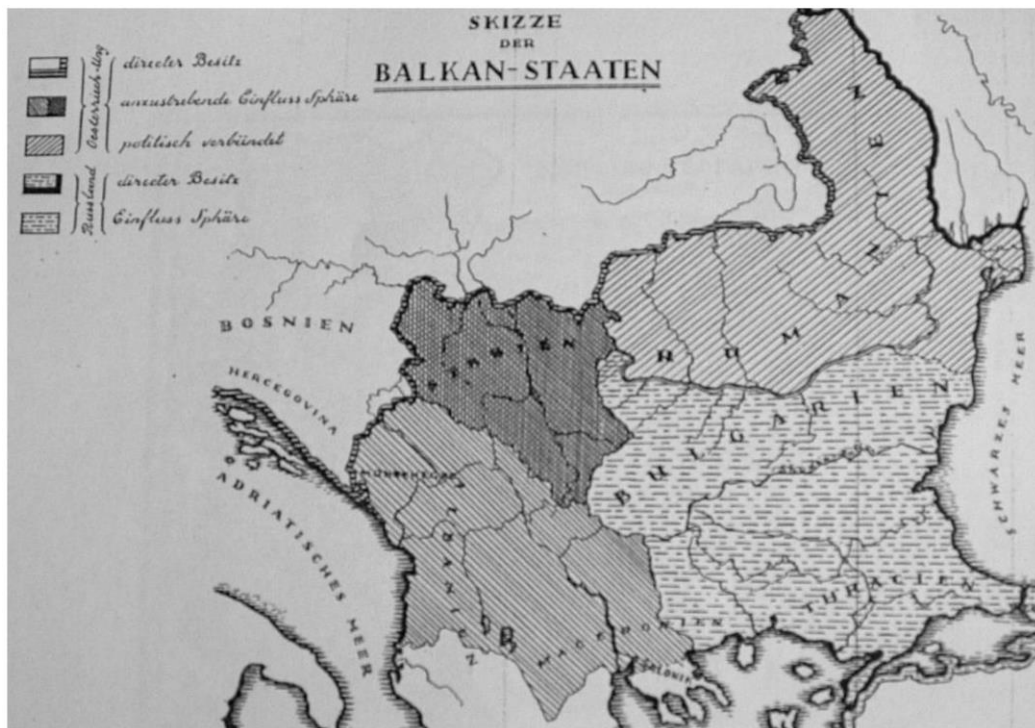


## AUSTRIAN PLANS ON THE PACIFICATION OF THE BALKANS BEFORE AND AFTER THE MÜRZSTEG CONVENTION

The year 1903 was very critical to Austria-Hungary. The Serbian regicide destroyed the hopes that Serbia remains an ally in the Balkans, and the death of Benjamin Kállay, the key expert of the peninsula was also a serious blow in these tumultuous years. However the visit of the Russian Tsar in Vienna and the support of the English – who refused to acknowledge the new Serbian dynasty, was somehow a compensation for the worsening political situation, after the fall of the Abbazian entente, the alliance between Romania, Greece and Austria-Hungary, that was to secure the Monarchy's position after the Goluvhowski-Muraviev pact in 1897.

In the present study we try to the Macedonian problems into this context, highlighting the rivalry of Powers over the Balkans. The Goluchowski-Muraviev pact of 1897 had several interpretations. According to Sidney Bradshaw Fay (and by Walters), it simply "put the Balkans on ice", i.e. the parties agreed to reinforce the status quo through their policies, as the interests of both sides currently demanded.<sup>1</sup> However, contemporary Hungarian historians, like Balanyi, evaluated this act rather as a division of spheres of interest on the Peninsula.<sup>2</sup>



The plan of Calice from 1896 to distribute Balkan spheres of interest<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> WALTERS, E. Austro-Russian Relations under Goluchowski, 1895–1906. – *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 32, No. 78 (1953), pp. 187–214. (esp. 187–188).

<sup>2</sup> BALANYI, GY. *A Balkán-probléma fejlődése a párisi kongresszustól a világháború kitöréséig*. Budapest, 1920, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> *Diplomatische Aktenstücke über die Reformaktion Mazedonien, 1906–1907*. Wien, Druck K.K. Hof und Staatsdruckerei, 1907.

Walters, based on the letters of Aehrenthal, published in the 1950s was also of the opinion that especially Aehrenthal, the future minister of Foreign Affairs, then ambassador to St. Petersburg wanted to consider the 1897 act as an agreement on partition of spheres. He even tried to convince Goluchowski to acknowledge Russia's right for the Straits in turn of securing the way to Salonika.<sup>4</sup> However, Goluchowski refused to accept the idea, because he thought it would cause more calamities by attracting other Powers to the peninsula and pushing orthodox nations towards Russia. Historians often claim, that Goluchowski simply wanted to repeat history by gaining the support of the English as Count Andrassy succeeded to acquire it in 1878, then Kálnoky in 1887 during the Battenberg affair, in the form of the Mediterranean entente between Austria-Hungary, Italy and Great Britain, because during the Macedonian reform movement Goluchowski's policy resulted in the interference of all powers. However, the original goals of Russia and Austria-Hungary to exclude others from the solution of the Macedonian problem. It is also worth emphasis that the Macedonian problem cannot be detached from the general tendencies of power policy that resulted in new alliances, and the make-up of Russia and England in 1904, though it did not solve the problems between these powers. This, compared to the situation in 1897, when Austria could count on the benevolent behavior of Russia after 10 years of overt opposition considering the Bulgarian affairs between 1886 and 1896, was a decisive change, as well as the make-up between Serbia and Bulgaria, or the Russian-Bulgarian military convention of 1902 that was to counterbalance the Abbazian entente. In short, Austria-Hungary not only did not gain ground in the Balkans, but lost its position despite its cooperative efforts and humanitarian intervention. It is not surprising that Aehrenthal, in 1907-08, exploiting Russia's defeat in Manchuria and its clash with the British interest over Persia, gave up cooperation and step forth to improve Austria-Hungary's position by exploiting another paragraph of the Berlin Congress, and decided to build the Uvac-Mitrovica railroad to reach Saloniki, as he has already proposed it in 1899.

In this context we try to analyze the role of Austria-Hungary in the peninsula prior to and after Mürzsteg/Ilinden.

Austria-Hungary and Russia has long been monitoring the situation in the peninsula through their network of consuls and agents (Kral, Pára, Fanta, Heimroth, Zambaur, etc.).<sup>5</sup> They collected vast amount of material including numbers on students, ethnic affinities and religious affiliation of settlements, material created by Bulgarian authorities and they also had their own data sources that often underwent sudden changes regarding ethnic proportions and numbers depending on the political demands and the sudden changes on the peninsula. The Ottomans were preparing a new census, with their old religious categories and this caused rivalry not only between the Patriarchate and the Exarchate, but between the small states surrounding the Macedonian vilayets. Austria-Hungary and the small states all produced their beautiful maps supporting their political goals, but behind the numbers one could often find manipulation. If

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<sup>4</sup> WALTERS, E. *Austro-Russian Relations under Goluchowski, 1895–1906*, pp. 187–188.

<sup>5</sup> See the five volumes of *Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo und im serbisch beherrschten Kosovo. Berichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Konsuln aus dem zentralen Balkan (1870–1914)*. Edited by OLIVER JENS SCHMITT and EVA ANNE FRANTZ (Hg.) unter Mitarbeit von SVEN MÖRSDORF. *Schriften zur Balkanforschung*. Band 1/1. Herausgegeben vom Forschungsbereich Balkanforschung des Instituts für die Erforschung der Habsburgermonarchie und des Balkanraumes. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, 2020.

we compare published and unpublished Austro-Hungarian sources the difference and the manipulation with ethno-religious categories is obvious (table 1 and table 2).

Table 1. Official appendix of the Austrian ethnic map on Macedonia<sup>6</sup>

	Albanians		Greeks		Vlachs	'Gypsies'	Jews	Total
	Muslim	Orthodox	Orthodox Greeks	Muslim Greeks				
<b>Janina</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>77,700</b>	<b>6,000</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>3600</b>	<b>95,950</b>
Leskovic	11,000	5,000	4,000			1,000		21,000
Konica	1,200		12,600		4,000	200		18,000
Filat	12,000	9,000	6,000			1,000		28,000
Ajdonat	5,000	5,000	5,000			800		15,800
Metsovo			850		4,700	50		5,600
Statistische Daten über Nationalitäten und Religionen in Makedonien. k.k Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1905.								184,350

**Original manuscript in HHStA, Wien**

	Albanians		Greeks		Vlachs	'Gypsies'	Jews	Total
	Muslim	Orthodox	Orthodox Greeks	Muslim Greeks				
<b>Janina</b>	<b>4,500</b>	<b>4,400</b>	<b>81,000</b>		<b>12,000</b>			<b>108,000</b>
Leskovic	8,000	5,800	1,000		200			18,000
Konica	2,000	2,000	15,000		5,800			25,000
Filat	1,000	1,000	5,000					37,800
Ajdonat	3,000	3,000	3,500					15,800
Metsovo					5,800			5,900
								211,100

<sup>6</sup> DEMETER, GÁBOR and BOTTLIK, ZSOLT. Maps in the Service of the Nation. The Role of Ethnic Mapping in Nation-Building and Its Influence on Political Decision-Making Across the Balkan Peninsula (1840–1914). Berlin, Frank&Timme, 2021, p. 200.

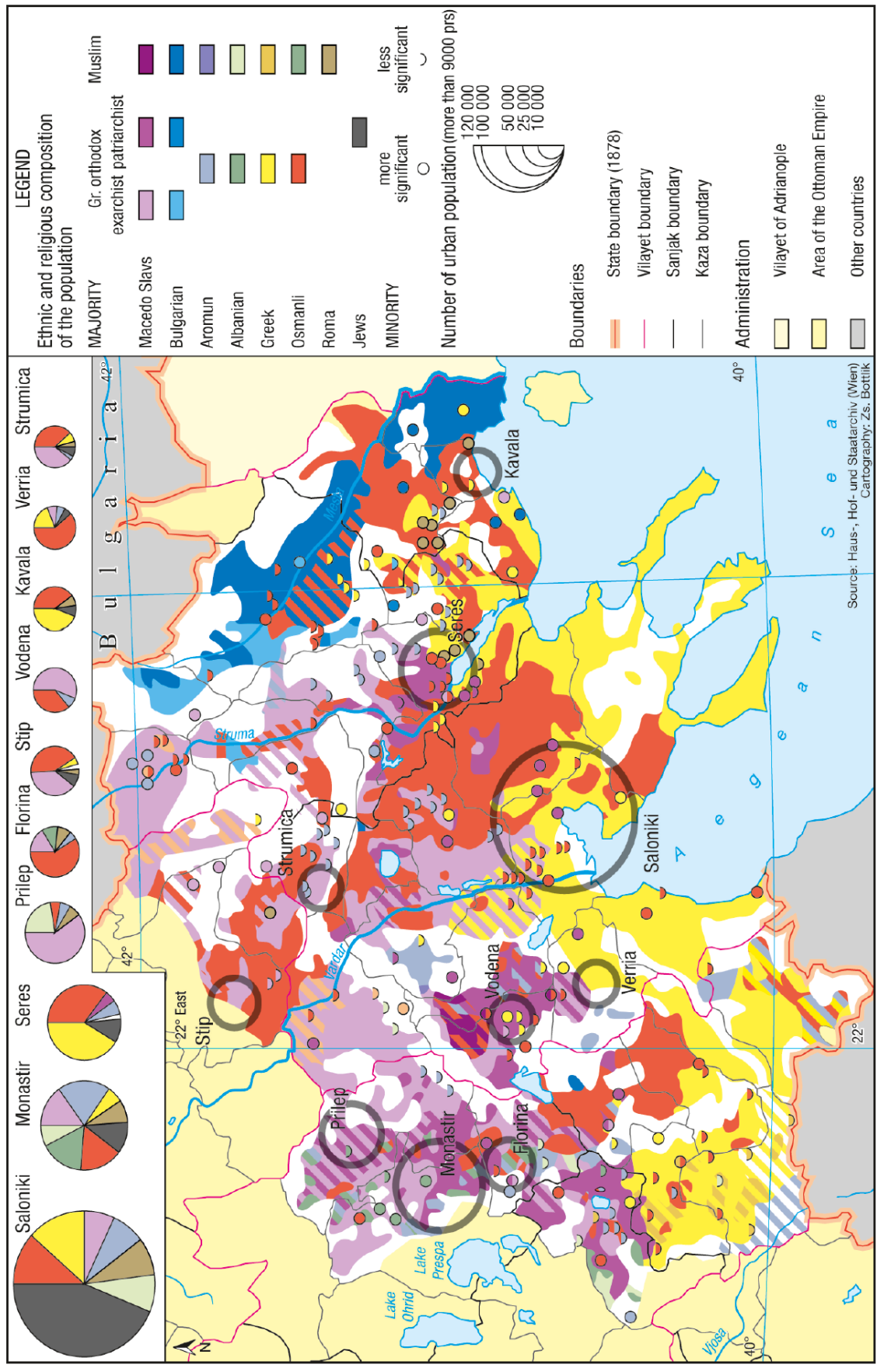
Table 2. Differences in population numbers between manuscripts from two consecutive years for the same region (from the reports of Consul Pára)<sup>7</sup>

Sanjak	Kaza	Muslim Albanian, 1901	Orthodox Albanian, 1901	Muslim Albanian, 1902	Orthodox Albanian, 1902
Monastir	Monastir	35,000	2,000	32,000	2,200
	Prilep	17,500		12,000	
	Ohrid	24,600		22,000	300
	Krchova	17,400		11,500	
	Florina	9,800	2,600	6,500	2,600
<b>Total</b>		<b>104,000</b>	<b>4,600</b>	<b>84,000</b>	<b>5,100</b>
Dibra	Gorna Dibra	49,000	408	44,000	400
	Rekalar	12,000	3,600	10,000	3,600
	Dolna Dibra	13,000		20,000	
	Mati	20,000		25,800	
<b>Total</b>		<b>94,000</b>	<b>4,208</b>	<b>99,800</b>	<b>4,000</b>
Elbasan	Elbasan	30,500	3,800	30,000	6,500
	Gramshi	11,000		11,100	
	Peklin	15,500		14,800	
<b>Total</b>		<b>57,000</b>	<b>3,800</b>	<b>55,900</b>	<b>6,500</b>
Korcha	Korica	36,500	26,400	40,000	20,800
	Kolonia	14,514	4,100	13,000	6,100
	Starovo	22,400	3,050	22,400	3,000
	Kastorija	13,500	4,900	11,000	3,000

Left: HHStA, PA XII, Türkei, Kt. 272. 66–71. Monastir, 30.04.1901.

Right: HHStA, PA XII, Türkei, Kt. 272. Report Nr. 255. Pára to Goluchowski, 21.12.1902.

<sup>7</sup> DEMETER, G. and BOTTLIK, ZS. Maps in the Service of the Nation, p. 201.



Source: HHStA, PA XII, Türkei, Liase XXV, Kt. 272. One of the rare maps that did not tend to colour unpopulated territories or classify people with unconsolidated identity patterns into ethnic categories.

Consular reports also talk about abuses – before and even after Ilinden – so these documents published recently in five volumes can be considered good sources for multiple approach and analysis.

Example 1. Redifs' atrocities against local population during the Ilinden uprising<sup>8</sup>

In Blace-Meč erschienen am 18. August 40 bis 50 Redifs ohne Officier, misshandelten die ganze Einwohnerschaft und raubten alle Häuser total aus. Unter Anderem nahmen sie:

Nikola Tošov	6 Pfund, 3 Medžid <sup>385</sup> ,
Nedelko Jakovce	5 Pfund,
Tane Jakovce	2 Medžid,
Trajce Kuzman	2½ Pfund und Kleider,
Nibče Dime	200 Piaster, 7 Hemden, Strümpfe u. s. w.,
Arse Levkov	4 Hemden,
Stojko Tasev	1 Pfund,
Doča Blazev	80 Piaster,
Cveta Andželeva	Geld und Kleider.

Example 2. Albanian atrocities against local population, before Ilinden<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> SCHMITT – FRANTZ (Hg.). Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo und im serbisch beherrschten Kosovo. Vol. 3. 202. : Nr. 77. Para an Gołuchowski. HHStA PA XXXVIII/Kt. 434, n. f. N° 235. Üsküb, am 4. September 1903.

<sup>9</sup> SCHMITT – FRANTZ (Hg.). Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo, Vol. 3. pp. 210-212. Nr. 80. Muthsam an Gołuchowski. HHStA PA XXXVIII/Kt. 400, n. f. N° 136 Prizren, am 8. November 1903.

		Livres turques
1)	Le grenier, le matériel de construction, le blé et le foin de l'église catholique à Zoumbi – brûlés par les arnaouts en Septembre 1901	50
2)	Le catholique Philippe Guega de Zoumbi tué par les arnaouts à Baschtrik <sup>427</sup> en 1901 à la famille	30
3)	Le catholique Frack Marco du village de Luka-Bunari <sup>428</sup> tué d'une façon barbare (crucifié) par les soldats turcs près de Diakova en Mai 1903 à la famille	50
4)	Six maisons catholiques du village de Planetchar <sup>429</sup> pillées par les soldats en Mai 1903	
	la maison de Prenk Kola Gogan	10 livres
	la maison de Kola Karitché	20 livres
	la maison de Deda Frock	60 livres
	la maison de Prenk Nretz	40 livres
	la maison de Prenk Guega	10 livres
	la maison de Nicolas Biba	<u>4 livres</u>
	au total	144
5)	Trois maisons avec leurs dépendances, le blé et le foin de la famille serbe de Ribatch du village de Desnik (Ipek) brûlés par les arnaouts en 1901 et en 1902	100
6)	La maison de Tona Rachkovitch du village de Domanek <sup>430</sup> – brûlée par les troupes ottomanes en Décembre 1902	30
7)	Quatre maisons serbes à Orahovetz brûlées et pillées par les arnaouts en Fevrier 1903	
	la maison de Blagoé Josifovitch	50 livres
	la maison de Phila Andreevitch	40 livres
	la maison de Rista Zvetkovitch	25 livres
	la maison de Aleksa Moisitch	<u>25 livres</u>
	au total	140
8)	La haie et le foin de l'église serbe a Goriatcha <sup>431</sup> (Ipek) – brûlée par les arnaouts en Août 1903	5
9)	Mara Krstinka une serbe d'Orahovetz – blessée par les arnaouts et rendue boîteuse en 1900	15
10)	Le Serbe Stefa Maksin de Lotchani <sup>432</sup> – tué par les arnaouts en 1902 aux parents	30
11)	Le zaptié serbe Krsto Jovanovitch de Prizrend tué par un arnaout à Tetovo en Mai 1903 à la famille	30

Example 3. The vagueness of Ottoman efforts is also testified by Austro-Hungarian consular reports.<sup>10</sup>

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**Muthsam an Gołuchowski**

HHStA PA XII/Kt. 318, Liasse XXXV/1, 3, f. 86r–93v.

*Analyse der osmanischen Reformpolitik in der Region. Unterwerfung der katholischen Stämme der Nikaj und Mërturi. Befriedungskommissionen in Peja und Gjakova zur Beilegung von Blutrachefällen. Laufende Volkszählung zur Durchsetzung der Wehrpflicht mit erheblichen Mängeln bei der Durchführung. Straßenbauprojekt. Weiterhin reform- und christenfeindliche Kräfte um Peja. Österreichisch-russische Intervention beim Vali. Verschleppung der Ernennung von christlichen Polizeibeamten. Ungleichbehandlung von Christen und Muslimen bei der Steuerbelastung. Missbrauch der Zehentpacht durch muslimische Abgabenpächter gegenüber christlichen Bauern. Beilage: Bericht Muthsam an Botschafter Calice.*

N° 74

Prizren, am 4. Juli 1903

Example 4. Consular intervention to promote the implementation of the 1903 February Austrian-Russian reform plans<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> SCHMITT – FRANTZ (Hg.). Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo, Vol. 3. p. 195. Nr. 76. Muthsam an Gołuchowski. HHStA PA XII/Kt. 318, Liasse XXXV/1, 3, f. 86r–93v. N° 74 Prizren, am 4. Juli 1903.

<sup>11</sup> See: SCHMITT – FRANTZ (Hg.). Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo, Vol. 3. p. 188. Nr. 73. Muthsam an Gołuchowski. HHStA PA XXXVIII/Kt. 400, n. f. N° 51 Prizren, am 30. April 1903.



Beilage: Copie. Muthsam an Chakir Pacha

Le 29 Avril 1903, N. 143

Programme des mesures à prendre en vu d'établir l'ordre dans les districts de Prizrend et d'Ipek

- 1) Le renvoi des officiers de gendarmerie et de police qui sont originaires de ce pays.
- 2) Le renvoi des gendarmes et des agents de police connus comme criminels et „zouloumdji“<sup>366</sup>.
- 3) L'exil de plus grands „zouloumdjis“ parmi les arnaouts.
- 4) Briser la résistance des arnaouts à l'introduction des réformes et exiler les chefs-rébelles.
- 5) Le règlement immédiat et énergique des questions suivantes:
  - a) la question de zouloumdji où les arnaouts brûlerent le foin appartenant à l'église catholique et où ils poursuivent le prêtre des menaces.
  - b) les 12 villages du district d'Ipek où les arnaouts forcent les chrétiens à devenir mussulmans.
  - c) le monastère de St. Marc<sup>367</sup> opprimé par les arnaouts de Kabasch<sup>368</sup>;
  - d) la question d'Orahovetz d'où les arnaouts chassèrent le maître d'école et où ils brûlent quatre maisons serbes.
- 6) Laisser des troupes dans plusieurs endroits et au commencement reprimer les „zouloumes“ de la façon militaire et administrative.  
Ce n'est qu'après cela qu'on pourra introduire les réformes. Mais pour garantir à ce pays un ordre parfait et durable on doit désarmer les arnaouts ce qu'on pourra faire en leur faisant remettre les fusils aux dépôts institués ad hoc.

mp. Muthsam

The IMRO and its supporters in Bulgaria and Macedonia urged for the implementation of the Article 23 of the Berlin Congress, speaking about the need for reforms in Macedonia, after the outbreak of the first Armenian crisis in 1895, which triggered the half-hearted objection of the Powers and the application of Article 23 (in fact article 61) for the Armenians. However, the Ottoman reforms extended to the Macedonian vilayets after the failure of the Sarafov-Kitanchev uprising in Melnik and Kjustendil was very modest. The irade on the 2nd of April, 1896 increased the mejlis members' number from 4 to 6, organised a supervising committee, and settled the tithe question by collecting the tax based on a 30-year average production. This was not enough to solve the situation.<sup>12</sup>

Referring to the content of consular reports both Austria-Hungary and Russia demanded the dissolution of the Macedonian organisations operating in Bulgaria as these were considered destabilizing factor. In the spring of 1902 the Bulgarian delegation to St Petersburg was refused a loan, and a ban on supporting Macedonian organisations operating in Bulgaria was imposed

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<sup>12</sup> BALANYI, GY. A Balkán-probléma, p. 171.

as a condition. Therefore the Bulgarian government – at least on paper – proclaimed to disband the paramilitary units.<sup>13</sup>

In this situation, the pro-Bulgarian faction of the revolutionary committees, the Verhoven Komitet was forced to take action, they chose the Dzhumaya district near the Bulgarian border as the area for the uprising, while the date was set to coincide with the celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the breakthrough in the Shipka Pass. The so-called Gorna Dzhumaya uprising began on 23 September 1902 under the leadership of the Bulgarian General Ivan Tsonchev. However, the many IMRO groups opposed the action considering it as premature. Thus the movement was completely eliminated by the Ottoman troops by mid-November.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of these events, the two most interested powers, the Monarchy and Russia, instead of putting (inefficient) pressure on small states began negotiations directly with the Porte on reforms to be implemented. In December 1902, Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909), fearing excessive interference by the great powers in the internal affairs, announced organisational reforms, appointing a joint governor-general over the three Macedonian vilayets, Hussein Hilmi Pasha. But, apart from the administrative centralisation of Macedonia, there were no substantial changes, the local administration remained unchanged, abuses continued such as the operation of revolutionary forces.<sup>15</sup> Though the reorganization of the gendarmerie also began, and Christians were allowed to serve in the gendarmerie, but this was not supported neither by the Muslims, who considered them spies and untrustful, nor by the IMRO, who considered the enrolled as traitors.<sup>16</sup> Against this insufficient reform programme, an Austro-Hungarian-Russian reform proposal was drawn up with the support of the other great powers including England.<sup>17</sup>

Example 5. Austro-Hungarian-Russian reform proposal:

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<sup>13</sup> CRAMPTON R. J. *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*. Cambridge 1989, p. 46. Associations finally were banned only in March, 1903.

<sup>14</sup> BALATONI, B. *Liberalizmus, humanitarizmus és nemzeti önrendelkezés a brit balkán bizottság tevékenységében (1903–1919)*. Szeged, Phd Dissertation, 2023, p. 70

<sup>15</sup> BALANYI, GY. *A Balkán-probléma*, p. 171.

<sup>16</sup> BROWN, K. *Loyal unto Death. Trust and Terror in Revolutionary Macedonia*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> See: SCHMITT – FRANTZ (Hg.). *Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo*, Vol. 3. p. 188. Nr. 73. Muthsam an Gołuchowski. HHStA PA XXXVIII/Kt. 400, N° 62. Prizren, am 1. Juni 1903.

**Muthsam an Gołuchowski**  
HHSa PA XXXVIII/Kt. 400, n. f.

*Drei gemeinsame Verbalnoten des österreichisch-ungarischen und des russischen Konsuls in Prizren an den Generalinspektor für Mazedonien Hilmi Pascha zu den geplanten Reformen. Beilagen: 1–3) Schreiben Muthsams an Hilmi Pascha.*

No 62

Prizren, am 1. Juni 1903

Hochgeborener Graf!

Anverwahrt habe ich die Ehre, Euerer Excellenz die Abschriften dreier Noten, die ich heute im Vereine mit dem hiesigen kaiserl. russischen Viceconsul

- 1.) wegen der Einsetzung eines katholischen Mitgliedes (mechkeme azasi) beim hiesigen Strafgerichte,
- 2.) wegen der Ernennung christlicher Steuereinnehmer in Ipek und Prizren,
- 3.) wegen der Arretirung zahlreicher als gewaltthätig bekannten Arnauten und wegen der Exilirung einiger hiesigen christenfeindlichen Notablen sowie auch wegen der Ausscheidung sämtlicher übelbeleumundeten Individuen aus dem Gendarmerie- und Polizeidienste an den Generalinspektor Hilmi Pascha richtete, zur hochgeneigten Kenntnissnahme tiefergebenst zu unterbreiten.

Gleichlautend berichte ich unter Einem sub No 28 an Seine Excellenz den Herrn k. u. k. Botschafter in Constantinopel.

Genehmigen Euere Excellenz den Ausdruck meiner tiefsten Ehrfurcht.

Muthsam

The so-called "Wiener Punktation" (Vienna Points) were accepted by the Sultan on 23 February 1903, considering the Austro-Russian move as a conservative status quo policy to maintain his power over the Vilayets.<sup>18</sup> After the unsuccessful Gornja Dzhumaja uprising, the IMRO was also at a crossroads for the future, but the leadership of the organisation was far from united. The more radical members of the IMRO concluded from the lack of intervention by the great powers that they could only achieve their goals by more extreme means, i.e. by provoking intervention through targeting European-owned properties (Saloniki, Ottoman Bank).<sup>19</sup> Many urged a general uprising, because they feared that the Ottoman agree to Austro-Russian reform plans would make IMROs preparations reasonless.

In parallel with the growing paramilitary activity, the Albanian population of the Vilayets began to rebel against the reforms to be introduced, which would have meant the loss of their privileges. The traditional Albanian-Slav and government-reayah conflicts became then coloured by goverment-Albanian conflicts. On the arrival of the new Russian consul in

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<sup>18</sup> BALATONI, B. Liberalismus, humanitarizismus, p. 71. and BURMAN, J. (ed.): Notes from Constantinople. The Political Diary of Sir Nicholas O'Connor, Britain's Ambassador to the Porte, 1898-1908. Istanbul, The Isis Press, 2007, p. 196.

<sup>19</sup> BURMAN, J. (ed.): Notes from Constantinople, p. 205.

Monastir,<sup>20</sup> who was to announce the reforms, Albanian gangs ambushed the Ottoman garrison, and the new consul was mortally wounded. The Ottomans responded by increasing the number of troops stationed in Macedonia introducing forced interrogations, tortures.<sup>21</sup>

The amnesty decree, promulgated with the Vienna points, only increased the number of paramilitary revolutionary troops. Despite this, the representatives of the great powers did not take such a desperate view of the situation in mid-summer. According to the Russian ambassador in Vienna, Pyotr Kapnist (1839-1904), the bands were in an awkward financial situation and, if they did not receive external help, they would soon break up.<sup>22</sup> However, signs of increased IMRO mobilisation became more evident throughout July as it reorganized itself as a self-sustainable organization (one may mention smuggling – beyond weapons there were many other goods sold with the aid of migrating vlachs, like poppy seed, tobacco, or one may mention the revolutionary contribution/tax, etc.). The well organized paramilitary units became rooted deep into the texture of the society.

But the Ottomans were well aware of the fact due to the Mogila-incident in mid-1903.<sup>23</sup> In October 1903, after 3 months of fighting, the revolutionary forces of 32,000<sup>24</sup> *comitadjis* were defeated by Ottoman III Army Corps and the *bashibozouk* troops.<sup>25</sup> However, from IMRO's point of view the uprising brought a partial diplomatic success, as the attention of the great powers was finally directed towards the Macedonian Question. Tsar Nicholas' mentioned visit in Vienna after the suppression of the Ilinden revolt in the autumn of 1903 as well as Lamsdorff's and Goluchowski's meeting revitalized the agreement of 1897 in a new form – with the support of the British government a humanitarian intervention was about to evolve.<sup>26</sup> With this step Vienna and Saint Petersburg tried to maintain their exclusive position in Macedonian affairs, based on the status quo of 1897 because France and Great Britain became more involved in the Macedonian affair and they suggested an international conference and the appointment of a Christian governor. Nevertheless their interest excluded any one-sided military solution of Austria-Hungary or Russia

The so-called Mürzsteg programme of Russia and Austria-Hungary in October was composed of 9 points including a Russian and Austrian civil agent to supervise the activity of the General Inspector of the 3 vilayets, Hilmi pasha and the execution of reforms and to control the local authorities. It included the reorganization of gendarmerie under the surveillance of foreign officers of the 6 powers; administrative reform of the vilayets, reform of jurisdiction including the involvement of Christians, tax-reforms and tax exemptions. The reluctant Porte accepted the 9 points in general on 27 December.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> BURMAN, J. (ed.): Notes from Constantinople, p. 214.

<sup>21</sup> BURMAN, J. (ed.): Notes from Constantinople, p. 204.

<sup>22</sup> BALATONI, B. Liberalizmus, humanitarizmus, p. 72.

<sup>23</sup> BROWN, K. Loyal unto Death, Appendix 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> BURMAN, J. (ed.): Notes from Constantinople, p. 214.

<sup>25</sup> The Ilinden uprising was considered a 'Bulgarian' uprising by Austrian diplomats. Austrian diplomats wrote about Bulgarian agitation and provocation, blaming it for the failure of the reform plans handed in prior to the uprising. See: Diplomatische Aktenstücke, 14. No. 12. 01.09. 1903.

<sup>26</sup> Goluchowski used the terms "humanitarian action" and "pacifying action" in several reports.

<sup>27</sup> BALANYI, GY. A Balkán-probléma, p. 175.

The manner in which the surveilled sectors were divided up clearly illustrated how Vienna and Saint Petersburg tried to maintain their leadership in the Macedonian question. Because of its own strategic military interests, Vienna wanted to exclude those districts from the reforms where the majority population was Albanian and also to prevent the *vilayet* of Monastir from being assigned to Italy. In addition, it was essential for the double monarchy to control the region around Uskub because of its proximity to Serbia, the new enemy. As Russia was assigned the southern area around Salonika, these two powers held de facto control over the north–south strategic line of communication, Uskub–Salonika – wrote Nadine Akhund.<sup>28</sup>

The direct precedent of the international intervention in Macedonia besides the old Article 23 of Berlin (1878) was the Cretan question. Following the Greek–Ottoman war in 1897 the island of Crete was placed under the supervision of the six great powers. The Armenian atrocities in 1895-96 also served as a precedent but not only to powers but to the revolutionary organizations to legitimize their demands and activities.

According to the Mürzsteg agreement two civil agents were appointed to control Hilmi pasha's activity: Heinrich Müller Roghoj and Nicolas Demerik's task was also to support refugees to rebuild their destroyed villages. They also controlled the appointment of Christian rural guards in the villages, a function that was normally assumed by Muslims.<sup>29</sup> They received peasant delegations and complaints against the abuses. However, the decisions regarding the practical outcomes of these cases remained in the hands of the Ottomans and the Civil Agents remained under the close supervision of Hilmi Pasha.<sup>30</sup>

The foreign officers' role was limited to make suggestions. In each sector, the officers asked for the dismissal of the incompetent, corrupt or violent officers and policemen, but the Ottoman officials were reluctant to investigate the cases.

As Nadine Akhund wrote, the Mürzsteg program ignored to define the relationship between the Civil Agents and their military counterparts. The two Civil Agents reported directly to their ambassadors. But Demerik was hesitant and ill and Roghoj also died in 1905. The international military commission included 15 people.<sup>31</sup> The relationship between the Civil Agents and General Degeorgis was tense, while it was cordial between Hilmi pasha and the 2 civil agents. In general, the officers sent the peasants' complaints to the Civil Agents or the ambassadors, who occasionally transmitted them to the Ottoman authorities (who put them aside for a while). The Austro–Hungarian diplomats did suggest a solution to the problems above by subordinating the international military structure to a mixed council under the control of two representatives from Vienna and Saint Petersburg. Hilmi Pasha approved it, as he estimated that the more complex the international administration became, the less efficient it would be. The French, British, and Germans rejected the project and it was abandoned.<sup>32</sup> All in all, this system of detaching civil and military administration from each other was very similar to the system implemented in Bosnia by Austria-Hungary.

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<sup>28</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis and the Mürzsteg Agreement of 1903: International Efforts to Bring Peace to Macedonia. – *Hungarian Historical Review*, 3/3 (2014), pp. 594–595.

<sup>29</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis, p. 593.

<sup>30</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis, p. 594.

<sup>31</sup> The general, Degeorgis in charge of the reorganization of the gendarmerie was assisted by two officers, one Italian and one Russian. The six military delegates were chiefs of the military missions. The six official military attachés from the great powers were also included as part of the commission.

<sup>32</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis, pp. 601-602.

The establishment of an international administrative system could have transcended the national issues linked to the delimitation of borders – wrote Nadine Akhund.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, the agreement produced just the opposite. Article 3 of the Mürzsteg Agreement, the content of which was ambiguous, indicated a future “modification in the delimitation of administrative units in view of a more normal grouping of different nationalities.”<sup>34</sup> This rather increased rivalry among Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria instead of decreasing the tensions and the new phase of the „Macedonian struggle” began in 1904 with the increasing presence of Greek paramilitary units. In 1907, alarmed by the serious the situation, the great powers attempted to provide a better definition of Article 3. In September, an Austrian–Russian note was sent to Athens, Sofia and Belgrade indicating that the territorial delimitation “will not in any case take into consideration the national changes resulting from the terrorist activities... this delimitation will instead be based on the principle of the status quo ante.”<sup>35</sup> However, the weak and vague formulation only encouraged small states to intervene – because they had nothing to lose. Thus the reforms rather comprised of the superimposition of an existing administration without the introduction of any real changes.<sup>36</sup>

Due to the amnesty after Ilinden 1600 political prisoners were released, and 6000 refugees resettled.<sup>37</sup> However, restoration of peace was not successful as several consular reports testified it. The Muslims remained hostile to the Mürzsteg program, which was perceived as a set of measures in support of Christians in a country where the official religion was Islam. The officers were seen as a symbol of military occupation with its resulting constraints. Religious tensions (Albanian Muslims vs. Slavs), political oppositions (Greek-Bulgarian), intracommunal tensions (IMRO activists vs. hesitant peasants or Christian gendarmerie) were overprinted by other new patterns, like intraorganizational violence (within the gendarmerie), supraconfessional revolt against government taxes, traditionalist Albanians attacking government buildings – making the situation more complicated (see below).<sup>38</sup>

**Nr. 87**

**Zambaur an Goluchowski**

HHStA PA XXXVIII/Kt. 385, n. f.

*Konfessionsübergreifender Widerstand der Bevölkerung gegen neue Steuer auf Großvieh. Ausschreitungen in Gjakova und Umgebung. Gefangenenbefreiungen und Plünderungen.*

Nro. 4

Mitrovica, am 3. Februar 1904

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<sup>33</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis, p. 598.

<sup>34</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis, p. 599.

<sup>35</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis, p. 600.

<sup>36</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis, p. 602.

<sup>37</sup> BALANYI, GY. A Balkán-probléma, p. 176.

<sup>38</sup> SCHMITT – FRANTZ (Hg.). Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo, Vol. 3.

**Nr. 78**  
**Pára an Gołuchowski**  
HHStA PA XXXVIII/Kt. 434, n. f.

*Ausschreitungen frisch ausgehobener muslimischer Truppen gegen christliche Gendarmen in Vuçitërn und Mitrovica. Flucht der christlichen Gendarmen von Mitrovica in das russische Konsulat. Kasernierung und Exerzierübungen als Mittel zur Disziplinierung der muslimischen Soldaten.*

N° 247

Üsküb, am 19. September 1903

**Nr. 90**  
**Halla an Gołuchowski**  
HHStA PA XXXVIII/Kt. 401, n. f.

*Muslimisch-albanische Angriffe unter Führung von Sylejman Aga Batusha und Myrteza Pascha auf Regierungsgebäude in Gjakova als Widerstand gegen Reformen und Viehsteuer. Gefährdung Pejas und Prizrens durch Abzug osmanischer Truppen. Besa im Bergland von Gjakova und Sammlung von Kriegern mehrerer Stämme. Materielle Interessen des Heereslieferanten Myrteza Pascha an Truppenkonzentration in der Region.*

No 21

Prizren, am 14. Februar 1904

The proportion of Christian gendarmes remained underrepresented measured to their general presence in the community. There was simply not enough foreign officers to train the gendarmerie, and there was not enough men to restore public security since the intervention of Serb and Greek bands into the Macedonian affairs. Instead of the required 4580 there was only 3790 even in 1907. The situation became so critical, that in January 1905 Austria-Hungary had to warn the Balkan governments in a verbal note. Only in Skopje sanjak within 5 months in 1905 there were more violent affairs described by the term everyday violence, than political murders in 1903!<sup>39</sup>

The powers insisted that the proportion of Christians in the gendarmerie should be set in line with their proportion of the population, instead of the general 20% prescribed by the original Ottoman plans. After the first failures in using ethnically mixed gendarme troops, the Powers decided to organize ethno-religiously homogeneous troops. But it seemed to be a mistake to apply the principle of nationality in the gendarmerie: this generated discontent among the local population, who – together with the small states – expected that the next step would be the reorganization of reformed vilayets according to the principle of nationality.

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<sup>39</sup> DEMETER, G. – CSAPLÁR-DEGOVICS, K.: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Destabilization: Violence and Strategies of Survival in Ottoman Macedonia (1903–1913). Istanbul, Isis Press, 2018.

Gendarmerie.

Im Sandschak von Prizren sind im Ganzen 420 Gendarmen angestellt, darunter 60 Suvari (beritten). Hievon sind 92 Christen (unter diesen 2 beritten), der Rest, 328, Mohammedaner. Von den christlichen Gendarmen sind 68 griechisch-orthodoxen, 24 katholischen Glaubens. Die Zahl der mohammedanischen und christlichen Gendarmen entspricht im Allgemeinen dem Bevölkerungsverhältnisse des Sandschaks Prizren.

Im Sandschak von Ipek sind, soweit bisher festgestellt werden konnte, 67 christliche Gendarmen im Dienste, hievon 34 im Kaza von Ipek, 33 in jenem von Djakova. Nachdem die Gesamtzahl der Gendarmen dieses Sandschaks circa 400 betragen soll, müßte die Zahl der christlichen Gendarmen auf ungefähr 100 gebracht werden, um dem Bevölkerungsverhältnis zu entsprechen.

After 1905, events took a course that put an end to the exclusive domination that Vienna and Saint Petersburg enjoyed since 1897. In 1905, the great powers pressed further for the implementation of the reforms laid down in the Mürzsteg program regarding finances and justice and finally all powers became involved in this question despite the original will of Austria-Hungary and Russia.

The roots are deep. As the part of the reforms, a new tax system had to be implemented based on fixed amounts, replacing the *iltizam* system. The reason was not only the inefficiency and corruptness of this system, but the critical economic situation in Macedonia in general. It became evident by the turn of the century that Macedonia was unable to supply more people at the given technological conditions. In the Kosovo vilayet 50% of the central income still came from the tithe, while in the more industrialized Saloniki vilayet and Monastir this was 25-30%.<sup>40</sup> Grain exports were stagnating, while crop imports grew from zero to 30 thousand tons yearly between 1895 and 1905.<sup>41</sup> While in the 1850s 20-25% of the crop per household was exported, this figure fell back to 5% in 1900, partly because of the fell in unit prices, partly because of tax increases. As crop production was stagnating, and the price index was also decreasing (table 3) these unfavourable conditions for the state budget could only be balanced by the increase of per capita tithe revenues. This 70% increase in the per capita tax burden within 10 years was the main cause of the general increase in central revenues (not prices or yield), but this overtaxation also contributed to the outbreak of the Ilinden uprising.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Based on: Diplomatische Aktenstücke, calculated based on 166–174. No. 160. 29.04.1906.

<sup>41</sup> AKARLI, A. Growth and retardation in Ottoman Macedonia 1880-1910. – In: The Mediterranean Response to Globalisation before 1950, edited by Şevket Pamuk – Jeffrey G. Williamson. London, Routledge, 2000, p. 121.

<sup>42</sup> DEMETER, G. – CSAPLÁR-DEGOVICS, K.: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Destabilization, pp. 146–147.



Table 3. Central income from tithe in Macedonia between 1890 and 1903

Year	Tax income in million piastres	Rural population in million	Crop price index	Tax index	Crop production in million tons	Crop production per rural person in tons	Tithe per capita in piastres	Index of tax burden per capita
1888-1890	41.5	2.04	100	100	1.1	0.5	20	100
1901-1903	58.3	1.7	85	200	1	0.6	34	170

Basen on the data of AKARLI, A. Growth and retardation in Ottoman Macedonia 1880–1910, p. 121.

However, the uprising resulted in the loss of one-year state income and harvest failures for the peasantry. While the latter could be solved by giving temporary tax exemptions, the tax arrears could not be collected even later. In Macedonia, the financial situation was reaching a critical point as the deficit for the three *vilayets* reached more than 600,000 Turkish pounds. The yearly income for the 3 vilayets reached 185 million piastres in 1905/06, while the expenses were rated 268 million and out of this more than 50%, 148 million was to secure public order (table 4).<sup>43</sup> Thus numerous administration officials had not been paid for months.<sup>44</sup> Corruption became regular.

The demand on financial reforms started as an Austro–Russian initiative. The Sultan refused to agree and in turn, requested an increase in tariffs of 3 percent, from 8 percent to 11, to meet the extraordinary expenses resulting from the situation in Macedonia. At the proposal of the Austro–Hungarian government, the powers sent an international squadron of eight battleships to the Straits lead by Admiral Ripper. Finally, in the beginning of December, the Sultan accepted the terms.<sup>45</sup> Macedonian finances were placed under the control of the international financial commission as proposed by the British, which remained active until 1908. However, military expenses were not included among the responsibilities of the financial commission.<sup>46</sup>

Table 4. Budget of the three vilayets – incomes and expenses

Expenses, 1905/1906,	Civil expenses	Military expenses	Affectation	Total
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<sup>43</sup> DEMETER, G. – CSAPLÁR-DEGOVICS, K.: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Destabilization, p. 151.

<sup>44</sup> Huseyn Hilmi pasha, often asked the Allatinis, the owners of the greatest milling company in Salonica, to continue providing bread supplies to the army without getting paid for months because of the financial situation. The government even asked for new loans from the Allatinis to settle earlier debts.

<sup>45</sup> BALANYI, GY. A Balkán-probléma fejlődése, p. 178.

<sup>46</sup> AKHUND, N. Stabilizing a Crisis, p. 605: Two years later, in 1907, at Russia's initiative, the great powers proposed to establish international control over the Macedonian judicial system, which was undermined by corruption, and to introduce Christians into the courts of justice. Based on a complex arrangement, the functioning of the justice system would be supervised by six inspectors (three Christians and three Muslims) and would be dependent on the Financial Commission. But the great powers could not agree in the details (whether to be from Europe, as was suggested by London, or subjects of the Ottoman Empire, as was favored by Vienna). This highlights their weakness to cooperate in the long run.

<b>millions of piastres</b>				
Saloniki	33.3	50.2	26	109.5
Kosovo	27.1	55.6	1,6	84.3
Monastir	24	42	7.8	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>84.5</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>268</b>
<i>Total for previous year</i>	<i>74.5</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>254</i>

<b>Income, 1905/1906</b> millions of piastres	<b>Tax</b>	<b>Tax arrears collected</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Population and tax per capita and per family (6 persons)</b>
Saloniki	70	7.8	77.9	1.1 million: 63 piastres, 350 piastres
Kosovo	49	7.9	56.9	1 million: 50 piastres, 300 piastres
Monastir	42	8.4	50.8	0.95 million: 44 piastres, 250 piastres
<b>Total</b>	<b>161.4</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>185.6</b>	<b>50 piastres, 300 piastres</b>

Also in 1907 the Powers wanted to extend the limit of the supervision for 7 more years, desired the full disarmament of the population (after Ilinden many weapons were redistributed to the local Christians to defend themselves – encouraged by the powers), the armament of the gendarmerie with new Mauser repeating rifles (the bands already had this efficient weapon through smuggling). The Porte accepted the prolongation of supervision – knowing the proven inefficiency of the all-power concert and also that she will soon conclude a separate agreement with the new Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aehrenthal on the Uvac-Mitrovica railway, that would disrupt the concert of Powers. The recurrence of the idea of the railway (which in fact was allowed under certain circumstances by the Berlin Treaty of 1878) managed to destroy the weak cooperation between the jealous powers. Both Russia and the western powers blamed Aehrenthal's separate agreement for the collapse of concert of Europe, and the next step of the Austro-Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the plan to annex Bosnia (with the consent of Iswolsky), even angered the powers further - and the new Ottoman government of the Young Turks too.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> ANGYAL, D. A Boszniai válság története. – A Bécsi Magyar Történetkutató Intézet Évkönyve, I-II. 1931–1932.