

## GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN OF 1915 AND SERBIA – CORRELATIONS, SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

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### Abstract

This paper represents an attempt to place Serbia in broader context of turbulent 1915 and its relations with Allied campaign at Gallipoli opposite to the usual interpretations and views of 1915 as year of long stalemate on the Balkan front. Although it is often observed as isolated event Gallipoli campaign was closely connected with events in the Southern and Southeast Europe. In that sense Serbia proved to be major obstacle for German and Austro-Hungarian attempts to establish land communication with their Ottoman ally. As fights on the Gallipoli intensified so did the Ottoman need for supplies. Despite the plans and wishes Central Powers were forced to postpone final showdown with Serbia. As long as Ottoman forces were pinned down defending the Straits they couldn't be used against Serbia. Same rule applied for Austro-Hungarian forces when Italy entered a war on the side of the Entente. Balkan neutral countries: Bulgaria, Greece and Romania were carefully observing situation choosing the right moment to join the fight. On which side they would fight depended on will and possibilities of the major European powers to fulfill their territorial demands. At the end Germans involved after they managed to achieve victory on the Eastern front and redeploy their elite forces to Balkans. Ottoman victory at the Gallipoli "bled out" the Western Allies to the extent that they couldn't commit enough forces to assist Serbia when in October 1915 began joint German-Austro-Hungarian-Bulgarian offensive resulting in temporary defeat of Serbia.

**Keywords:** Serbia, Allies, Gallipoli, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Ottoman Empire.

Allied Gallipoli campaign of 1915 represents one of the most known episodes of the Great War – for some of its participants, for example Australia and New Zealand (as well as Turkey), it is one of the corner stones in forging post-war national identities.<sup>1</sup> For the Ottomans it was much needed victory after series of defeats in an ongoing as well as previous conflict. This victory contributed a great deal to the rise of Mustafa Kemal, future founder of the modern Turkish state.<sup>2</sup> In a long and suffering campaign designed with the aim to take over the control of the Straits Western Allies had engaged considerable assets of their Armies and Navies. However, there is clear tendency to observe Gallipoli campaign out from its geographical context, that is out of the fact that Gallipoli or Çanakkale is located on the Balkan Peninsula. Traditional view of event in the Balkans during this period is a long stalemate in war operations after the dynamic and turbulent autumn of 1914. If we

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<sup>1</sup> See: Jenny Macleod, *Gallipoli*, Oxford University Press 2015; Michael JK Walsh, Andrekos Varnava (eds.), *Australia and the Great War: Identity, Memory, Mythology*, Melbourne University Press 2016; Mark McKenna, Stuart Ward, "It war really moving mate': The Gallipoli Pilgrimage and Sentimental Nationalism in Australia", in: *Australian Historical Studies* vol. 38, 2007, issue 129, pp. 141-151.

<sup>2</sup> See: Ayhan Aktar, "Mustafa Kemal at Gallipoli: The Making of a Saga 1921 – 1932" in: Michael JK Walsh, Andrekos Varnava (eds.), *Australia and the Great War: Identity, Memory, Mythology*, Melbourne University Press 2016, pp. 149-171.

go beyond this narrative rather different picture would appear. Actual situation in the Balkan war theatre in 1915 was quite dynamic with numerous crisis, smaller and secret interventions, and increased diplomatic activities of both alliances aimed at attracting the neutral Balkan countries Romania, Bulgaria and Greece, which all had important places in war planning of both coalitions.

On the other hand, Serbia and Montenegro after successful 1914 continued to coordinate their efforts with the Allies, primarily Russian Empire. In addition, Serbian position and attitudes had their own influence on the course of the events in the Straits, that is, Serbian/Allied blockade of the Danube prevented Germany and Austria-Hungary to send needed supplies to their Ottoman ally.

However, how Serbia, its political and military leaders saw this period, as well as how they behaved and what were their actions, initiatives, and views on current warfare and politics was mostly ignored and unappreciated by its Western Allies. Little was done to prevent the obvious outcome while consequent allied actions proved to be futile and even more disappointing. This paper is aiming to furthermore explain correlations of these events and their influence on future actions of belligerent states.

### ***Serbia and outcomes of the 1914***

War year of 1914 for Serbia<sup>3</sup> was successful because of several reasons:

1. Three consecutive enemy offensives were repelled.
2. Enemy were inflicted serious casualties.
3. Enemy offensive capabilities were broken and Serbian army gained valuable time for necessary recovery.
4. Serbia has publicly proclaimed its war aims.<sup>4</sup>

Serbian casualties in 1914 (apart of civilians and those suffered during the epidemic of typhoid fever) accounted total 140.729 (20.208 dead, 84.185 wounded, 36.360 captured and missing in action) out of 420.000 mobilized men. As for the Austro-Hungarian casualties, from 400.000 soldiers engaged in 1914 Balkan campaign (compared to 921.000 on Russian front) total losses reached number of 273.813 (28.285 dead, 122.122 wounded, 46.716 with maladies, 76.690 missing in action).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> More on Serbia's participation in the First World War, see: Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War 1914-1918*, Hurst&Company, London 2007; also, see: Frédéric Le Moal, *La Serbie, du martyre à la victoire (1914-1918)*, 14-18 éditions, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> On December 7 1914 during session in Serbian war capital Niš, parliament passed a short official declaration stating that Serbian war aim is liberation and unification of "all our brothers Serbs, Croats and Slovenes who are not free", see: A. Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War*, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup> Bjelajac, Mile: Serbia, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2015-10-01. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10737>.

However, for Serbia this was achieved with:

1. Huge human losses and increased demographic strain to compensate casualties.
2. Huge losses in animals.
3. Detrition of equipment.
4. Enormous destruction in areas of combat operations.

Above mentioned casualties showed to be crippling one for a country that according to the 1910 census had population of 2.922.058. Although Serbia had huge birthrate and although after two Balkan Wars was awarded with new territories in Sanjak, Kosovo and Metohija and Macedonia that almost doubled it; and inhabitants that increased population to 4.576.508, new subjects and territories did not contribute to Serbia's war efforts accordingly.<sup>6</sup> Main reason was insufficient time between the Balkan Wars and the Great War needed to successfully incorporate above mentioned new territories and its population. In addition, considerable number of the new subjects were Muslims – ethnic Turks and Albanians as well as Slavs pro-Bulgarian proponents that at all cost tried to avoid being involved in fighting on Serbian side.

Secondary effects of the turbulent 1914 on Serbia:

1. Outbreak of typhoid fever in winter 1915 caused additional casualties in army but especially among civilian population.
2. Medical staff was decimated.
3. Serbian army lost its offensive capabilities in that sense that all away until the October and joint German-Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian offensive Serbian army did not perform offensive activities.

However, the end of victorious 1914 for Serbia proved to be a prelude to a real catastrophe. In winter 1914/1915 an epidemic of typhoid fever broke out causing additional casualties both among military and civilians. Precise number of those who died hasn't been determined. It is estimated that from 400.000 infected around 100.000 civilians and 35.000 soldiers died. Austro-Hungarian PoW's paid heavy death toll as well. By the end of epidemic 20.000 were unaccounted for, leaving 714 officers and 37.056 NCO's and soldiers in Serbian captivity.<sup>7</sup>

In spring of 1915 Serbian army was suffering from:

1. Lack of uniforms and field equipment
2. Insufficient quantities of engineering equipment especially for bridging operations.
3. Poor logistics – main mean of transport were oxen carts.
4. Insufficient number of heavy artillery pieces.

<sup>6</sup> Dušica Bojić, "Srpske izbeglice u Prvom svetskom ratu", in: Prvi svetski rat i Balkan – 90 godina kasnije, Tematski zbornik radova. Institut za strategijska istraživanja, Belgrade 2010, p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> Slobodan Đukić, "Austroougarski ratni zarobljenici u Srbiji 1914-1915. godine", in: Prvi svetski rat i Balkan – 90 godina kasnije, Tematski zbornik radova. Institut za strategijska istraživanja, Belgrade 2010, p. 145.

Even before the Great War started, as a result of the Balkan Wars, Serbian army lacked at least 120,000 rifles, heavy and mountain guns, ammunition, field equipment, 6.000 horses, around 300.000 complete sets of uniforms, medical equipment, medical staff, etc.<sup>8</sup>

However, in the context of the Allied war aims overall results of Serbia and Montenegro in 1914 are satisfactory because they have tied up significant amount of enemy troops that otherwise would be used on Eastern front against Russian Empire. In addition, Bulgarian joining to Central Powers was postponed while Romanian approach towards the Entente was initiated. Finally, Germany and Austro-Hungary remained deprived from land connection with Ottoman Empire.

### ***Serbia and prospects of 1915***

Beside above-mentioned Serbia was facing other challenges, especially in so called New districts, i.e. territories gained after the two Balkan Wars – Macedonia and Kosovo and Metohija, those challenges were:

- Increased activities of Bulgarian and Young Turk organizations with indications of preparations for sabotages on road and rail-road communications in Macedonia;
- Increased activities of Austro-Hungarian and Young Turk organizations in Albania;
- Endangered positions of Serbian protégée and ally Esad pasha Toptani in Albania.

Commanding officer of the Serbia's New districts troops, which were in the phase of formation, demanded his troops to be additionally strengthened.<sup>9</sup> By the end of March 1915 a huge incident happened in Macedonia and it had practically announced Bulgarian attitude and final decision to join the Central powers. After several smaller actions in Serbian Macedonia *komitaji's* of Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) attacked railroad station and bridge on Skoplje – Salonika railroad near the village of Valandovo. This endeavor was carefully planned in coordination with Ottoman agents and was financed by Austro-Hungarian military attaché in Sofia. Incident happened on Good Friday. Some 1.500 *komitajis's*, together with one Turkish irregular detachment, inflicted serious casualties to Serbian 3<sup>rd</sup> line troops guarding the railway and bridge. Although their opponents were 3<sup>rd</sup> line

<sup>8</sup> Bjelajac, Mile: Serbia, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2015-10-01. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10737>.

<sup>9</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, Volume 8, p. 25-27. He asked for three field, three mountain and three howitzer batteries with crews captured from the Austro-Hungarians. Also, he asked for 8 machinegun squads with 6 pieces in each and additional 25.000 rifles and volunteers from Austro-Hungarian PoW's (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) willing to serve in batteries he asked for.

conscripts<sup>10</sup> with obsolete weapons guarding the station *komitajis* did not succeed to damage the railroad sufficiently enough to interrupt traffic. However, this action was warning for the local Serbian military and civilian authorities. It has once more demonstrated how vulnerable were communications in Macedonia on which Serbia depended so much.<sup>11</sup> The other aspect – open assistance of Bulgarian army during *komitaji's* crossing the border and denial of any involvement of Bulgarian official circles in whole affair have been even more disturbing. In relation to that Bulgaria has entered the focus of both Entente and Central Power's endeavors to attract it on their side. Main events of that period were:

- Failed mission of Russian Prince Trubetskoy aimed to achieve reconciliation between Serbia and Bulgaria;
- Bulgaria proclaimed neutrality but was ready to negotiate with both sides;
- Allies warned Bulgaria they will defend Serbia but they promised compensations in Macedonia if Bulgaria maintains its neutrality;
- Serbia agreed to hand over part of the left bank of the Vardar river if Bulgaria enters war on the side of the Entente;
- Bulgarian king Ferdinand was willing to support Austro-Hungary and Germany but was confused and reluctant after Allied victories on Marne, in Galicia and in Serbia. 12

In relation to that Greece, which had an alliance with Serbia, was keeping its neutrality in order not to provoke Bulgarian reaction. Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos has assured Serbia that in case of Bulgarian mobilization Greece would proclaim its mobilization and eventually enter the war on Serbian side.

Romania remained neutral but everyday was becoming closer to the Entente. Romanian Prime Minister Bratianu managed to get Romania closer to the Entente despite opposition of Romanian king and some politicians.<sup>13</sup>

After the Balkan wars Albania became independent but quickly fell into state of anarchy. After just six months happened the departure of Albanian first ruler - Prince Wilhelm zu Weid and rise of Esad pasha Toptani, Albanian magnate and former Ottoman general.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Serbian army conscripts were divided in so-called lines (or calls), to 1<sup>st</sup> line belonged conscripts in age between 21 and 31, to 2<sup>nd</sup> line between 31 and 38 and 3<sup>rd</sup> line between 38 and 45. So-called "3<sup>rd</sup> liners" were mostly used for rear-guard duties, guarding duties on communications, bridges, PoW camps etc. Due to that they were armed with obsolete weapons like Russian single-shot rifles of *Berdan* system (10.7 mm caliber).

<sup>11</sup> Ljubomir Marić, "Valandovski zločin i njegove žrtve", in: *Ratnik IV* (1930), pp. 19-31, and Dimitar Minchev, *Participation of the population of Macedonia in the First World War 1914 – 1918*, Sofia 2004, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, p. 31-32.

<sup>13</sup> Heppner, Harald, Gräf, Rudolf: Romania, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10375.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Bartl, *Albanci, od srednjeg veka do danas*, CLIO Beograd 2001, pp. 124-138.

### **Turbulent 1915**

Prior to the Allied operation at Gallipoli Bulgaria continued to publicly maintain neutral position but managed to obtain a huge loan from Germany and Austria-Hungary. Greece did the same with England.

When on 19 February Allied fleet began with artillery barrage of Ottoman positions at Gallipoli situation in the Balkans became very dynamic. Greek Prime Minister saw a chance for Greek eventual expansion in Asia Minor and fulfillment of Greek nationalist project called *The Great Idea*. However, this endeavor was prevented by British – namely because of lack of transports.<sup>15</sup>

According to the Austro-Hungarian command there was an urgent need for ammunition (probably artillery) for the defense of Gallipoli. Normally, Ottomans could be supplied by transports using Danube, however position of Belgrade made it almost impossible. Way of solving this problem was observed differently by Germans and Austro-Hungarians. While Germans insisted on immediate attempt to break Serbian blockade, Austro-Hungarians wanted to neutralize Serbian artillery in Belgrade region first and than to send transports down the Danube. Germans managed to impose their idea, which resulted in an attempt to break the blockade. Despite success to pass by Belgrade, transport ship “Belgrade” carrying some 400 tons of ammo was destroyed by Serbian artillery on 30 March at 23.30. Only 8 people survived the explosion and there were no further attempts to deliver supplies to the Ottomans.<sup>16</sup>

In relation to this incident and in order to strengthen defense on the Danube Russians have deployed two guns and mine laying equipment in lower Danube to prevent eventual Austro-Hungarian attempts to block the river in order to prevent transports both going from Serbia and arriving from Russia.<sup>17</sup>

March was marked by intensive negotiations related to eventual Italian entrance into the war on the side of the Entente. Italians presented substantial territorial demands in Dalmatia while Russia continued to support Serbian interests in the Adriatic. Serbian main goal was final achieving of a sea outlet, which in this particular case wouldn't be blocked by imminent Italian expansion.<sup>18</sup>

During April occurred different actions and combinations. They went from fear of possible Serbian offensive across Danube, in its lower flow near Romanian border, to the joint Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian and Ottoman offensive against Serbia.

Eventual Serbian offensive was seen as a major distraction, which would assist ongoing Russian offensive. However, Serbian offensive against Austria-Hungary was very much questionable because of several reasons. First, Russian offensive began to lose impetus; second, water level on Danube started to raise and finally, Serbian army was still in poor conditions to consider major

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<sup>15</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, p. 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, p. 82.

offensive action. On the other hand, since 18 of April Austro-Hungarian war planners headed by archduke Eugene started to develop their own offensive plan. They thought that combined offensive of the Central Powers in the Balkan would resolve several important questions:

- Bulgarian final joining to Central Powers;
- Defeat and occupation of Serbia and interruption of its connection with Russia through Danube and connection with Western Allies through Salonika port;
- Establishment of land connection with the Ottomans and regular support of their war efforts;
- Performing of crucial influence on Romania and Greece to either keep out from the conflict either to join Central Powers;
- With the fall of Serbia Montenegro's destiny would be sealed as well.

Austro-Hungarian draft consisted of two segments:

- German and Austro-Hungarian joint action across Sava and Danube towards the south following natural communications in Morava and Kolubara valleys;
- Bulgarian and Ottoman joint action on wide front following entire length of Bulgarian-Serbian border.

Main goals of this plan would be:

- Occupation and neutralization of north Serbian regions that were most populated, most industrially developed and were considered as most developed agricultural regions as well;
- Interruption of Timok valley railroad (that went parallel with the Serbian-Bulgarian border), this railroad connected town of Niš and Danube port Prahovo and actually could represent useful route for supplying Romania as well Russian forces that would probably arrive in case of Romania joining the Entente;
- Occupation of strategically important Serbian town of Niš which was important road junction on ways towards the Constantinople and Salonika;
- Occupation of Serbian Macedonia and interruption of communications with Salonika as most important port for supplying Serbia and possible supplying of Romania and Russia.

The plan was designed to make maximum use of available resources. Plan envisaged engagement of:

- 145 German and Austro-Hungarian battalions and 450 guns (especially heavy artillery) grouped in five to six divisions and autonomous brigades

- on main direction and two divisions on auxiliary direction – 145.000 rifles in total.
- 100 Ottoman battalions and 200 guns (three army corps each with three divisions of nine battalions –100.000 rifles in total).
  - 144 Bulgarian battalions and 450 guns in six divisions –144.000 rifles in total.

According to the plan main part of German and Austro-Hungarian forces (some 120 battalions) would advance from north. Ottoman forces would advance following the main communication from Sofia towards Pirot and Nish while Bulgarian troops would interrupt Timok valley railroad in the north and railroad Skoplje-Salonika in the south taking Macedonia as a whole.

However, when Allies began landing operations on Gallipoli on 26 of April plan was abandoned for simple reason because 100.000 Ottoman soldiers that were planned for operations against Serbia had more urgent business elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

### **Outcomes of the 1915**

Northern Serbia, Danube and Belgrade continued to be area of intensive artillery and airplane activities throughout the year. Defense of Belgrade has been strengthened by arrival of several Allied batteries of coastal artillery and torpedoes. By the beginning of 1915 one French and two British coastal batteries arrived joining two already operating Russian guns. Beside guns and torpedoes Russians have deployed electro-contact mines while British brought one torpedo boat. Finally, French brought whole airplane squadron with eight planes, which during the summer were joined by another four.<sup>20</sup>

What happened afterwards was pretty much known. Signing of secret London Treaty brought Italy on the side of the Entente. Almost over the night Austro-Hungarian Balkan army had to change its position from offensive to defensive. Its units became very important in case of Italian, Serb-Montenegrin or even Romanian offensive activities. When finally on 23 of May Italy entered war a new front was opened.

Meanwhile, position of Albanian magnate and Serbian ally and protégé, Esad pasha became very unstable. Serbian leadership decided to assist him with military interventions of some 20.000 soldiers operating in three detachments. By the rule, autonomous actions of Balkan states always used to cause Western Allies objections and protests. This time objections came from British Supreme Commander, Lord Kitchener himself. In a telegram he expressed his dissatisfaction with possible intervention in Albania calling it improper and irregular because Serbia needed to focus on Austria-Hungary and support of expected Italian and Russian offensive actions.<sup>21</sup> However, there were several strong reasons that made

<sup>19</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, pp. 84-88.

<sup>20</sup> Stanislav Sretenović, Danilo Šarenac (eds.), *Leksikon Prvog svetskog rata u Srbiji*, "Ratna dejstva oko Beograda", Institut za savremenu istoriju, Beograd 2015, p.164.

<sup>21</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, p. 127.



this almost impossible. First one was low supply of stocks needed for offensive actions. Also, Serbia just started to recovery from typhoid fever epidemic. Finally, French aero reconnaissance brought news of huge fortifications efforts that the Austro-Hungarian army has made across Sava and Danube rivers.<sup>22</sup> Although, there weren't analyses of possible outcome of eventual offensive actions, probability of huge casualties during the crossing of rivers as well as further advancement were probable cause for Serbian army to remain defensive. In addition, just an overview of contemporary reports related to condition of materiel and animals tells that offensive possibilities of Serbian army in 1915 were extremely limited.

What happened during the summer?

During summer months both sides invested huge efforts in attempts to attract Bulgaria. It became obvious that Bulgaria was interested only in one thing – Macedonia, as Prime Minister Radoslavov openly expressed in one interview in mid-August.<sup>23</sup> However, Serbia's and Greek possession of this important province proved to be crucial for Bulgaria's logical decision to join Central powers. It was much easier for Austria-Hungary and Germany to promise Macedonian lands to Bulgaria than from Western Allies to expect Serbia and Greece to hand over to their former adversaries the same territories for which they already fought one war. From Serbia's point of view it was unacceptable to hand over Macedonia to Bulgaria just to get promises of possible territorial compensations in return. From German and Austro-Hungarian standpoint creation of land connection with the Ottomans was most urgent. Serbia was major obstacle while Bulgaria was seen as logical and most convenient ally. However, Bulgarians expressed determination that they would not take any action before the completion of harvest – logical demand because as in other Balkan states majority of conscripts were peasants who could not be summoned in the middle of the harvest without jeopardizing its results.

Also, German high command managed to conduct successful military operations on Eastern front that led to Russian defeat, withdrawal and changes in Russian command structure. Germans could finally focus on Balkans and bring there their crack 11<sup>th</sup> army and general Mackensen who already managed to build reputation of a troubleshooter. His Balkan campaigns against Serbia in 1915 and against Romania in 1916 have just confirmed it.

Serbia continued its action in Albania aimed at helping Esad-pasha and preventing further covert actions of Austrians among Albanian clans. Meanwhile, in an autonomous action Montenegrin troops have occupied important north Albanian town of Shkoder/Scuttari. Meanwhile, all Allied attempts to finish Gallipoli campaign successfully proved to be futile.

While German negotiations with Bulgaria showed to be fruitful, Western Allies were still hoping to achieve success on expense of Bulgarian neighbors.

<sup>22</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, pp. 123-125.

<sup>23</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, p. 247.

Although Serbian government through diplomatic channels provided solid proofs of Bulgarian intentions to wage a war against Serbia Western Allies continued to warn and even threaten Serbia not to provoke conflict with Bulgaria.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of September Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić sent a special message to every Serbian diplomatic and military representatives accredited at Allied countries. Again, his wisdom and experience proved to be unparalleled. His message was precise analyses of possible outcomes if Serbia's current position continued to be ignored. Almost as prophecy he announced future developments in Balkan War Theater. According to his words, if Western Allies continue to rely on wavering policy towards Bulgaria and to expect any achievements only by concessions it would actually prove German strength and even Bulgarian parliamentary opposition would begin to support official policy. This would mean that Bulgaria has actually tricked everyone and achieved its goal. In order to prevent such development Pašić proposed following measures:

1. To give Bulgaria 24 hour ultimatum demanding immediate suspension of mobilization;
2. Immediately after the expiration of the ultimatum Allies should occupy Bulgarian ports;
3. To send necessary materiel to Serbia through Salonika as well as entire Russian division by Danube – second measure would make strong impression on traditionally Russophile common Bulgarians;
4. Put a pressure on Romania to join Serbia and Greece and proclaim general mobilization.

According to his words, failure to carry out above mentioned steps would lead towards final breakdown in the Balkans and Germany will obtain land communication with the Ottomans in shortest possible period. Greece, even mobilized, would remain inactive because it would realize that it couldn't rely on the Entente. Same would happen with Romania.<sup>25</sup>

As it is known, events that followed proved 1915 to be very successful for the Central Powers. Theirs careful planning, economy of forces and adequate choosing of moments for action was followed by series of wrong moves and estimations from the Entente. Although Italy joined allied efforts, their huge army was practically blocked on the rough Alpine front. Serbia was temporarily put out from action while Montenegro actually finished its existence as independent state. The end of 1915 was marked by the beginning of famous Serbian withdrawal across the Albanian mountains. Total number of those who died was never determined. Albania was occupied and divided. Romania and Greece were left aside.

Bulgaria joined Central Powers thus providing land connection to the Ottomans and continuous flow of war materials and troops. Soon, German and Austro-Hungarian troops reached Middle East strengthening Ottoman forces there. In one moment their number there exceeded the overall strength of the German forces in the Balkans.

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<sup>24</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, p. 295.

<sup>25</sup> *Veliki rat Srbije*, Volume 8, pp. 296-297.

As for the Entente, 1915 proved to be was disastrous for several reasons. Firstly because defeat in Gallipoli campaign resulted in huge casualties – from 410.000 British and 79.000 French soldiers that were disembarked on Gallipoli, 205.000 British and 49.000 French were counted as casualties. Ottoman army, despite heavy losses as well (almost half of the overall 500.000 soldiers engaged) after years of consecutive defeats has gained necessary self-confidence for the continuation of war efforts.<sup>26</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Ottoman success in the battle of Gallipoli represents foundation of Central Powers successful diplomatic and military campaign in the Balkans. On the other hand, it showed once again how for the Ottoman state establishment of land connection with its allies was urgent. Ottoman forces managed to tie down Allied forces and inflict them serious casualties. This has directly influenced course of events in the Balkan war theatre afterwards when after withdrawal from the Gallipoli and landing at Salonika Allied forces were too weak to assist Serbia which was fighting tripartite invasion. In the same time, German success on the Eastern front provided them opportunity to focus on the Balkans and help Austria-Hungary which after the opening of Italian front was able to solely engage with Serbia and Montenegro. Deployment of the German 11<sup>th</sup> army with its proven battle-hardened commander, as General Mackensen has been, change the balance of powers in the Balkan war theatre. In order to strengthen their odds Central Powers war planners managed to attract Bulgaria on their side. Equally important was Western Allies short sightedness regarding the Serbian warnings about the on-going negotiations between Bulgaria and Central Powers. Once concluded, agreement with Bulgaria brought multiple gains for the Central Powers. In just a couple of months Serbia was temporarily and Montenegro permanently expelled from war, land connection with Ottoman Empire has been established, Greece and Romania were forced to remain neutral, Albania was occupied while Bulgarian troops were able to confine newly arrived Allied forces in Salonika. Serbian forces were forced to abandon their heavy weaponry and together with their sovereign, government, parliament and numerous civilian refugees perform strenuous withdrawal across roadless Albanian mountains. Lack of basic provisions on a verge of famine, winter, diseases, and attacks of Albanian clansmen caused huge losses. Although after reaching Adriatic coast, what was left of Serbian forces recovered with the Allied help, they weren't able to join fighting on newly established Salonika front before August 1916.

Due to the defeat at Gallipoli and subsequent military and political miscalculations, instead of taking Constantinople, Western Allies became witnesses of German expansion. Assistance, which Germans provided to the Bulgarians and Ottomans as well as arrival of their troops and instructors to the Balkans and the Middle East prolonged the fighting in both war theatres.

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<sup>26</sup> Alan Moorehead, *Gallipoli*, Perennial Classics, New York 2002, p. 355.

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