

# BULGARIA WILL NOT SWERVE FROM HER CHOSEN PATH

BY

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**T**he form of the new world begins to assume an increasingly clearer shape, and during this process the peoples of the different Continents have separated into two camps to take part in the gigantic struggle on the outcome of which depends their fate for the next fifty or a hundred years. On which side does Bulgaria stand? In what direction does the Bulgarian nation progress? What are the sentiments that fill the hearts of the Bulgars? and what are the opinions of the leading Bulgarian statesmen who have undertaken the arduous task of steering the country towards a happier future? Before answering these questions, we must cast a glance back into the past, for by examining the Bulgaria of yesterday we shall have a clearer understanding of the situation of the country today.

Let me recall the speech made in 1929 by Dr. Nicholas Minkoff, a leading representative of the post-war youth of Bulgaria and a member of the present Government Party. In that speech, made on the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Neuilly, Dr. Minkoff said:

“In the war of 1914—1918 four States — Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Bulgaria and Turkey — were fighting practically against the whole world. Millions and millions of soldiers representing every race under the sun, were thrown into battle against that alliance of four nations; but their front remained unbroken. All the might and wealth of the Continents became a weapon directed against the Central Powers; and yet it seemed that victory would be theirs. Time passed and *the military successes of the German, Austrian, Hungarian, Bulgarian and Turkish armies were made of no avail by the fact that the material resources of those countries were exhausted.* The possibilities of victory

for either side were equalized. A hard struggle began and the hope of peace became more and more remote.

"Something would have to happen to tip the balance in favour of one side or the other. It was the entry into the war of the United States of America, the sword of America thrown into the scales, that made the balance tremble, but not to any decisive extent. America, with all her dollars, was not weighty enough to upset the equilibrium until to the sword and gold of the United States *President Wilson added the olive branch of the hope of peace. Then, indeed, the scales turned — in favour of the other side.* The Bulgarian soldiers, who by their brave deeds and military prowess had enriched history with many glorious pages, were now thrown into perplexity by President Wilson's promise that the wishes of the peoples should and would be respected, and that every nation would have the right of self-determination. Why, they began to ask, should we continue to fight, if we can achieve our aims without arms? What followed is well known to all: *Bulgaria and her comrades-in-arms, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, lost the war, although they had not been defeated in battle.*"

Then came Versailles, Trianon and Neuilly. *After the war very hard times visited Bulgaria,* The Treaty of Neuilly plunged the country into financial and economic distress, and greatly weakened its military and diplomatic strength. King Boris and the various Governments that succeeded one another in Sofia during the next twenty years made every endeavour to avoid the pitfalls dug for Bulgaria by her neighbours, to maintain internal equilibrium, and to preserve in the soul of the Bulgarian people the hope that sooner or later fairer days would dawn for their country. The task was often a very difficult one, especially *when the adjacent States openly sought a quarrel with Bulgaria, or when Bulgarian statesmen were subjected to pressure from all sides.* But the hard times following the war acme to an end at last, and 1940 brought the first foretaste of joy: the restoration of the southern part of the Dobrudja.

Some months passed; then a year ago, on 1st March 1941, Bulgaria solemnly signed the Three Power Pact at the Belvedere Palace in Vienna. Next day the Bulgarian Premier,

Professor Filoff, made the following announcement to the Sofia Parliament:

"When the Axis Powers took the initial steps towards a solution of the problem of Southern Dobrudja, they not only won the deep gratitude of the Bulgarian people, but also gave proof of their determination to create a more equitable situation in Europe. In view of this historical fact Bulgaria sees in the Pact concluded by Germany, Italy and Japan a political instrument *the aim of which is to ensure to the different nations justice and the possibility of peaceful development. Imbued with a desire to contribute as far as she can to the realization of these great aims, Bulgaria has joined the Three Power Pact.*"

With this Bulgaria's attitude towards the belligerents has been decided, and she has definitely taken sides in the great conflict. Although the country has not yet taken part in the fighting, she stands armed and ready for all contingencies, as she must, if she is to maintain her prestige in the eyes of certain of her neighbours.

The German lightning war in the Balkans, which ended in the collapse of Yugoslavia and the surrender of Greece, began on 6th April 1941. Within two weeks of that date the Bulgarian troops began to re-occupy the liberated areas — *Macedonia, Thrace and Morovia*. Today this aggrandized country (the importance of which lies perhaps less in its extent than in its geo-political and strategic situation) has attained to the rank of a mediumsized Power, and is preparing to play a rôle of the first magnitude in the future life of Europe.

The area of Bulgaria after it had been mutilated under the Treaty of Neuilly by the victors of the last war was 103.000 square kilometres, with a population of 6.500.000 souls. With the restoration of Southern Dobrudje (7696 sq. k. s. and 1.400.000 souls), Macedonia and Morovia (27.000 sq. k. s. and 1.400.000 souls), and Thrace (14.000 sq. k. and 150.000 souls) the area of Bulgaria is now 152.000 square kilometres, with a population of 9.000.000.

The Bulgarians are happy. In the years 1940—1941 they witnessed the realization of the national ideals for which they had striven for more than sixty years. Their joy over

the restoration of the areas wrested from Bulgaria by the Treaty of Neuilly was all the greater because those parts returned to the mothercountry without the sacrifice of a single Bulgarian soldier.

*The various Governments that succeeded one another in Bulgaria during the past twenty years always pursued a revisionist policy.* It is true that their methods differed, but the aim was always the same: a struggle against the burden of the Treaty of Neuilly. Proof that this was so is afforded by the fact that none of Bulgaria's statesmen, whatever his political or ideological standpoints may have been, would ever agree to Bulgaria's joining the Balkan Alliance. This in itself shows that they refused to accept the situation created by the Peace Edicts.

So far Bulgaria's army, modernized and augmented in keeping with the country's present circumstances, has not taken active part in the war. This intact army, the strength of which grows from day to day, is a guarantee to the Axis against any unpleasant surprise from the direction of the Black Sea or — more likely still — from the south, for in either case Bulgarian bayonets, tanks and aeroplanes would be there to act as a check. I am convinced that the task assigned to the Bulgarian army is well known to other countries, friends and foes alike.

When we speak of the Bulgarian army, we always involuntarily think of Turkey. Why? There are several reasons why we should do so.

*A year ago an agreement was concluded between Bulgaria and Turkey in which it was expressly stated that the unshakable foundation of the two Governments' foreign policy was that both parties would refrain from any act of aggression.*

Hitherto Turkey and Bulgaria have managed to remain on friendly terms. Both countries are very careful not to give any cause for unrest, and Turkey has stated that she does not feel threatened in any way by Bulgaria. *We have every reason to hope that this state of matters will continue, but it is the opinion of political circles in Sofia that Turkish statesmen must also be careful to avoid taking any mistaken steps.*

The misfortunes that overtook the Bulgarian people after the war of 1914—1918 were as numerous as they were great. The Peace Treaty of Neuilly tore the historical Bulgarian frontiers asunder, imposed heavy burdens on the economic life of the country and, to crown all, disarmed the Bulgarian army. Disappointment, lost hopes and a hard life disturbed the mental equilibrium of many Bulgarians and facilitated the spread of Communistic ideas, especially among the working masses. Bulgaria has always been a favourite hunting-ground for the Third International, but the peasantry of the country, who form about 85% of the total population, have always remained indifferent to Communism, and in December 1941 Premier Filoff officially announced that Bulgaria had joined the Anti-Commintern Pact. The vast majority of Bulgarians are peasants and small farmers in whom the sense of property is so highly developed that it is the mainspring of all their activities. *This is the reason why the Bulgarian people have always remained unaffected by Communist propaganda, and why the Bulgarian Government has struggled and will continue to struggle against Communistic activities.*

Words have been followed by deeds. Some months ago the police and military authorities took over the Government's relentless struggle against Bulgarian Communist agitators. *About one hundred death sentences were executed for crimes endangering the security of the State; and this has resulted in a reduction to the minimum of Communistic activity.* The Soviet radio continues its propaganda broadcasts in the Bulgarian language, calling upon the people of Bulgaria to fight for Panslav ideals, but the results are far from encouraging for the Soviet. *For, it has been stated in Sofia that the Bulgarians will not allow themselves to be led astray by this propaganda, because they are well aware that Panslavism, which the Bolshevists would like to use as an instrument of defence and attack, is nothing but one facet of a racial theory that is not compatible with the international ideas of Communism.*

*Since 1934 there are no political parties in Bulgaria, for the simple reason that they have all disintegrated. With the exception of a very small minority representing what*

may be described as an Opposition, all the members of the "Sobranie" are supporters of the Government's policy. The members of this Opposition are mostly men who were leaders of the old Parties, or who played some rôle in the old political life of the country and are still advocates of a return to Party politics. Seeing, however, that the questions at issue are questions of national policy, the Opposition has agreed to lend its support to the official policy.

Last year the organization of the youth of Bulgaria was begun on a general scale. In the past the creative force of youth was not properly exploited to the extent now demanded by the present abnormal circumstances. The organization goes by the name of the "Brannik", and its members are recruited from the schools — boys and girls alike. *The number of its members at present is 40.000, but this is merely a beginning.* This year the organization of young people who have left school is to begin, and by means of a new law full provision will probably be made for the organization of all the youth of Bulgaria. A happy idea that has been productive of excellent results was that the "Brannik" groups should take part in agricultural work in the summer months and help peasants who were unable to find enough labourers, or do some other kind of community work.

After several months of a strenuous work of organization conditions in the restored areas — first in the Dobrudja, then in Thrace, Macedonia and Morovia — became entirely normal. Within the present frontiers of Bulgaria life is proceeding in an orderly fashion. Everything in the spheres of economy, culture, administration and social welfare, as well as in the army, has been unified. Naturally the newly restored areas require special attention. They are receiving it, and the various departments of the Ministries have been assigned special tasks in connection with the Dobrudja, Macedonia, Thrace and Morovia.

*Bulgarian economic life has been able to cope with the situation created by the war, so that the country may be said to be sound economically.* Certain major and minor difficulties with which some branches of economy have to contend, do not contradict this statement.