgaria — a Balkan country most subordinated to the Soviet Union, and on the other hand by Greece, a member of the NATO pact, governed, let us

²⁴ W. Dziak, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²⁵ J. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 354–355.

²⁶ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, Political Report of the Polish People’s Republic Embassy in Sofia, D.I.B–0–2420/9/70.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ E. Znamierowska, *Ewolucja stosunków między państwami bałkańskimi po II wojnie światowej (Evolution of Relations between the Balkans States after World War II)*, “Sprawy Międzynarodowe”, Warszawa 1973, № 11, pp. 55–62; E. Znamierowska–Rakk, *Rozwój stosunków Bulgarii z Grecją i Turcją po II wojnie światowej (The Development of Relations between Greece and Turkey after World War II)*, Wrocław — Warszawa — Kraków — Gdańsk — 1979, p. 183 ff; A. Feroz, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy 1950–1975*, London 1977; D. Khar'kov, *Voennite v politicheskii zhiivot na syvremenna Turtsiya*, Sofiya 1989.

stress, by the fascist-like “black generals”. The rapprochement of those two Balkan countries was at first sight astounding, all the more so given that for many decades Bulgarians and Greeks were separated by sharp territorial, frontier and financial antagonisms²⁹. In the wake of this spectacular “warming up” of the climate in Bulgarian–Greek relations, Sofia and Ankara signed an analogous agreement in 1975. At the same time one could observe the tightening of high–state–level contacts between Greece and Yugoslavia and Rumania as well as the enlivening of Turkish–Yugoslavian and Turkish–Rumanian relations. Greek–Albanian and Turkish–Albanian relations also finally came back to normal³⁰. In later years the regulation and improvement of coexistence between the Balkan states with different socio–political character resulted in the increase of intra–regional communication, manifested among others by conferences that took place in Athens in 1976, in Ankara in 1979, in Sofia in 1981, in Bucharest in 1982 and in other state capitals of this region³¹. Without going into details of this intra–Balkan rapprochement process, which just like the progressing political disintegration of the states of the communist bloc and the conflicts between the states of capitalist bloc, quite naturally seemed to undermine the fundamental dichotomy of the Balkans, it should be emphasized once again that this division remained unchanged for over 40 years.

After this synthetic presentation of the genesis and functioning of the dichotomy in the Balkans after World War II, a question suggests itself how the matter of political divisions in this region looked after World War I. While anticipating at this point the possible accusation of being achronological in my exposition, I must stress that in a comparative approach, a departure from a strict sequence of time sometimes may be even constructionally desirable. In this way, it seems to me, one can present more expressively the contrasts or analogies between the compared elements, while omitting needless repetition or necessity to go back to earlier deliberations.

In opposition to the dichotomical division of the Balkans that was consistently maintained as long as the Yalta–Potsdam system was valid, after World War I the demarcation of this part of our continent was much more complicated and unstable. At the beginning the political configuration was defined by three main elements: the pro–Versailles Yugoslavian–Rumanian

²⁹ E. Znamierowska–Rakk, *Sprawa Tracji Zachodniej*, p. 51, *passim*.

³⁰ E. Znamierowska–Rakk, *Rozwój stosunków Bułgarii z Grecją i Turcją*, pp. 188–189.
F. Gołembski, *Zmiany systemowe w państwach Europy Południowo Wschodniej (Systemic Changes in the States of South–Eastern Europe)*, Warszawa 1991, *passim*.

³¹ F. Gołembski, *Balkany. Determinanty stabilności (The Balkans. Determinants of Stability)*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 98, 122–128, 149.

agreement under the patronage of France, Greek–Turkish armed conflict connected with the opposition of Kemalist Turkey to the plunderous conditions of the Sèvres peace dictated to her, and the revisionist Bulgaria, remaining outside these systems, weak, isolated by her neighbours and incapable to follow in the footsteps of Turkey³². The distribution of political power in the Balkans changed after 1923, when on signing a peace treaty at Lausanne the relations between Athens and Ankara improved and in later years there was even a rapprochement between them, supported by Italy. Rome, as the main spokesman of revisionism in the Balkans, remaining in opposition to France, which consistently defended the Versailles order, tried to find allies in this region for its expansionist plans towards Albania and Yugoslavia. It is worth stressing that although Greece and Turkey manifested revisionism from the point of view of their own interests, (Athens could not reconcile itself to being deprived of Eastern Thrace and Smyrna in Anatolia, while Ankara was not pleased with the drastic reduction of its possessions in Asia Minor), nevertheless in view of the revisionist pretensions of Bulgarians, they relentlessly took a stand of categorical defence of the Versailles order³³. Quite naturally, a similar stand on the revisionism of Sofia was taken by Belgrade and Bucharest, regardless of their wish to introduce certain corrections to the order established in the Balkans, which I mentioned above.

While analysing the attitude of Turkey towards the Versailles order in the context of the main political division in the Balkans after World War I (into the states that defended the *status quo* and those that strove for its change), a reflection suggests itself that the taking up of arms by the Kemalists just as, after World War II the armed struggle of the communist left in the civil war in Greece, were events which in the first post-war years stirred up the international situation in this region and undermined the existing order there, although in the ultimate effect both these insurrections strengthened the international order in this region. It is true that Kemal Atatürk's victory forced the Great Powers to annul the respective resolutions of the Sèvres Treaty and to accept a new regulation of territorial questions that was more favourable for Turks, but as a consequence Turkey shook off the odium of revisionism and joined the orientation defending the Versailles order in its Balkan policy. Let us note that also the defeat of Greek communists, as the result of the British and especially American assistance, sealed, as it were, the division introduced in the Balkans after World War II by the Yalta–Potsdam system. As a result, at the end of 1940s and the

³² K. Manchev, V. Bistritski, *Bylgariya i neinite sysedi*, Sofiya 1978, p. 23 ff.

³³ *Ibidem*.

beginning of 1950s, the dichotomy existing in the Balkans was deepened and determined on the one hand by the support of the United States for Greece and Turkey and on the other by the imposition of a satellite status on the Balkan communist countries by Moscow.

Coming back to the deliberations devoted to the instability of the crucial political division in the Balkans after World War I one should note that the change of Ankara's political line after the Lausanne Treaty did not, however, lead to its joining the pro-Versailles alliance of Belgrade and Bucharest, supported by France. By contrast, Turkey created an informal bloc with Greece, which enjoyed the approval of Italy and Great Britain, who saw it as an instrument to weaken the position of Paris in South-Eastern Europe. However, the initiative of creating the so-called Balkan Locarno, which reflected calculations of this kind, ended in failure. Because of the contrary aims and aspirations of the interested parties, the creation of a system of security and mediation after the Locarno model, with the participation of revisionist Bulgaria and its neighbours, remained a mere proposal³⁴. Nevertheless, in the first half of the 1930s, when one could observe a strong increase in revisionist tendencies in Europe and as a reaction to this a pacifist attitude was manifested by Western democracies who were ready to make concessions to the fascist powers at the cost of small and middle-size states of East Central Europe, both the Balkan states connected with France and those preferred by Italy did create a military-political bloc called the Balkan Entente in 1934, in order to defend the jeopardized *status quo* in the Balkans³⁵.

The Balkan Entente constituted the only and at the same time the last chord of relatively harmonious action by all the states taking a pro-Versailles stand in South-Eastern Europe. Soon after, the progressing exacerbation of the international situation on the European and also global scale, as well as the passiveness of Great Britain and France in face of the increased activeness of totalitarian powers: Italy, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, had led more and more to the obliteration of the main line of division in this region. The states that defended the Versailles order and those that strove for its change in the Balkans, oscillating between London and Paris and revisionist powers while looking to safeguard their security, in fact diluted their hitherto basic political orientations. However, this by no means signified their unity or wish to embrace harmonious co-operation. On the

³⁴ W. Bałcerak, *System wersalski a państwa bałkańskie*, pp. 138–139.

³⁵ For the genesis of the Balkan Entente see: B. Łyczko-Grodzicka, *Polska dyplomacja a Ententa Bałkańska 1933–1936 (Polish Diplomacy and the Balkan Entente 1933–1936)*, Wrocław — Warszawa — Kraków — Gdańsk — Łódź 1981, pp. 9–58; A. Kuzmanova, *Balkanska politika na Rumyniya 1933–1939*, Sofiya 1984, pp. 29–48.

contrary, on the eve of the outbreak of a global armed conflict, each Balkan country in order not to get involved in the fire of war conducted their distinct politics, leaning more and more towards the Third Reich, however not without creating to a large or small extent the appearances of loyalty towards the Western democracies, and at the same time taking care not to irritate Berlin too much³⁶. In these conditions nothing came of the plans to create some new integrated bloc, and when the latter proved unrealistic, at least a neutral bloc of Balkan states with the participation of England and France. Confidence in London and Paris had run out, and the Soviet offers made to Rumania, Bulgaria and Turkey were unequivocally treated as attempts to communize them. At any rate the Soviet Union was not able to protect its possible Balkan partners from the war, as it was not prepared for it itself. Thus in the best case Moscow's proposals would only be an empty declaration³⁷.

The disassemblage of the Versailles system in the Balkans was started by territorial corrections made under the pressure of Berlin and Rome and by the forces of the Red Army over the period of a few months, from June to September 1940. The continuation of this process followed in the form of armed struggle; the attack of Italy on Greece in October 1940 marked the date of the outbreak of World War II in the Balkans. The reverses suffered by the Mussolini army became the cause of the attack of the Third Reich on Yugoslavia and Greece in April 1941, for which the Germans made use of the territories and mineral resources of their Rumanian and Bulgarian allies, and managed to neutralize Turkey³⁸.

As a consequence, from Spring 1941 the Balkans found themselves almost completely in the hands of the Axis states. Albania was from Spring 1939 occupied by Italy, Rumania and Bulgaria as satellites of the Third Reich had their own governments, but under the control of Berlin. Yugoslavia and Greece were dismembered and their territory was occupied by Germany and her allies. Under the protectorate of the Axis a puppet state was established of *ustash* Croatia as well as collaborationist government in Serbia and Greece, while their legitimate authorities found themselves in exile. From July 1941 a war for independence went on in Yugoslavia, led by the partisans of Tito and the *chetniks* of Draža Mihailović. In the

³⁶ W. Bałcerak, *System wersalski a państwa bałkańskie*, pp. 141–145.

³⁷ E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Sprawa Tracji Zachodniej*, pp. 173–175; Nazi–Soviet Relations 1939–1941. Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office, Washington 1948, pp. 226–246, 252–254; E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Radziecko-bułgarska gra polityczna w początkowym okresie II wojny światowej (The Soviet-Bulgarian Political Game in the Initial Period of World War II)*, “Dzieje Najnowsze”, 1991, № 3, pp. 29–39.

³⁸ E. Znamierowska-Rakk, *Bulgaria wobec napaści III Rzeszy na Jugosławię i Grecję w 1941 r.*, p. 608 ff.

resistance movement in Greece, and to a smaller extent in Bulgaria, considerable role was played by communists. Turkey bound by an alliance with Western democracies led a trimming policy and decided to enter the war on the side of the Great Coalition almost in the last phase of armed struggle³⁹.

While summing up the deliberations devoted to the breakdown of the Versailles system in the Balkans one can state that this was an evolutionary process. Not devoid of many meanderings, beginning with the second half of the 1920s, this order was systematically weakened and its disintegration was clearly accelerated at the end of the 1930s. Nevertheless, the *status quo* established for this region after World War I had lasted until the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939, and even somewhat longer, i.e. over twenty years.

In comparison to the Yalta–Potsdam system, the Versailles order was not so deeply-grounded and much more unstable, mostly reflecting the then unstable situation over the entire European continent and the world as a whole, which powerfully affected the international situation in the Balkans. On the other hand the demarcation of this region after 1945, regardless of various disintegrating factors on both side of the “iron curtain”, survived over four decades unchanged, and its liquidation came about rather suddenly and unexpectedly.

It seems that the Yalta–Potsdam system was based on stronger foundations than the Versailles one. Apart from political and strategic–military considerations, at the foundations of the Balkan dichotomy after 1945 lay also ideological reasons. It should be stressed that within the communist zone in this region, centrifugal actions resulted above all from the aspirations of Yugoslavia, Albania and Rumania to throw off the dictate of the Kremlin and not to throw off the Marxist ideology and the accepted socio–political system. Also on the other side of the division line, neither Greece nor Turkey, although they opposed some moves of the United States, with their patronage over the countries of the Southern NATO flank, and underwent some turbulent changes of their internal situation, did not exhibit any wish to depart from the principles on which their system of power rested. Moreover, the integrity of the respective zones of influence on both sides of the divided South–Eastern Europe was effectively defended by two opposed military blocs: the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as well as by the economic organizations: the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and European Economic Community (EEC), regardless of the fact that not all the Balkan countries of the given zone were members of those structures.

³⁹ D. Kha kov, *Političata na Turtsiya v Arabskiya Iztok 1940–1970*, Sofiya 1972, pp. 15–53.

Thus, despite all the convulsions, the relatively stable political configuration in the Balkans after 1945 was mainly determined by the distribution of power in Europe and in the world, which was then different from the one that was shaped after World War I. If after 1918 the attitude of the main architects of the Versailles order towards their creation changed surprisingly quickly, replaced by their passiveness, pacifism, and later appeasement policy towards the claims of revisionist powers, after World War II, in the day of nuclear balance and domination in global politics of the two antagonistic super powers: the United States and the Soviet Union, more concern was shown for the stabilization of the system that the Great Coalition created yet at the time of its relatively harmonious co-operation, and for respecting the earlier-established rules of the game. This tendency was favoured by the hegemony of only one power in each of the two politico-ideological zones in the Balkans, a hegemony which, generally speaking, was maintained until the end of the Yalta-Potsdam system; despite some attempts to undermine it on the part of China. It is worth noting that the role of Italy and France as well as Great Britain was after World War II diminished in comparison with the period after World War I, when these powers showed greater interest in the Balkans (especially Rome and Paris, London in smaller degree), although none of them achieved supremacy here. This probably resulted from the fact that South-Eastern Europe did not represent for those countries a priority area.

Following these comparative deliberations it seems worth while dwelling briefly on the problem of integration of the Balkans. After World War I in this region there were two formal regional groups: the Little Entente and the above-mentioned, Balkan Entente. Geographically the former union of states went beyond the Balkans, bringing together Yugoslavia and Rumania as well as Czechoslovakia, which played the leading role in it. Hence the point of gravity of the Little Entente lay rather in Central Europe than in the Balkans, which forejudged the limited possibilities of this group from the point of view of the interests of Belgrade and Bucharest. This circumstance in the conditions of menace to the *status quo* of South-Eastern Europe was perhaps the principal reason why the Balkan states which defended the Versailles order called into being the intra-Balkan Politico-military bloc, called the Balkan Entente. However, the effectiveness of this union was undermined by two factors: controversies between the co-signatories, and its rump shape, caused by the absence of Albania and Bulgaria. Nevertheless the Balkan Entente, while extending the influence of the Little Entente into the Balkans, had some significance not only for its members but also for the main pro-Versailles power — France. Generally speaking, one should state

that the Balkan pact, despite all its weaknesses, and especially the Little Entente, were the results of sovereign strivings for harmonious co-operation arising, despite the stimulation from Paris, from the said directly involved countries themselves, and they brought them some substantial advantages on the political and economic plane, although they could not protect those countries from the danger of war⁴⁰.

On the other hand as regards the issue of Balkan integration after World War II, considering the dichotomy of this region, this issue may only be analysed within the framework of each of the two zones separately. In the area dominated by the Soviet Union there appeared two kinds of consolidation: one arising from and initiated by the interested Balkan communist states, and one imposed from on high by Moscow. If the former remained mere plans, as it happened in the case of the Federation of South Slavs, which was to embrace Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and possibly Greece⁴¹ the latter was introduced in the form of political (*Kominform*) and military (Warsaw Pact) or Economic (CMEA) strictures, centrally controlled by the Kremlin. In these conditions the integration of the Balkan communist states, based on the one-sided dominion of the Soviet Union, which took care of its own profits, i.e. also of its unshakeable position as a sovereign, which could be threatened by too close ties between the "brother countries", had to be artificial and apparent. At any rate, a few years after the war, in 1948, Yugoslavia found itself outside the Moscow-created *Kominform*, and in the 1960s Albania also fell away from the Warsaw Pact and CMEA. As the result of Rumania's emancipation in the Soviet bloc, Bulgaria remained as the only satellite of the Kremlin in the Balkans that was not a troublemaker. Also the southern flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, i.e. the territories of Greece and Turkey, mainly because of the prolonged mutual controversies and attempts to loosen the alliance ties and dependencies within the bloc by Athens⁴², turned out to be a structure of rather doubtful integration.

In the light of the above facts it would be difficult to consider the Balkans as a consolidated and internally well-knit region. This concerns both the period after World War I, and after World War II, despite some efforts, and even concrete actions to bring about its integration in the

⁴⁰ W. Bałcerzak, *Pakty regionalne w Europie Środkowej (1918–1939) (Regional Pacts in Central Europe 1918–1939)*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe", Warszawa 1972, № 1, pp. 77–84.

⁴¹ More extensively on this subject: I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Powojenne koncepcje federacji jugosłowiańsko-bułgarskiej (1944–1948) (Post-War Concepts of Yugoslav-Bulgarian Federation 1944–1948)*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace z Nauk Politycznych". Kraków 1988, fasc. 34; R. L. Wolff, *The Balkans in Our Time*, Cambridge 1974, pp. 316–317.

⁴² A. Evtimov, *Izlicaneto na Gyrsiya ot voennata organizatsiya na NATO — poslednitsi i perspektivi*, "Mezhdunarodni otnosheniya". Sofiya 1975, № 1, pp. 104–111.

inter-war years, or the allegiance to some politico-military or economic groups after 1945, as well as the establishment of the foundations of all-Balkan economic co-operation that could be observed in the 1970s and the 1980s in the international relations of this region of Europe.

The above presented, cursory attempt at a comparative treatment of the international situation in the Balkans under the rule of the Versailles and Yalta-Potsdam systems leads to a conclusion that although the heritage of turbulent history affected very intensely the states and peoples of that region, nevertheless the fundamental determinant that shaped it in both periods consisted of the criss-crossing interests of the Great Powers. It was precisely they who dictated to the states of South-Eastern Europe the national-territorial order: after 1918 in the form of the Versailles system, and after 1945 — of the Yalta-Potsdam system.

The policy of the Great Powers determined decisively also the character of meanderings and the direction of evolution in the international situation in the Balkans throughout the inter-war period. However, it was not an absolute dictate, for the Balkan states to a certain extent co-created these processes of transformation, while regional integration actions were even initiated and realized by those countries themselves, although, naturally, not without the influence of the Great Powers. On the other hand after World War II the modifications of the political constellation in South-Eastern Europe, especially within the framework of communist Balkan states, although effected indirectly at the instance of the Soviet Union, the United States or China, nevertheless were the outcome of the direct action by Belgrade, Tirana or Bucharest. As for the integration of the states of this region during the operation of the Yalta-Potsdam pact, apart from the initiatives arising from these states themselves during the first post-war years (Balkan Federation, Balkan Pact), the structures existing there were either imposed from on high by the Soviet Union in order to control its satellites better or were peripheral branches of organizations directed by Western Powers. Thus the Balkan states themselves after World War II in comparison with the inter-war period did not decide the forms of integration existing on both sides of the Balkans. It is quite another matter that as the result of the above-mentioned political reversals made by the Balkan communist states, and because of Greek-Turkish controversies, these structures were considerably undermined, especially beginning with the 1960s. Of course one cannot put on the same plane the subordination of the

members of the Warsaw Pact and the CMEA and the dependence of Greece and Turkey on NATO or EEC.

In contradistinction to the Versailles system, which finally broke down because of the passivity, defeatism and appeasement policy on the part of Western democracies, and because of the expansion and revisionism of the totalitarian states, the decline of the establishments of the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences ensued in a peaceful and essentially bloodless way. I have in mind here the very process of throwing off the fetters of the communist system, and not the later clashed over independence, which led to the war in the former Yugoslavia. As it is well known the downfall of the order established in the Balkans after World War II ensued as a chain-reaction to the so-called Autumn of Nations of 1989, initiated by Poland. Thus the downfall of communism in the Balkans came as a reaction to the infectious example of Poland, Hungary, GDR and Czechoslovakia, who succeeded to disassemble the Soviet bloc in Central Europe. One should, however, bear in mind the primary cause of those fundamental changes was the inefficiency of the Soviet Union, its total bankruptcy in the sphere of ideology, politics and economy, and the concomitant deep crisis of the communist regimes in East Central Europe. The process of disintegration of the Eastern Europe Bloc was also favoured by the policy of Western Powers, with the United States at the head, that supported the democratic opposition in the Eastern Bloc. Nevertheless, the direct causative forces that overthrew the Yalta-Potsdam systems in the Balkans were not the Great Powers, as it happened in the case of disassemblage of the Versailles system, but small and middle-size states first of Central Europe, and than the Balkan states themselves.

However, in contrast to the post-communist countries of Central Europe where the conflicts in Czecho-Slovaks relations revealed after 1989 could be regulated at the negotiation table, in the Balkans the controversies between main nationalities of the former Yugoslavia took the form of prolonged armed conflicts. Here doubtlessly came to light the inglorious Balkan traditions of solving mutual claims in a military way, not without the significant interference of the Great Powers.

Summing up the above facts and assertions it should be acknowledged that the international situation both after World War I and after World War II in the Balkans could not take shape regardless of the distribution of power on the Continent or in the world at large. It seems, however, that over the last decades after World War II there occurred a certain change of accents in the hierarchy of determinants of the international situation in the Balkans (and in all East Central Europe). If after World War I and in the first years after World War II all the crucial issues were decided by the Great Powers,

several dozen years later local factors had more and more say in this respect. Their influence was realized not only in the form of such or other modifications within the framework of a territorial–national order established from on high, but also in the dimension of constitutive changes that created a new order. However, whether this is a permanent or ephemeral tendency can be seen only in due course. At any rate already now one can see that the downfall of the Yalta–Potsdam system, signifying the end of the communist regimes in the Balkan states, reactivated the latent and stifled controversies between the nations of this region, which led to the war in the former Yugoslavia, which unsettled not only the Balkan region but also the European and may be even global international situation. Hence we have to deal here with feedback: the international situation on the Continent and in the world has a repercussion in the Balkans, while this part of our Continent affects the distribution of power in Europe and the world.

(Translated by Agnieszka Kreczmar)