

From Ankara to Bled Marshal Tito's Visit to Greece (June 1954) and the Formation of the Balkan Alliance

Abstract: Tito's visit to Greece contributed to the Balkan Pact's transformation into a military alliance. Despite the establishment of Soviet-Yugoslav diplomatic relations in 1953, the Soviet Union made no political move towards normalizing bilateral relations. For security reasons Tito visited Athens (June 1954) to promote Yugoslavia's military cooperation with Greece and Turkey without ruling out Yugoslavia's accession to NATO. But the Soviet leadership, fearing Yugoslavia's involvement in western defence mechanisms, sent the message to Belgrade that it was ready to recognise Stalin's blunders towards Yugoslavia. Thus, Tito applied a policy of equidistance between East and West and refused to link up the Balkan Alliance with NATO.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Greece, Balkan Pact, NATO, Turkey, Soviet Union, Tito's visit to Athens, Bulgarian attitude

The Balkan Pact of 1953–54 has been thoroughly studied in international historiography and most of its aspects have been clarified.¹ Little attention, however, has been paid to Tito's visit to Greece, which had a

¹ For a first approach see John Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle. Birth and decline of an alliance across ideological boundaries* (The Hague & Paris: Mouton, 1968); Hans Hartl, *Der "einige" und "unabhängige" Balkan* (Munich: Oldenburg Verlag, 1977), 51–65; Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu (Odnosi s velikim silama 1948–1955)* (Zagreb: ČGP Delo, Globus, 1988), 488–511; Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952–1955. Jugoslovensko približavanje Nato-u* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 2000), 76–89 and 141–154; David R. Stone, "The Balkan Pact and American Policy, 1950–1955", *Eastern European Quarterly* 28/3 (September 1994), 393–407; Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *Στα σύνορα των κόσμων. Η Ελλάδα και ο Ψυχρός Πόλεμος 1952–1967* [Greece and the Cold War. Frontline state 1952–1967] (Athens: Patakis, 2009), 96–114; Dora Gota, "Από την Άγκυρα στο Βled: Τα Βαλκανικά Σύμφωνα του 1953–54 μεταξύ Ελλάδας, Τουρκίας και Γιουγκοσλαβίας" [From Ankara to Bled. The Balkan agreements of 1953–54 between Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia], *Greek Historical Association, 28th Congress* (25–27 May 2007), *Proceedings* (Thessaloniki 2008), 274–279; Christos Tsardanidis, "Η Ελλάδα και το Βαλκανικό Σύμφωνο", *Η ελληνική κοινωνία κατά την πρώτη μεταπολεμική περίοδο (1945–1967)* [Greece and the Balkan Pact], in *Greek society in the first post-war period (1945–1967)* (Athens: Institut Sakis Karagiorgas, 1994), 210–222. Also, it is worth noting the publication of Yugoslav diplomatic and military documents in *Balkanski Pakt. Ugovor o prijateljstvu i saradnji (Ankara, 28. februar 1953) i Ugovor o savezu, političkoj saradnji i uzajamnoj pomoći (Bled, 9. avgust 1954) između Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije, Kraljevine Grčke i Republike Turske. Zbornik dokumenata iz Arhiva Vojnoistorijskog*

significant effect on the Balkan Pact's final transformation into a military alliance. The purpose of this paper is to examine Tito's visit to Greece in the framework of bilateral Greek-Yugoslav relations and in a broader inter-Balkan and international context as well.

The normalization of the Greek-Yugoslav relations in 1950–51 had paved the way for closer contacts between the two countries.² For Belgrade and Athens security matters were of paramount importance, since it had been made clear that Tito's breach with Stalin was not a mere episode. Yugoslavia turned out to be the main victim of the financial and psychological war, waged by the countries of the Soviet bloc, and its survival depended on American economic and military aid.³ After the normalization of Greek-Yugoslav relations Greece pushed ahead with a plan for a military alliance between Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey aiming at the formation of a common front for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea from Soviet expansion. Yugoslavia turned down the Greek proposal, calculating that such a thing was not necessary since it pursued a peaceful policy, while, on the other hand, its joining a military alliance system with western countries might prompt the Soviet Union to launch a military strike against it. In the Yugoslav strategy the maintenance of economic and cultural relations with western countries took precedence over military issues.

Once Greece and Turkey had joined NATO at the Lisbon summit conference in February 1952, the issue of military cooperation between the two new NATO members and Yugoslavia was raised during bilateral Greek-Turkish discussions, but Athens and Ankara did not make any decision on that matter. The possibility of an alliance between Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia perturbed Italy. Rome was worried that such an alliance would upgrade Yugoslavia's role in the region and reinforce Tito's negotiating position on the open issue of Trieste.⁴

instituta, Arhiva Ministarstva spoljnih poslova i Arhiva Josipa Broza Tita 1952–1960, ed. Milan Terzić (Belgrade: Vojnoistorijski institut, 2005).

² On the normalization of Greek-Yugoslav relations see Spyridon Sfetas, “Η εξομάλυνση των ελληνογιουγκοσλαβικών πολιτικών σχέσεων 1950/51”, *Βαλκανικά Σύμμεικτα* 12–13 (2001–2), 191–207.

³ On the likelihood of a Soviet military attack against Yugoslavia see Peter Vukmar, “The possibility of a Soviet military attack against Yugoslavia in British archival documents (1948–1953)”, *Tokovi istorije* 1–2 (2009), 163–176.

⁴ On the Trieste dispute in the framework of Yugoslavia's relations with the West see Dragan Bogetić, “Odnosi Jugoslavije sa Zapadom i Tršćansko pitanje (1948–1954)”, *Istorija 20. veka* 1 (1994), 122–138; Glenda Sluga, *The problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border. Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York: State University Press, 2001).

In 1952 Greece and Yugoslavia established a series of contacts aiming at the achievement of a bilateral cooperation on defence issues. After the sweeping victory of *Ellinikos Synagermos* in the parliamentary elections (November 1952) and the formation of a stable majority government, Alexandros Papagos, the new prime minister, tried to boost the Greek-Yugoslav relations. He knew, as a former military officer, that a possible downfall of Yugoslavia would be an imminent threat for Greece. When Yugoslav military delegates revisited Athens in December 1952, they were welcomed by King Pavlos and prime minister Papagos himself. Discussions between the Greek and the Yugoslav officers were focused on military plans to form a common defence front in case of an attack by states of the Soviet block.⁵ This time the Yugoslav delegation disclosed its intentions to speed up the procedures towards reaching a military agreement, which had not been made clear during its previous visit to Greece in September.⁶ The continuation of the Korean War and its implications on the Balkans, the danger of a new front in the Balkans as well as the political and economic benefits from a trilateral military agreement between Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia may have been the main reasons that led Belgrade to back out of its initial position. The Greek government asked the United States for consultations in order to ensure that a military alliance with Yugoslavia would be compatible with its obligations towards NATO.⁷

But Italy opposed to any rapprochement between Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey before the settlement of the Trieste question. Alcide De Gasperi, the Italian prime minister, hastily visited Athens on 8 January 1953 and sent the message that "until the Trieste question has been settled, Greece can count on Italy for the Mediterranean defence in the context of a 'Mediterranean Pact'."⁸ Italy also rejected the Turkish position that cooperation between Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Italy would lead to the settlement of the Trieste question, warning that the Italian army would never fight on the Yugoslav army's side if the Trieste question was still in abeyance. When De Gasperi got the information that Fuad Köprülü, the Turkish foreign minister, planned to visit Belgrade, he characterized his visit as premature.⁹

⁵ See *Balkanski pakt*, ed. Terzić, 182–243.

⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952–1954* [hereafter FRUS], vol. VIII, *Eastern Europe–Soviet Union–Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. William Z. Slany (Washington 1988), 600–601, no. 314, The Ambassador in Greece (Peurifoy) to the Department of State, Athens, December 31, 1952.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu*, 491–492.

⁹ See Bogetić, *Jugoslavija*, 80.

Taking the Italian objections into consideration, Washington carved out its policy in view of the forthcoming negotiations between Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey:

The United States favour maximum possible progress on contingent military planning between Turkey and Yugoslavia and Greece and Yugoslavia, although we consider that there should be no commitment of forces at this time. Such commitment should of course be subject to governmental decisions in light of all circumstances and in consultations with NATO allies as appropriate.¹⁰

Yugoslavia's admission to NATO was not a matter of urgency in the United States, since it was a long-lasting process and required the approval of other NATO members. England and France espoused the American position. Turkish as well as Greek diplomacy followed their allies' guidelines. During his visit to Belgrade (20–26 January 1953), Fuad Köprülü made clear to the Yugoslav foreign minister, Koča Popović, that a tripartite military agreement should come up as the final outcome of a procedure that would lead to Yugoslavia's admission to NATO; however, he did not set any timetable.¹¹ As an alternative, Nuri Bigri, the Turkish deputy foreign minister, suggested the signing of a political treaty of friendship and cooperation without any military terms, so that it could pave the way for a military alliance.¹² Showing flexibility, Tito accepted the proposals for the signing of a tripartite treaty of friendship and cooperation between Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece without any military obligations. From his point of view, such an agreement would satisfy public opinion in Yugoslavia and would have positive effects on the psychological propaganda war against the Soviets.¹³

Returning from Belgrade, Köprülü visited Athens (26–30 January 1953) and informed Papagos and Stefanos Stefanopoulos, the Greek foreign minister, about his new initiative regarding the treaty of friendship and cooperation. The Greek side agreed on promoting such an initiative. In his visit to Yugoslavia (3–7 February 1953), Stefanopoulos officially announced the Greek position: tripartite negotiations for the signing of a political

¹⁰ See FRUS 1952–1954, vol. VIII, 610, no. 318, The Counselor of Embassy in Turkey (Roontree) to the Ambassador in Turkey (McGhee) at Istanbul, Ankara, January 16, 1953. Suggested line to take with Foreign Minister Koprulu upon Yugoslavia.

¹¹ See Terzić, *Balkanski pakt*, 247.

¹² *Ibid.*, 248.

¹³ FRUS 1952–1954, vol. VIII, 613, no. 320, The Ambassador in Greece (Peurofory) to the Department of State, Athens, January 28, 1953. Discussion between the American ambassador and Köprülü during his short stay in Athens on his return from Belgrade. Köprülü presented the proposal for a tripartite friendship treaty as Tito's idea. However, it was Turkey's initiative.

treaty and continuation of discussions in order to reach the conclusion of a military treaty.¹⁴ Immediately after that, a tripartite military conference was held in Ankara (17–20 February 1953), while on 20 February 1953 summit talks between the foreign ministers of Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey were conducted in Athens. On 28 February 1953 the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in Ankara by the foreign minister of Greece, Stefanos Stefanopoulos, Turkey, Fuad Köprülü, and Yugoslavia, Koča Popović. The terms of the treaty provided mutual efforts of the Signatories to maintain peace and to examine in common security issues, extension of cooperation in economic, technical and cultural matters, and peaceful settlement of differences. Greece and Turkey would maintain their rights and obligations towards NATO, while the General Staffs of the three countries would cooperate to make suggestions to their governments on security and defence issues and to coordinate the decision-making.¹⁵

For the Yugoslav leadership it was self-evident that NATO would support Yugoslavia if the country was under attack. Visiting Great Britain in March 1953, Tito discussed Balkan and European security issues with Winston Churchill and Antony Eden. Tito pointed out that a Soviet attack on Yugoslavia would not only trigger regional war but could also turn into a global conflict; he asked for western military support for Yugoslavia and explained the reasons he was opposing Yugoslavia's accession to NATO. The British leaders pledged military aid in case of a threat to Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and revealed a plan for the transformation of the Balkan Pact into a Mediterranean Pact with Italy's participation, after the settlement of the Trieste question.¹⁶

The Balkan Pact was ratified by the three countries (on 28 March 1953 by the Greek and Yugoslav Parliament and on 18 May 1953 by the Turkish parliament) and on 24 June Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey published a declaration on common strategy in facing the new political and military challenges. The first conference of the foreign ministers was held in Athens from 7 to 11 July 1953. Stefanopoulos, Köprülü and Popović decided to establish a Permanent Secretariat, they stressed the peaceful policy

¹⁴ See Tsardanidis, "Η Ελλάδα και το Βαλκανικό Σύμφωνο", 219–220.

¹⁵ See *Balkanski pakt*, ed. Terzić, 311–313.

¹⁶ Djordje Borozan, "Jugoslovensko-britanski razgovori u Beogradu 1953. i Londonu 1953. godine", *Istorija XX veka* 21 (1997), 113–127. Early in 1953 the Soviets were, indeed, elaborating Tito's assassination either in Belgrade or at the Yugoslav embassy in London during the Yugoslav leader's visit to London. Regarding this issue see relevant document at: wilsoncenter.org/index, *Cold War International History Project. Digital Archive. Collection: Yugoslavia in the Cold War. Stalin's Plan to Assassinate Tito (01/01/1953)*. After Stalin's death the plan was abandoned and Tito safely returned from London.

of their countries towards neighbouring states, mainly as far as Albania's territorial integrity was concerned, and entrusted the General Staffs of their countries with the study of conditions for a tripartite military cooperation. The first military conference, after the signing of the Balkan Pact, had already taken place in Athens (3–13 June 1953).

Greece attached great importance to a military alliance with Yugoslavia, but it avoided challenging Italy and fulfilled its obligations towards NATO. During the Trieste crisis in September–October 1953 Greece took a neutral stance.¹⁷ The Greek–American agreement of 12 October 1953 on the installation of American military bases on Greek soil upgraded Greece's importance within NATO and gave Athens a strategic advantage against Ankara in promoting western policies in the Balkans.¹⁸

The basic reason for signing the Balkan Pact had been the Soviet threat. The “friendship attack policy” towards the West, initiated by Nikita Khrushchev after Stalin's death (5/3/1953), the re-establishment of the Soviet–Yugoslav diplomatic relations in June 1953, the execution of Lavrenti Beriya, the powerful head of the Soviet secret police, in December 1953 and the Soviet Union's diplomatic support of Yugoslavia during the Trieste crisis in September–October 1953 temporarily created in Belgrade the impression that the Soviet threat had been eliminated. Nevertheless, since Khrushchev had not undertaken any substantial initiative for the fully-fledged normalization of the Soviet–Yugoslav relations and there was no evidence that he would cope with Stalin's closer comrades, Tito abided by the Balkan Pact and the three countries' General Staffs started negotiations (10–20 November 1953 in Belgrade, 24 March – 1 April 1954 in Ankara). They elaborated preliminary plans to form a military alliance. It was generally agreed that, if Bulgaria launched an attack against Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey would automatically engage in the conflict, since they shared a common frontier with Bulgaria. Should Yugoslavia be attacked by Romania

¹⁷ In September 1953 Papagos visited Rome. On 8 October 1953 Britain and the US announced to Yugoslavia that they were going to cede the city of Trieste and zone A to Italy. Tito opposed to it and asked the Security Council to intervene. See Dora Gota, “Αλληλεπιδράσεις στους διπλωματικούς χειρισμούς του ζητήματος της Τεργέστης και των Βαλκανικών συμφωνιών του 1953–1954” [Interactions in the diplomatic management of the Trieste issue and the Balkan agreements of 1953–54], *Greek Historical Association, 29th Congress* (16–18 May 2008), *Proceedings* (Thessaloniki 2009), 372–373. The Papagos government took a neutral attitude.

¹⁸ On the Greek–American Agreement of 12 October 1953 see Ioannis Stefanidis, *Ασύμμετροι εταίροι. Οι Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες και η Ελλάδα στον Ψυχρό Πόλεμο 1953–1961* [Asymmetric Partners. United States and Greece in the Cold War 1953–1961] (Athens: Patakis, 2005), 199–243.

or Hungary or invaded by armed groups, Greece's and Turkey's attitude needed to be clarified.

The military alliance with Yugoslavia was regarded as a basic security matter by the Papagos government. Despite the Greek-American agreement on military bases, ground forces were expected to play a decisive role in case of war in the Balkans. In this respect, the Yugoslav army's contribution was indispensable. The Papagos government was alarmed when the Milovan Djilas case came up early in 1954. Djilas accused the Yugoslav leaders of undermining the economic system of workers' self-management due to the Communist Party and the state's pervasive influence; he called for less bureaucracy and more democracy and criticized the luxurious life of his comrades. In January 1954 Djilas was expelled from the Central Committee.¹⁹ The Djilas case was (mistakenly) understood by the Papagos government as Soviet machination against Yugoslavia. In the light of these events, Athens considered that procedures for a military alliance with Yugoslavia had to be accelerated.²⁰ Nevertheless, Washington did not share Athens' anxiety. America considered the Djilas case as an indication of western liberalism's influence on Yugoslavia, without any grave implications for Yugoslavia's foreign policy, which was balanced between the East and the West.

The United States had suggested that Athens should not be hasty in concluding a military treaty with Yugoslavia under the current circumstances, since the Trieste question had not yet been settled.²¹ However, the Papagos government ignored the American reservations when it became known that during Tito's visit to Ankara, in mid April 1954, the Yugoslav leader had discussed the transformation of the Ankara Treaty into a formal military alliance with the Turkish government without informing Athens which was merely asked for its approval.²² Greece expressed its discontent, considering that it had been pushed aside on an issue on which the Greek leaders believed that they should have been consulted.²³ In order to create

¹⁹ With a series of articles in the *Borba* daily (11/11/1953 – 7/1/1954) and a lengthy article entitled "Anatomy of Moral" in *Nova Misao* journal (January 1954) Djilas discussed the failure of so-called workers' self-management and the emergence of a new red class in Yugoslavia. Also, in an article in *Komunist* in the autumn of 1953, he expressed his doubts that the Soviet Union would ever reach real Socialism. See Slobodan Stanković, *Titos Erbe* (Munich: Oldenburg Verlag, 1981), 89–110.

²⁰ FRUS 1952–1954, vol. VIII, 639–640, no. 336, The Ambassador to Greece (Cannon) to the Department of State, Athens, February 13, 1954, Top Secret.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 640–642, no. 337, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Greece, Washington, February 16, 1954. Top Secret.

²² See *To Vima*, 16 April 1954.

²³ See *To Vima*, 17 April 1954.

a climate of confidence between Athens and Ankara, Fuad Köprülü immediately informed the Greek ambassador in Ankara, Ioannis Kallergis, that during the Turkish-Yugoslav negotiations the two countries had expressed only their desire to reinforce their common efforts to transform the Ankara Treaty into a military alliance; at the same time the Turkish embassy in Athens gave similar assurances to the ministry of foreign affairs' secretary Alexis Kyrou.²⁴ It is evident from the proceedings (13/4/1954) of the discussions between Tito, the president of Turkey, Celâl Bayar, the Turkish prime minister, Adnan Menderes, and the Turkish foreign minister Fuad Köprülü, that the transformation of the Ankara Treaty into a military alliance was marginally treated.²⁵ The Greek reaction came after Popović's public statement on 15 April in Ankara about the transformation of the Ankara Treaty into a military alliance. Nevertheless, after Kallergis' intervention a special reference to the Greek role was included in the communiqué that was released by Turkey and Yugoslavia on 16 April 1954.

During the discussions that were conducted in a spirit of absolute cordiality, which is indicative of the friendly relations between Yugoslavia and Turkey, every issue — general and specific — of common interest was debated thoroughly. The necessary acquiescence of Greece, which is a valuable Signatory of the Ankara Treaty, has always been taken into account...

In that respect, the tripartite Ankara Treaty is of major significance and it is essential to upgrade its value and its effectiveness day by day...

This Treaty was concluded in a spirit of alliance and every action related to its implementation is taken towards this direction. As a result, the time has come for its transformation to a formal alliance, which depends only on the circumstances now.²⁶

The Turkish press commented on "Greek mistrust", although Greece's suspicions had been dispelled after Turkey's official explanations and Popović's statement in Constantinople that the transformation of the Balkan Pact into a military alliance would take its final shape during Marshal Tito's visit to Greece and that Turkey's opinion could be requested, if new circumstances called for it.²⁷ There was a latent antagonism between Greece and Turkey regarding each country's importance within NATO. Greece had recognized Turkey's leading role on issues regarding the Middle East and it claimed the right to have the initiative on Balkan issues. The Papagos government believed that the Greek-American agreement of 12 October 1953 had increased the importance of Greece's role. Nonetheless, after Khrushchev's

²⁴ See *To Vima*, 18 April 1954.

²⁵ See *Balkanski pakt*, ed. Terzić, 630–635.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 639.

²⁷ See *To Vima*, 20 April 1954.

statement that the Soviet Union had no territorial differences with Turkey, Athens considered that Bulgaria and the Soviet Union constituted a greater threat for Greece and Yugoslavia.

In view of Tito's visit to Athens, Yugoslavia's ministry of foreign affairs drew up a special memorandum regarding several important issues which, apart from the main question of the military alliance, could be brought into discussion. Such issues, relating to Greek-Yugoslav relations, were the free zone of Thessaloniki, the "Macedonian minority" in Greece, the problem of the monks in the Serbian monastery of Chilandar and the proposal of a Greek deputy, Matsas, for the establishment of a Balkan Consultative Assembly.²⁸

Regarding the free zone of Thessaloniki Yugoslavia claimed the right to choose the workmen for loading and unloading merchandise from ships. Yugoslavia had the right to choose only workers who were employed within the zone. The Greek side considered that any ship entering the zone was subject to Greek legislation. Since Greece's territorial integrity within the zone was recognized by Yugoslavia, Athens considered that only Greece had the right to hire the workmen for loading and unloading ships.²⁹ The establishment of a Balkan Consultative Assembly, patterned after the Scandinavian model, was Matsas' proposal. The latter was a member of the Greek parliament from Papagos' party and chairman of the movement for Europe's unification. The problem was, according to the Yugoslav government's evaluation of the proposal, the political character attributed to the suggested Balkan Consultative Assembly. Matsas envisaged an enlarged Balkan Consultative Assembly with the participation of Bulgaria, Albania and Romania. These countries would be represented by political anticommunist emigration, not by deputies of their formal Parliaments. The Balkan Consultative Assembly's main purpose was to wrest Bulgaria, Albania and Romania away from the Soviet orbit. Although the Balkan Consultative Assembly was formally a non-governmental organization, its political anti-Soviet propaganda would cause strong reactions in Albania, Bulgaria and Romania with the real danger of undermining Yugoslavia's efforts to normalize its relations with the Soviet Union. Taking these parameters into consideration, Yugoslavia had to request some clarifications regarding the character and objectives of the Balkan Consultative Assembly.³⁰ As far as

²⁸ Belgrade, Arhiv Predsednika Republike (APR) [Archive of the President of the Republic], Kabinet Predsednika Republike (KPR) [Office of the President of the Republic] I-2/3, Put Josipa Broza Tita u Grčku [Josip Broz Tito's visit to Greece], 2-6/6/1954. Materijal za političke razgovore.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

the Serbian monastery of Chilandar was concerned, Yugoslavia should demand the increase of the number of Serbian monks in order to prevent its "Hellenization".³¹ Finally, the problem of the Macedonian minority took a central position in the Memorandum. A special mention was made to its non-recognition by the Greek government, to the regime of "terrorism" in Northern Greece, to the emigration wave of the Slavomacedonians to Australia, to the Greek Legislative Act, introduced in August 1953, concerning the colonization of Greek borderlands and property confiscation of the Aegeans who participated in the Civil War and abandoned Greece. The Greek consulate in Skopje was accused of espionage and obstructionism in issuing visas to Slavomacedonian businessmen.³² Greek authorities were blamed for rejecting Yugoslavia's request for the repatriation of Macedonians from Greece that had found shelter in Yugoslavia as political refugees (23,000). A diplomatic incident that occurred on the 2nd of August 1953, anniversary of Ilinden, was also mentioned. The Greek consul, Iraklidis, left the National Museum in protest due to the presentation of a map which included the Greek region of Macedonia within the borders of Yugoslav Macedonia, where the Ilinden uprising took place. The Greek ambassador in Belgrade, Spyros Kapetanidis, submitted a diplomatic note to the Yugoslav ministry of foreign affairs regarding this map. The Yugoslav memorandum did warn of the negative consequences for Greek-Yugoslav relations which could ensue from the circulation of the journal *Glas na Egejcite* [The Voice of the Aegeans] by "Aegean" refugees in Skopje. With its incendiary articles against Greece and America, the above magazine sapped Yugoslavia's foreign policy towards Greece because: 1) it provided the Greek side with arguments to accuse the People's Republic of Macedonia of undermining the Balkan Pact; 2) it sabotaged the Yugoslav government's efforts to claim better conditions for Macedonians living in Greece; 3) it helped Greece justify its measures to assimilate the Macedonian population. Thus, the replacement of the editorial board was considered to be imperative. Last but not least, the Memorandum suggested that the Macedonia minority issue would be settled by promoting bilateral cooperation between Greece and Yugoslavia and that the Yugoslav delegation had to raise this question during Tito's visit to Greece. Yugoslavia should explicitly reject any territorial claims on Greece and accept the current borderline as definitive,

but on condition that the Greek government, in a spirit of understanding and friendship, will provide members of the Macedonian minority with the usual minority rights (right to use their mother tongue in public and in court, education in the Macedonian language in primary and secondary

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

schools, lifting of discriminatory policies and repatriation of refugees from Aegean Macedonia living in Yugoslavia) ... Even if neither side raises the problem during the forthcoming discussions, we will stick to our position. That is mainly to make possible the repatriation of refugees from Greek Macedonia and to thwart the implementation of the colonization law.³³

It is evident that Yugoslavia linked up the inviolability of the Greek-Yugoslav border with the recognition of Macedonian minority by Greek government. Tito did not intend to broach the Macedonian issue during his forthcoming visit to Greece, due to the delicate nature of the Greek-Yugoslav relations. Since it was impossible for Papagos to raise an issue that did not exist from the Greek point of view, it was certain that the Macedonian question would be overlooked during the discussions. It had been already discussed. The map of Greater Macedonia during the celebrations of Ilinden's anniversary on the 2nd of August 1953 and the Greek Legislative Act regarding the borderland colonization in August 1953 had given both sides the opportunity to exchange their views on this matter. The Yugoslav side connected the law on colonization with Papagos' visit to Rome and the supposedly pro-Italian Greek attitude towards the Trieste problem. Concerning the Greek "Legislative Act for borderland colonization and support to its population", the opinion of Yugoslavia's Legal Council made clear that the act was not discriminatory since it affected all Greek citizens. Besides, Yugoslavia could not interfere in Greece's internal affairs.³⁴ Regarding the map of Greater Macedonia in the Museum of the Liberation Struggle, Yugoslavia's ministry of foreign affairs explained that the map depicted merely the areas where the battles of 1903 were fought; it was a map of historical importance and a museum exhibit.³⁵

The Papagos government bypassed Italy's objections to Tito's visit. Stefanos Stefanopoulos made clear to the Italian embassy in Athens that the Balkan Pact had no anti-Italian spearhead and it would reinforce Balkan defence and NATO's strategy as well. Italy had no reason to speak out against the Balkan Alliance, since it had already accepted the Balkan Pact that aimed at the formation of an alliance. He denied any connection of the envisaged Balkan Alliance with the Trieste problem, pointing out that Italy and Yugoslavia had enough time to settle the Trieste problem until the formation of the alliance. The Greek foreign minister concluded that Greece,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See Kostas Katsanos, *Το Μακεδονικό και η Γιουγκοσλαβία. Πλήρη τα απόρρητα γιουγκοσλαβικά έγγραφα 1950-1967* [The Macedonian question and Yugoslavia. Classified Yugoslav documents 1950-1967] (Thessaloniki: Association of Macedonian Studies, 2009), 90-91.

³⁵ Ibid., 92.

Turkey and Yugoslavia would keep NATO's Council informed regarding their decisions.³⁶

On 2 June Tito sailed into Piraeus on the Yugoslav yacht "Galeb", accompanied by Popović. When the Yugoslav yacht entered Greek territorial waters, it was escorted by the Greek destroyers "Aetos" and "Panther". "Galeb" sailed along the coast of Corfu and when it approached the island of Vido where a Serbian military cemetery is located, Tito cast a wreath in the sea with the inscription "For World War I heroes". When Tito and Popović disembarked in Piraeus, they were welcomed by prime minister Papagos, King Pavlos and others.³⁷

On 3 June Greek-Yugoslav discussions began at the ministry of foreign affairs. The Greek side was represented by Papagos, Stefanopoulos, Alexis Kyrou, the secretary of the ministry of foreign affairs, Christos Kapetanidis, the Greek ambassador in Belgrade, and G. Christopoulos, the head of Balkan affairs at the foreign ministry. Yugoslavia was represented by Tito, Popović, Radoš Jovanović, the Yugoslav ambassador in Athens, and Djura Ninčić, Popović's advisor.

Papagos characterized Tito's visit as proof of Greek-Yugoslav friendship and the Yugoslav leader's strong personality as the best symbol of Yugoslavia's willingness to fight for freedom and independence on the Greek people's side. He pointed out that Moscow's imperialistic plans still existed, since the Russians had never renounced their objective to conquer the civilized world, they had only modified their methods and tactics for domestic policy reasons. Thus, the evolution of the Balkan Pact into an alliance constituted a historical step forward, as he himself had underscored the necessity of an alliance between Greece and Yugoslavia in 1950-51.³⁸ The Greek prime minister rejected that there was any connection between the Balkan Alliance and the Trieste problem, on which the Greek government kept a neutral stance and desired the best solution; however Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia would not be hostages of this issue. After these general remarks, Papagos came to more substantial issues, regarding the functioning of the Balkan Alliance. He suggested the establishment of an experts' committee to carve out the alliance on the basis of the following principles. 1) A local conflict can quickly grow into a regional one. 2) An attack against one country is considered to be an attack against the other two. An enemy state is the one that launches an attack no matter whether it is Hungary, Romania,

³⁶ *To Vima*, 2 June 1954.

³⁷ *To Vima*, 3 June 1954.

³⁸ APR-KPR, I-2/3, Zabeleška o razgovorima Predsednika Republike s Pretsednikom grčke vlade, maršalom Papagosom, vodjenim u Atini 3.VI.1954, u prostorijama grčkog Ministarstva inostranih poslova u 17 časova.

Bulgaria or the Soviet Union attacking from the Black Sea or the Caucasus. The experts' committee would assess whether there would be a distinction between cases where the attacking country had a common border with the three allies, where the common defence policy should automatically be applied, and cases where there were no common borders. In case there were common borders, there would be some automatic response mechanisms, and it is understandable that the three countries should follow the situation and take the necessary measures, such as mobilisation and concentration of troops. It is a task for the experts to prepare a common defence plan until the next foreign ministers' conference. In the second case, that the allied states had no common borders with the attacking state, a regulation could be adopted similar to Article 5 of the NATO treaty. 3) The relations between the Balkan Alliance and NATO or the European Defence Community [the European army that was being considered, a French-German plan that did not yield any results, S.S.], had to be specified. In his conclusion, Papagos proposed the establishment of a Balkan Consultative Assembly, according to the Scandinavian model. Each country could send a delegation of 15 to 20 members of their national parliaments. The purpose of this assembly would be to examine thoroughly all issues of common interest not only for the governments, but also for the peoples.³⁹

Tito expressed his satisfaction at meeting Papagos in person and sharing his views. He was pleased to accept Papagos' suggestion for the Balkan Alliance defence system's automatism that should be activated without any hesitation. He also denied any connection between the Balkan Alliance and the Trieste problem and rejected, as unrealistic, any allegation that Yugoslavia was attempting to exploit the Balkan Alliance in order to strengthen its position on the Trieste problem. His visit to Athens did not aim at the direct signing of a military agreement, but at promoting the alliance case, that would be undertaken by experts from the three countries. He agreed with Papagos that there were external threats and for this reason a tripartite military cooperation agreement, as well as a Balkan Consultative Assembly,

³⁹ Ibid. Article 5 of NATO's Charter defines that "the Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security."

were necessary. He admitted that the Soviet policy had not undergone any radical change and that it exploited western countries' weaknesses. The Soviet-Yugoslav relations had not been normalized yet and for this reason Tito stressed the need of a Balkan Alliance:

We consented to their initiatives to normalize our relations. However, there was not any serious step taken by their side, although we reestablished our diplomatic relations last year. Not only is there no progress in the normalization process, but they have not taken any serious action to bring our relations to the level they should be between countries of a different system. Soviet-Yugoslav relations are a miniature of the Soviet Union's policy towards the world. Soviet policy should not hypnotize us and I agree that we must stay alert – they have changed their tactics but their purpose is still the same. Meanwhile, I repeat that our three countries must form this alliance, even if changes occur. Anyone who has good intentions should not fear our alliance.⁴⁰

Commenting on the political conditions in the Soviet Union and Eastern countries after Stalin's death, Tito characterized them as unstable and fluid. Regarding the European Defence Community, the Yugoslav leader pointed out that his country had a positive attitude towards it, although he believed that it would be a mistake if this new organization had exclusively military responsibilities, without developing any mechanism that could help European countries overcome their economic difficulties.⁴¹ However, he stated that Yugoslavia, despite its positive attitude towards the European Defence Community, did not desire accession to NATO for the time being:

That does not mean we do not recognize NATO's positive role. We do not wish to join this organization for specific reasons, but this does not mean that there should not be cooperation with NATO. Such cooperation can take many forms, without any obligation for Yugoslavia to join this organization. There can be a different way of cooperation, either directly between Yugoslavia and NATO or through the Balkan Alliance. Yugoslavia is a member of this defence system. Thus, our attitude towards NATO has not changed, and that also means that we would discuss our accession to NATO, if the threat increases and becomes imminent.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. The main reason for the establishment of a western European defensive army was to prevent Germany from forming an independent military force. Essentially it was going to be a common French-German military. The signing of the agreement for the establishment of the European Defence Community took place in Paris on 27 May 1952. The establishing members were France, Western Germany and the BENELUX countries. However, it was a stillborn establishing act. On 30 August 1954 the French parliament rejected the agreement for the establishment of the European Defence Community, with 319 votes against and 163 votes for.

⁴² Ibid.

Stefanopoulos agreed with Papagos' and Tito's positions. He stressed that the Balkan alliance was not directed against Italy and he accused Rome of making a political mistake by pretending that Yugoslavia was using the Balkan alliance for its own purposes. He made an interesting statement concerning the delicate issue of the Balkan alliance's relations with NATO:

Yugoslavia does not desire to join NATO for its own political reasons. We and Turkey are members of NATO and we have specific responsibilities towards NATO. Article 8 of NATO's Charter forbids its members to undertake any obligation that contravenes NATO's purposes. We support our view that our alliance complies with NATO's aims ... We consider that our alliance is an important deterrent force and for this reason any decision should be taken unanimously. It is a fact that Italy misinterprets our alliance. However, NATO is not a supranational union; it is a union of sovereign states. We have announced that we are willing to submit our agreement to NATO's Council. The Balkan Alliance's ties with NATO must be examined. NATO is a major force. Not only do European countries participate in it, but also America and Canada with their vast economic potential. It is important that the Balkan Alliance can count on NATO.⁴³

The Greek foreign minister stressed the importance of the European Defence Community and hinted at the likelihood of Yugoslavia's accession to western European institutions. Announcing the ending of the conference, Papagos and Tito pointed out that they had reached an agreement on all the basic issues and that the foreign ministers, in cooperation with the Turkish ambassador in Athens, could elaborate the core of the agreement and prepare a mutual communiqué.

It was evident that the Balkan Military Alliance should have three keystones, according to Papagos: 1) in case of Bulgarian attack against Greece, Yugoslavia or Turkey, the defensive mechanism of the allied countries would be automatically activated, since the three countries shared common borders with Bulgaria; 2) in case of Romanian or Hungarian attack against Yugoslavia or of Soviet attack against Turkey, a stipulation in the spirit of Article 5 of NATO's Charter should be activated, meaning that the other parties of the Balkan Alliance would take action to support the attacked state, including the use of military force; 3) the Balkan Military Alliance should be linked up with NATO. Practically, this meant that NATO as a body would assist Yugoslavia in case of Soviet attack, while Yugoslavia would take on the responsibility of supporting other NATO states, except Greece and Turkey, against a Soviet attack.

The following day, June 4th, the Greek and Yugoslav foreign ministers met the Turkish Ambassador in Athens. The purpose of the meeting was to elaborate a mutual communiqué that had already been drafted by

⁴³ Ibid.

Alexis Kyrou and Koča Popović. The contentious point was a phrase stating that the Alliance “will be established” (*sera établi*) by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs during the next annual conference in Belgrade. Taraj, the Turkish ambassador, anticipating Italian reactions, suggested the replacement of the expression “will be established” by the phrase “will be examined” (*examiné*). In his view, it was inappropriate to take the formation of an alliance for granted, before the Trieste issue was settled and the relations between Yugoslavia and NATO were clarified.⁴⁴ In their response, Stefanopoulos and Kyrou emphasized the ambivalence of the term “established” and argued that it could be interpreted in a broader sense. “Establishment” did not necessarily mean the “signing” of the Alliance Treaty, but the completion of the procedures. The relations between Yugoslavia and NATO should be regulated after the Trieste issue was settled. Stefanopoulos compared Yugoslavia’s position within the Balkan Alliance with that of West Germany within the European Defence Community and insisted that the experts’ committee should have finished their work by the next meeting of foreign ministers.⁴⁵ The Turkish ambassador needed some time to consult his government, before announcing his approval of the communiqué.⁴⁶

The next meeting of foreign ministers was scheduled for July 1954. By setting a timetable for the formation of the Balkan Alliance, Greece and Yugoslavia exerted pressure on Italy to speed up the negotiations to settle the Trieste issue. If the Turkish proposal was adopted, Koča Popović believed that Italy would keep stalling the settlement of the Trieste issue.

The following day, 5 June, Stefanopoulos and Popović with their staff examined bilateral issues. The Yugoslav minister raised the question of Yugoslav industrial products exports to Greece, the foundation of a Balkan Institute, the Balkan Consultative Assembly, the free zone of Thessaloniki and the monastery of Chilandar.⁴⁷ Stefanopoulos responded that 1) he would inform the Federation of Greek Industries about the imports of Yugoslav products by Greece; 2) both governments should define the matters the Balkan Consultative Assembly had to tackle; 3) the aims of the Balkan Institute should be clear. This question had already been raised by Popović during his discussions with Köprülü on 17 April. The latter envisaged the Balkan Institute as a “think-tank” that would carry out scientific research on

⁴⁴ APR-KPR I-2/3. Zabeleška sa sastanka održanog u grčkom Ministarstva inostranih poslova 4.VI.1954 u 11 časova radi izrade kominikea o boravku Pretsednika Republike u Grčkoj.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ APR-KPR I-2/3. Zabeleška o sastanku održanom u Ministarstvu inostranih poslova Grčke 5.VI.1954 god. u 11 časova.

substantial issues the Balkan countries were facing. As a historian, Köprülü had accepted Popović's proposal; 4) As regards the free zone of Thessaloniki, Stefanopoulos shared Popović's view that Yugoslav officials entrusted with administrative duties in the zone would be exempted from taxes and tariffs. However, they were not entitled to select the workers within the zone, according to the Greek legislation. Popović did not object; 5) As regards the monastery of Chilandar, Stefanopoulos accepted Yugoslavia's request for the numerical increase of Serbian monks and the maintenance of the monastery's historic monuments and relics.⁴⁸

Popović avoided broaching the issue of the Macedonian minority in Greece. When Kyrou referred to the corrosive role of the journal *The Voice of the Aegeans* that undermined the efforts of both countries to boost Greek-Yugoslav relations, Popović tried to play down the matter, by distancing himself from this journal, but he admitted that its publications had had a negative effect on the Greek-Yugoslav relations and revealed that the Yugoslav government planned to change the editorial board.⁴⁹

Kyrou sounded out Popović on Yugoslavia's attitude towards the Cyprus question, in case Greece decided to bring the issue to the UN. He explained that Greece aimed at the internationalization of the Cyprus question without giving to this political motion any anti-British character, moreover it wanted to stress that the Cyprus question had been left in abeyance and affected the relations of the two UN member-states. Kyrou pointed out that Turkey had not expressed its official position yet, and despite the negative comments in the Turkish press, Greece did not expect that Turkey would speak out against the internationalization of the Cyprus question. Nevertheless, Greece would stick to its decision in spite of Turkey's attitude. Popović responded that Yugoslavia would carve out its policy when Greece raised the question, but he stated in advance that the principle of self-determination was the keystone of Yugoslavia's foreign policy.⁵⁰

Should Turkey not accept the formula "establishment" for the Balkan Alliance, Kyrou pointed out that the paragraph referring to Turkey's consensus would be omitted and the communiqué would reflect only the Greek and the Yugoslav position. But during the discussions the Turkish ambassador contacted the delegations, stating that his government had accepted the text of the communiqué as it had been drafted by Kyrou and Popović. Thus, they agreed that each country would set up a committee of three to four experts (legal advisors, military officers, diplomats) to draft the final text

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

of the Military Agreement.⁵¹ In his response to Kyrou's and Stefanopoulos' questions regarding the Balkan Military Alliance's relations with NATO, Popović argued that this was not a priority issue, since the three countries had the necessary forces to repel an attack. The West would provide material support irrespective of Yugoslavia's relations with NATO. Stefanopoulos agreed and emphasized that the Council of NATO would be kept informed about the forthcoming signing of the Military Alliance Treaty.⁵² The text of the communiqué was as follows:

At the invitation of the King of Greece, President Josip Broz Tito arrived in Athens on 2 June 1954 for an official visit, escorted by Mr. Koča Popović, minister of foreign affairs. During the discussions that Marshal Tito had with prime minister Alexandros Papagos and foreign minister Mr. S. Stefanopoulos the international situation was thoroughly examined in the light of recent events.

These discussions, conducted in a warm atmosphere, demonstrated once more the close friendship between Yugoslavia and Greece and proved the consensus of their opinions on all the issues that were examined.

The examination of specific issues of common interest for both countries proved harmonious bilateral relations and made clear their willingness to stabilize them. We expressed our desire to extend our constructive cooperation on a political, economic and cultural level. It was concluded that the progress made to this day on an economic level is very satisfactory and that the spirit of sincere and complete cooperation, on which our relations are based, justifies our optimism for a fruitful future.

Major international problems were examined with consideration of their effect on both countries' interests and on peacekeeping in Europe. It was admitted that the current international situation prompted the members of the tripartite Ankara Agreement to stay alert. It required their close and systematic cooperation.

In the belief of all Signatories of the Ankara Agreement it is the first step to a closer and more effective cooperation. Moving precisely towards this direction both governments, in absolute accordance with the Turkish government, agreed to complete the Tripartite Agreement by forming an official alliance, in order to stabilize peace in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. For this purpose we decided that the alliance should be established (*sera établie*) by the Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs during the forthcoming annual conference in Belgrade.

Desiring to extend the popular basis of the tripartite Ankara Agreement, both governments also agreed, following Marshal Papagos' proposal, to establish a Tripartite Consultative Assembly, consisting of equal numbers of Greek, Turkish and Yugoslav members of the Parliaments. It will convene in the three capitals by rotation.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

The Turkish government has been kept informed through its Ambassador about the abovementioned discussions and has expressed its complete approval.⁵³

Comparing Ankara's communiqué to Athens' communiqué, it is obvious that the latter was stronger and more comprehensive. Papagos' government wanted to play the leading role in the formation of the Balkan Alliance, indicating that Greece superseded Turkey in Balkan affairs within NATO.

On 5 June Popović held a press conference for Greek and foreign journalists at the Yugoslav embassy. He distanced the Trieste problem from the signing of the Balkan Alliance and expressed his belief that there was no difference between announcing the signing of the agreement and its actual signing during the forthcoming conference of foreign ministers without Yugoslavia's accession into NATO being necessary.⁵⁴ Concerning the Macedonian issue, he stated that it was no impediment for the development of excellent relations between the two countries. Regarding the Greek government's intention to internationalize the Cyprus problem he pointed out that Yugoslavia would specify its position when Greece made its appeal to the UN, however he made it clear that the principles of self-determination and emancipation were underlying Yugoslavia's foreign policy.⁵⁵

Tito's visit to Greece was welcomed by the western press (with Italy's reservation), but it was criticized, as expected, by eastern European press and radio stations. They treated it as an attempt to implement the new American strategy of linking up the Balkan Alliance with the European Defence community and to NATO.⁵⁶ Hatching a conspiracy theory they connected Tito's visit to Ankara and Athens with Adenauer's previous visit to Greece and Turkey; on its broadcast of 7 June Sofia's radio station suggested that the Balkan Military Alliance aimed at the formation of a great anti-Soviet bloc with the participation of Hitler's renewed army in West Germany and Franco's executioners of the Spanish people. Yugoslavia's haste to forge the Military Alliance before the solution of the Trieste problem did not reflect Belgrade's will to maintain good relations with the Balkan states. "The Balkan Military Alliance will become a weapon to exacerbate the tension in this area of the world and to stifle the people's struggle for peace and true international security."⁵⁷ On the occasion of Tito's visit to Greece, the Bul-

⁵³ *To Vima*, 6 June 1954.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ APR-KPR I-2/3. Pregled pisanja inostranih agencija i štampe od 30. maja do 5. juna o poseti druga predsednika Grčkoj i o balkanskom savezu.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

garian press reported that citizens were arrested by the police in Athens.⁵⁸ It referred to a small group of pro-Soviet communists who regarded Tito as a traitor of socialism and held him responsible for the defeat of the Democratic Army.

From the Greek side, Tito's visit to Athens was a diplomatic success. The Balkan Alliance project was put forward there. The Yugoslav side made concessions on bilateral issues, such as the free zone of Thessaloniki. Besides, neither the "Macedonian minority" issue nor the lifting of the Legislation Act had been raised. Popović understood that the journal *The Voice of the Aegeans* with its anti-Greek and anti-American articles undermined Yugoslav foreign policy and in a short time its publication was banned.⁵⁹ Further, he assured Greece that Yugoslavia would support Cypriot self-determination. Tito dispelled all Greek suspicions that Yugoslavia had territorial claims on Greece. He visited the Acropolis, he entertained the Greek opposition leaders in Megaro Maximou (the prime minister's residence in Athens), he gifted horses to the Greek Royal family and he inspected the Greek fleet in Salamina accompanied by King Pavlos. The Greek press distanced the Trieste problem from the Balkan Pact, pointing out that they were completely different issues.

Does Italy consider that it could ever go to war with Yugoslavia over Trieste? But our Allies and their Allies are never going to allow this war to break out for many reasons and for one vital one. Trieste is under international supervision. And any violation of this status would mean a war against those who guarantee the order in this unsafe region ... Diplomacy is easy, when it is exercised on the banks of the Thames or the Potomac. But here we have the Danube and the Evros. And Marshal Papagos pointed this out in one of his recent interviews regarding the purposes of the Balkan Alliance: in order to be fruitful, the Alliance must be equally interested in both the Danube and the Evros.⁶⁰

Tito returned to Yugoslavia via Thessaloniki. Accompanied by King Pavlos he sailed on the cruiser "Elli" to Thessaloniki, where he was welcomed by the minister of Northern Greece and the authorities of the city. He laid a wreath at the Serbian cemetery in honour of those who had fallen during the First World War, and he attended the military parade at Sedes airport. Obviously, with these symbolic actions Tito aimed at demonstrat-

⁵⁸ *Rabotničko delo*, 2 June 1954.

⁵⁹ See Iakovos Mihailidis, "Οικοδομώντας το παρελθόν. Σλαβομακεδόνες πολιτικοί πρόσφυγες στη Λαϊκή Δημοκρατία της Μακεδονίας: Μια πρώτη προσέγγιση" [Building up the past. Slavomacedonian political refugees. A first approach.], *Istor* 13 (2002), 118.

⁶⁰ *Kathimerini*, 6 June 1954.

ing that the planned Balkan Alliance followed past Greek-Serbian alliances' tradition, since it turned against their "common enemy", Bulgaria. The newspaper *Ellinikos Vorras* (Greek North) hastened to characterize Tito as a *hajduk*-fighter who continued the traditional Greek-Serbian friendship.

Greece has never fought against Serbia, since the emancipation of both nations. On the contrary, these two nations have always fought side by side, when there was a struggle for freedom. In Pirot there are hundreds of Greek soldiers' tombs, who fell during the struggle for Serbia's liberation, and in Thessaloniki rest Serbian soldiers, who fought side by side with their Greek brothers to dam the German-Bulgarian torrent during World War I ... Yugoslav peoples were too proud to open the gates through which Hitler's armies would fire on us. And they revolted. The *hajduks'* descendants, the Greeks' fellow-soldiers during World War I, marched to Belgrade and overthrew the dishonest men and the traitors. And the Yugoslavs held our hand and walked with us to Golgotha ... Marshal Tito, a popular hero, has also been a *hajduk*, who slept many times with a rifle in his arms, before entering the Presidential Residence in Belgrade. And when he was convinced that the Kremlin's communism was the greatest betrayal for the workers and peasants and a pretence for the imposition of Russian imperialism, he acted according to the moral and material interests of Yugoslavia: he applied to the sincere friends of his country, among which Greece has been the longest and the best tested.⁶¹

Tito was never a *hajduk* but a partisan. The *hajduk* tradition was claimed by the Serbians chetniks of Draža Mihajlović during the Second World War. The military coup of 27 March 1941 had been hatched by the Serbian military rather than the "Yugoslav peoples" as a whole, and it was celebrated only by the Serbs. Tito had no intention of selling out communism. However, under those new conditions it was important to create an impression that Tito's Yugoslavia was continuing the tradition of the Greek-Serbian alliance, despite any ideological differences. Tito sent the same message. He left Thessaloniki and returned to Belgrade by train via Skopje, obviously suggesting that Greece and Yugoslavia constituted a common defence space. Delivering a speech in Skopje, on 7 June, Tito explained the reasons for his visit to Greece:

I know what you are interested in. You would like to know something about the success of our visit, of our mission. And you know most of it having read about it in the daily press. As far as I am concerned, I may emphasize once more all that has been made known and published — and that is that our mission has been a success. We went to friendly Greece to prepare the way for the completion of an undertaking which has been our goal for several years and we have succeeded in this. The Greek people and their leading officials had the same target and were waiting impatiently for

⁶¹ *Ellinikos Vorras*, 6 June 1954.

this day to come when the road of our cooperation was to be determined more precisely, the way in which our security was to be protected, for our freedom and peaceful development.⁶²

In such circumstances it did not make sense for Tito to raise the Macedonian issue. Nine years earlier, in October 1945, in a speech delivered in Skopje Tito had stood up for the “Macedonian people’s” right to be united.⁶³ Speaking at a similar rally in Belgrade, Tito justified the Balkan Alliance with the imminent danger to Yugoslavia’s security:

One would wonder, well, you say every day that the danger of war is gradually decreasing, that the war danger has passed. It is not true that it has passed, but it is less than it was, and tomorrow it will be lesser, and I do not believe at all that it is near. However, this does not mean that we have not undertaken all possible measures in order to be able to prevent any possible danger, by our unity, by our readiness to defend our independence, our freedom and our integrity.⁶⁴

On 10 June 1954 Belgrade’s Federal Parliament ratified the results of Tito’s visit to Athens.

The forthcoming formation of the Balkan Alliance caused alarm in Moscow, since the likelihood of Yugoslavia’s accession to NATO could no longer be excluded. The re-establishment of Soviet-Yugoslav diplomatic relations had not been followed by any substantial Soviet initiative for the normalization of the relations. Therefore Tito was still suspicious of Khrushchev. The Soviets were willing to prevent Yugoslavia’s accession to NATO. The opening of Greek-Bulgarian negotiations on resetting the borderline in 1953 was undoubtedly part of the Soviet strategy to involve Bulgaria more into Balkan affairs in the aftermath of the Ankara Treaty. Vâlko Červrenkov, Bulgaria’s prime minister and secretary general of the Bulgarian Communist Party, was invited to Moscow in early June 1953. The Soviet leadership requested Bulgaria to pursue a dynamic Balkan policy and mainly to normalize its relations with Yugoslavia as a capitalistic state,⁶⁵ that is, practically to accept the Yugoslav road to socialism (workers’ self-management). In the

⁶² *Borba*, 8 June 1954.

⁶³ Spyridon Sfetas, *Η διαμόρφωση της σλαβομακεδονικής ταυτότητας. Μια επώδυνη διαδικασία* [The configuration of the Slavomacedonian identity. A painful procedure] (Thessaloniki: Vaniias, 2003), 202–203.

⁶⁴ *Borba*, 8 June 1954.

⁶⁵ Evgenia Kalinova & Iskra Baeva, *Bâlgarskite prehodi 1939–2002* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2002), 199. On Bulgaria’s attitude towards the 1953–1958 Soviet-Yugoslavian rapprochement see Evgenia Kalinova, “Bâlgarija i sâvetskoto-jugoslavskoto ‘sblizavane’ 1953–1958 g.”, in *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije 1950–1961*, ed. Slobodan Selinić (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2008), 118–137.

second half of 1953 diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were re-established and commercial transactions started. Besides, Greek-Bulgarian diplomatic relations were re-established on 22 May 1954 at the level of *chargé d'affaires* instead of ambassadors, due to Bulgaria's reluctance to pay off the war reparations it owed to Greece.⁶⁶

The re-establishment of Soviet-Yugoslav, Bulgarian-Yugoslav and Greek-Bulgarian diplomatic relations did not prevent Athens and Belgrade from promoting the negotiations to transform the Balkan Pact into a military alliance. Tito's visit to Athens perturbed both Sofia and Moscow. Trying to frustrate Yugoslavia's accession to NATO, Khrushchev thought it was advisable to send a message to Belgrade that Moscow had no aggressive plans against Yugoslavia. On 17 June 1954 *Rabotničesko Delo*, the official Bulgarian newspaper, published an article with the title "The Bulgarian people have always favoured peace and good relations with the neighbours". It emphasized Bulgaria's efforts to normalize its relations with Greece and Yugoslavia and confirmed that Bulgaria applied a peaceful policy.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria is maintaining multilateral friendly relations with the Soviet Union and other People's Republics. Regarding the capitalist countries Bulgaria's policy is based on the principle that social system differences should not be an obstacle to peaceful relations among the peoples. Bulgaria is widening actual cooperation with these countries on the basis of mutual interests and respect for their national independence and sovereignty. Bulgaria's foreign policy efforts aim at consolidating peace in the Balkans. Bulgaria genuinely wishes to re-establish relations of good neighbourliness with Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. On the 9th of September, in his opening speech for the 9th anniversary of the people's uprising, Comrade Váiko Červrenkov stated that our people's government wishes to settle all the outstanding questions with its neighbours — Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece. We do not have any aggressive plans against anyone. We do not want to impose our social system on anyone. We want to have good relations with them and we are willing, on the principle of mutual respect, to discuss the settlement of disputed issues, to wipe out any misunderstanding and to re-establish relations of good neighbourliness. The past has proved that our country's initiative for peace was absolutely

⁶⁶ See the Greek-Bulgarian declaration in Paris regarding the reestablishment of Greek-Bulgarian diplomatic relations, in V. Kontis *et al.*, eds., *Σοβιετική Ένωση και Βαλκάνια στις δεκατίες 1950 και 1960. Συλλογή εγγράφων* [Soviet Union and the Balkans in 1950–1960. A collection of documents] (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 2003), 16–18. On the diplomatic background, see Georgi Daskalov, *Bálgarija i Gárcija. Ot razrivakám pomirenie 1944–1964* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 2003), 228–249.

realistic and that all efforts to mitigate tensions and to restore good relations with our neighbours have led to positive results...⁶⁷

The article highlighted the re-establishment of Bulgarian-Yugoslav and Greek-Bulgarian diplomatic relations and concluded:

Ideological differences cannot be an obstacle for communication between peoples. Our people appreciate the contribution of every nation, big or small, to our global cultural treasure. Extensive cultural exchanges among countries could reveal the potential for a direct acquaintance with every nation's achievements and it could, consequently, lead to putting aside all misunderstanding and distrust. The People's Republic of Bulgaria supports, and will continue to support, such contacts with all countries on the basis of reciprocity and mutual respect. Our country will do everything that depends on it to consolidate peace in the Balkans; it is convinced that the consolidation of peace in this part of Europe constitutes a substantial contribution to the efforts of mankind to consolidate peace worldwide. Our country will keep trying to seek the settlement of all disputes and it will keep working on the reestablishment of relations of good neighbourliness with Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece.⁶⁸

The article surprised diplomatic circles. It was the first time that Bulgaria, contrary to its former attitude, neither referred to the Balkan Pact nor spoke out against it.⁶⁹ As the Yugoslav ambassador in Sofia Mita Miljković found out, the article had been written by the Bulgarian minister of foreign affairs Minčo Nejšev, who also confirmed that the article had been approved by Červrenkov and could be considered as a keystone of Bulgaria's foreign policy.⁷⁰ There was no doubt that Bulgaria was acting by Soviet command. The "de-Stalinization" in Bulgaria had already begun. At the Sixth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party (18/2 – 3/3/1954) Červrenkov had lost his position as the party's general secretary, but he kept his position as prime minister. The new first secretary Todor Živkov, nominated by Khrushchev, had not yet asserted himself within the party and until 1956 he played a marginal role in Červrenkov's shade. Bulgaria was worrying that Yugoslavia would soon raise the Macedonian issue, as it had done in 1944–48, i.e. that it would demand the secession of the Bulgarian part of Macedonia and its annexation to the "People's Republic of Macedonia" in exchange for the

⁶⁷ "Bălgarskijat narod stoj tvărdo za mir i dobri otnošeniija sâs svojite sâsedi", *Rabotničesko delo*, 17 June 1954.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ On Bulgaria's general attitude towards the Balkan Pact see Jordan Baev, "Bulgaria and the Balkan Pact (1953–1954)", in *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije*, ed. Selinić, 587–601.

⁷⁰ Mita Miljković, *Burne diplomatske godine. Iz sofijskog dnevnika 1953–1956* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995), 116.

western outlands (Caribrod and Bossilevgrad). Nejščev had expressed these fears to Konstantinos Tranos, Greece's chargé d'affaires in Sofia.⁷¹

On 26 June, a few days after the article was published, the Soviet Union's ambassador delivered a letter from Khrushchev to Tito. Although the letter's content was not made public at that time, it could be concluded from Tito's and other Yugoslav officials' statements that Khrushchev expressed the Soviet Union's willingness to normalize bilateral relations with Yugoslavia, recognising Stalin's mistakes in 1948.⁷² Khrushchev's letter of 22 June 1954 has recently been published and it confirms that the Soviet leader stressed the need for the normalization of bilateral Soviet-Yugoslav relations after Beriya's execution and Djilas' removal.⁷³ The Soviet Union's conciliatory and peaceful attitude was perceived by Belgrade as a noticeable decrease of the Soviet threat and it undoubtedly affected Yugoslavia's attitude towards the Balkan Alliance in particular and towards the West in general. For Washington the Balkan Alliance had to be linked up with NATO⁷⁴ and its formation should coincide with the settlement of the Trieste dispute.⁷⁵ Yugoslavia separated the two issues and was reluctant to undertake any obligation towards NATO. This became clear during the expert committee's sitting in Athens (28 June – 5 July 1954), when the Yugoslav delegation objected to the Greek draft for the alliance. The preamble of the Greek draft provided that the treaty of alliance would constitute a basic factor for order and stability and that the measures which would be taken, in compliance with the United Nations Charter, would reinforce collective security. Close tripartite cooperation and cooperation with other states as well would contribute to the maintenance of international security. Article 1 referred to the necessity of strengthening collective security according to provisions of the UN Charter. Article 2 provided that the Contracting Parties should reinforce

⁷¹ Ibid., 119. After Tito's rift with Stalin Bulgaria denied the existence of Macedonian minority on its soil and opposed the creation of a Macedonian nation of anti-Bulgarian basis. See Spyridon Sfetas, *To Μακεδονικό και η Βουλγαρία. Πλήρη τα απόρρητα βουλγαρικά έγγραφα 1950–1967* [The Macedonian question and Bulgaria. Classified Bulgarian documents 1950–1967] (Thessaloniki: Association of Macedonian Studies, 2009).

⁷² See Bogetić, *Jugoslavija*, 148–149.

⁷³ See <http://www.wilsoncenter.org./index>. *Cold War International History Project. Digital Archive, Collection: Yugoslavia in the Cold War. Letter from Khrushchev to Josip Broz Tito (06/22/1954)*.

⁷⁴ FRUS 1952–1954, vol. VIII, 661–662, No. 349, The Secretary of the State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, Washington, July 8, 1954, Top Secret.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 659–660, no. 348, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Greece, Washington, July 2, 1954, Top Secret.

their defence system, individually or collectively, and grant mutual assistance. Article 3 provided that any armed aggression against one or several of them should be considered as an aggression against all the Contracting Parties which had the right to defend themselves individually or collectively. Article 4 provided that in case Greece and Turkey were forced to take measures to meet their obligations towards NATO according to Article 5 of the Charter, Yugoslavia was bound to take proportionate measures in consultation with Greece and Turkey. Article 7 provided that the Contracting Parties were obliged to monitor the international situation and in the event of a grave deterioration to take preventive measures, proportional to the threat to their political independence and territorial sovereignty, in order to secure their mutual interests. Article 10 provided close cooperation of the Contracting Parties with international organizations which had been entrusted with the consolidation of peace and international security.⁷⁶

With their remarks the Yugoslav experts aimed at attributing an intra-Balkan character to the Balkan Alliance and loosening the links between the Balkan Alliance and NATO as far as Yugoslavia's obligations towards NATO members were concerned. They noticed that the preamble of the Greek draft made no reference to the issues of territorial integrity, independence and common security of the Balkan Alliance's member states. Article 2 was essentially accepted. In Article 4 the Yugoslav experts discerned Yugoslavia's equation with Greece and Turkey as regards their obligations towards NATO. Their thesis was that any specification of Yugoslavia's obligations to NATO should be avoided. Article 7 was considered to exceed the limits of defensive alliance and Article 10 was also labelled as a clause for cooperation between Yugoslavia and NATO.⁷⁷

Therefore, three trends emerged. Greece was striving to link up the Balkan Alliance with NATO and to involve Yugoslavia in its defence mechanisms, Yugoslavia was trying to separate the Balkan Alliance from NATO and to confine its obligations only to the Balkans, while Turkey, primarily interested in Middle East issues, did not rush for the formation of the Balkan Alliance, combining the latter with the settlement of the Trieste problem.

The "Treaty of Alliance, Political Cooperation and Mutual Support" that was signed on 9 August 1954 at Bled (Slovenia) by foreign ministers Koča Popović, Stefanos Stefanopoulos and Fuad Köprülü, balanced the Greek and the Yugoslav position. Article 2 provided that any

⁷⁶ APR-KPR 1-2/3. Ugovor o Savezu, političkoj saradnji i uzajamnoj pomoći. Grčki Projekat.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

armed aggression against one or several of the Contracting Parties, at any part of their territories, “*shall be considered as an aggression against all the Contracting Parties, which, in consequence, exercising the right of legitimate collective defence recognized by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, shall individually or collectively render assistance to the Party or Parties attacked, undertaking in common accord and immediately all measures, including the use of armed force, which they shall deem necessary for efficacious defence*”. Article 6 provided that “*in the event of a grave deterioration of the international situation, and especially in the areas where such deterioration could have a negative effect, direct or indirect, upon security in their area, the Contracting Parties shall consult each other with a view to examining the situation and determining their attitude. ... In the event of an armed aggression against a country toward which one or several of the Contracting Parties should at any moment of the signing of the present Treaty have undertaken obligations of mutual assistance, the Contracting Parties will consult each other on the measures to be taken, in conformity with the aims of the United Nations, to meet the situation that would have thus been created in their area. It is understood that consultation provided for under this Article could also include an urgent meeting of the Permanent Council*”. Article 10 provided that “*provisions of the present Treaty do not affect, and cannot be interpreted as affecting in any way, the rights and obligations that arise for Greece and Turkey from the North Atlantic Treaty of April 4, 1949*”. A Permanent Council was established, consisting of the foreign ministers and other members of the governments of the Contracting Parties. It would be convened regularly twice a year. The General Staffs of the Contracting Parties should continue their joint work. The Treaty was concluded for a period of twenty years. If none of the Contracting Parties should cancel it one year before its terms had expired, the Treaty should be considered as tacitly prolonged for another year and so forth until cancelled by one of the Contracting Parties.⁷⁸

The Treaty had a narrow Balkan framework and Yugoslavia undertook no clear obligations towards NATO. It was not definitely obliged to provide military assistance to any NATO member that could be attacked, apart from Greece and Turkey; however, it was self-evident that NATO would collectively support Yugoslavia in case of emergency. It was obvious that Yugoslavia wanted to avoid involvement in NATO's defensive mechanisms and subordination to American military command. Yugoslavia's

⁷⁸ See the text of the Treaty in *Documents on American Foreign Policy 1954*, ed. Peter V. Curl, published for the Council on Foreign Relations by Harper and Brothers (New York 1955), 186–190.

closer relations with NATO would mar the process of the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement and could be a threat to the country's communist regime.⁷⁹

With Soviet support for Yugoslavia, the Trieste dispute was basically settled in October 1954 through a Memorandum of Understanding, but the Balkan Pact proved to be stillborn. With the exacerbation of the Cyprus dispute between Greece and Turkey in 1955 and the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement in 1955–56, the Balkan Pact lost its practical significance. In May–June 1955 Khrushchev visited Belgrade, accompanied by prime minister Bulganin. He recognized the Yugoslav way to socialism (Declaration of Belgrade) and promised financial aid. Khrushchev intended to bring Yugoslavia back to the Soviet sphere of influence and to generate its accession into the Warsaw Pact. It was not coincidental that Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade took place immediately after the establishment of the Warsaw Pact. In April 1956 the Cominform was dissolved and in June 1956 Tito visited Moscow. With the Declaration of Moscow, Khrushchev recognised once again Yugoslavia's way to socialism.⁸⁰ However, Yugoslavia's foreign policy was based on the principle of equal distance from the East and Tito became leader of the non-aligned movement.

In 1956–58 there was new friction in Soviet-Yugoslav relations, mainly because of the Hungarian issue. In April 1957 at Soviet prodding Romanian prime minister Chivu Stoica submitted a proposal to the Balkan governments for a Balkan Conference in order to discuss issues of economic cooperation and collective security. With this political motion the Soviet leader aimed at further weakening the Balkan Pact, since Khrushchev had not yet ruled out the likelihood of Yugoslavia's reliance on NATO. Nevertheless, the Soviet-Yugoslav relations were soon warmed up again because of Yugoslavia's decision to support Soviet positions on international issues. Showing flexibility, Tito supported the Soviet position on the German issue and he condemned China's adventurism and the American spy war against the Soviet Union. Thus, another noticeable rapprochement between Belgrade and Moscow took place in 1961–62.

These new circumstances weakened the military cooperation between Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey. The Permanent Council convened only once (28/2 – 3/3/1955) and focused on the establishment of the Balkan Consultative Assembly which, nevertheless, never met. The Permanent Council met by rotation in Belgrade (1954), in Ankara (1955), in Athens (1956) and

⁷⁹ On general NATO-Yugoslav relations see Bojan Dimitrijević, *Jugoslavija i NATO* (Belgrade: Vojska, 2003).

⁸⁰ On this initial phase of the Soviet-Yugoslav relations normalization see Svetozar Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: Reconciliation, comradeship, confrontation, 1953–1957* (London: Routledge, Taylor & France Group, 2011).

again in Belgrade (1957), but without any results. The Balkan Institute was not created. Suggestions to organize common military exercises, to establish a common Balkan Chamber of Commerce and to collaborate in nuclear research remained unfulfilled. The Balkan Pact was practically devitalized, although no party denounced it.

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