

GERMAN-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS

DURING

THE BOSNIAN CRISIS

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PREFACE

In both the Bosnian crisis and the events following the assassination of the Austrian Archduke which set off the first World War, the diplomacy of the Central Powers presented the similar pattern of Austria taking the initiative in the Balkans with strong backing from Germany. The circumstances surrounding the crisis in July, 1914 have been thoroughly investigated but the writer feels that more light could be shed upon the earlier crisis in 1908-1909. In addition to tracing the course of German-Austrian relations during this period, an attempt has also been made to integrate more fully the relationship between the domestic problems of the Central Powers with their foreign policies.

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CHAPTER I

STATUS OF GERMAN-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS, 1908

By 1908, the diplomatic situation in which the Bosnian problem was a prominent factor had become so involved that the slightest move on the part of any of the great powers took on added significance, was studied intently by the various diplomatic offices and became the subject of numerous conferences of European chiefs of staffs. It was the era of nationalism, militarism, secret diplomacy, and exaggerated news stories which witnessed a steadily increasing tension between the great powers that were lined up into two separate camps.

Moving through these troubled diplomatic waters, the German Foreign Office had several specific aims.¹ Although the strong hand of Otto von Bismarck had long since departed from the scene, the influence and basic plans of the Iron Chancellor were guiding lights for Prince Bernhard von Bülow, chancellor of Germany from 1901 to 1909. Uppermost in the mind of Bülow was the aim to take any action that was necessary in order to forestall any outbreak of hostilities which would lead to a struggle with the Triple Entente. This he hoped to do by playing off the natural antagonisms of the various powers.²

By 1908, the main lines of German, indeed European, diplomacy prior to 1914 had clearly emerged. Although Germany was a member of the Triple Alliance which included Austria and Italy, Bülow based his foreign policy upon the alliance with Austria, since he held little faith in the effect-

¹ Bernhard von Bülow, Memoirs of Prince von Bülow. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 3 vols., 1931), Vol. II, p. 350.

² Ibid., Vol. II, p. 351.

iveness of Italy's vow of allegiance to the pact.³ This was in strict accordance with Bismarck's old policy of isolating France so that she would be unable to attack his jerry-built empire. By 1908, however, France had succeeded in aligning herself with Russia and England to such an extent that the Kaiser frequently spoke of the encirclement of Germany. That such a development had come about caused the German Foreign Office much unrest but these results had been brought about by Germany's own actions.⁴

In the first place, Anglo-German relations had deteriorated considerably from the time of Germany's refusal to enter into any agreement with England under the Chamberlain government at the turn of the century. The crux of the friction between the two countries had become the huge increase in German naval armaments. Britain's fear of Germany's intentions grew in direct proportion to the size of the naval appropriations of the Reichstag to supplement the Tirpitz Naval Laws. From time to time, Britain approached Austria without success to see if some pressure could be brought to bear on the Kaiser to reduce naval construction. As late as August 15, 1908, King Edward VII made representations over naval matters but to no avail.⁵ Added to this basic cause of friction was the attitude of Kaiser Wilhelm whose eccentric activities, blundering speeches, and needlessly harsh treatment of British ambassadors only

³ Ludwig Bittner and Hans Uebersberger (eds.), Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914. (Wien and Leipzig: Osterreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 9 vols., 1930), Vol. I, p. 14. Hereafter cited as Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik.

⁴ Erich Eyck, Das Persönliche Regiment Wilhelms II. (Zürich: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1948), p. 488.

⁵ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, pp. 37-39.

served to heighten the animosities between the two countries.⁶

Whereas the naval appropriations constituted the basic source of friction between Germany and England, it was the far older problem of Alsace-Lorraine which embittered Germany's relations with France. Following the Moroccan Crisis of 1905, involving the removal of Theophile Delcasse from the helm of French foreign policy, the rift between the two countries steadily widened. The relative inactivity of France during the Bosnian Crisis was due more than anything else to disinterest in Balkan affairs. Her area of concentration was in Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Rhine boundary.⁷

To compensate for the lack of interest in Balkan affairs on the part of France the third member of this Triple Entente, Russia, was very definitely a contending power in Southeastern Europe. In a large measure, however, German diplomacy had secured the temporary neutralization of its huge neighbor in the East. German hopes of miring the Tsar in the Far East and Manchuria through the Russo-Japanese War had exceeded their fondest expectations. Both Austria and Germany realized that Russia, as a result of war and revolution, was temporarily unfit to carry on any aggressive action. In a further effort to guarantee her eastern frontier and at the same time to weaken Russia's role in the Triple Entente, the Kaiser paid a visit to Tsar Nicholas II at Björko and had signed a

⁶ Examples: The Krueger Telegram congratulating the Boers on inflicting a defeat upon the British in Africa and the inflamed speech at Hamburg aimed at Great Britain. Bülow, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 92; Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Bartholdy and Friedrich Thimme (eds.), Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914. (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 40 vols., 1922-1927), Vol. XXIV, p. 123. Hereafter cited as Die Grosse Politik.

⁷ Montchilo Nintchitch, La Crise Bosniaque (1908-1909) et Les Puissances Europeennes. (Paris: Alfred Costes, Editeur, 2 vols., 1937), Vol. II, pp. 6-8.

mutual aid treaty with him only to have the Russian Foreign Office force the Tsar to renounce it.⁸ Nevertheless, Germany tried manfully to maintain an amicable relationship with Russia. Despite the manifestations of friendship between the two rulers, the German-Austrian alliance precluded any deep understanding between the two countries.

Just as Germany's prestige varied in Russia from time to time, her influence in the Ottoman Empire alternated with the swinging of the diplomatic pendulum in the Sublime Porte. Although Germany had no territorial ambitions in the Near East, she did have some interest in the economic and strategic possibilities of that region. The proposed Berlin-to-Bagdad Railway, efforts to improve the markets for German goods, German military missions and the constant work of a highly trained diplomatic corps were sufficiently clear evidences of German interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. Germany acquiesced in Russian attempts to secure control of the Straits only because Btlow knew that such action would enable him to pose as Russia's friend without giving anything away.⁹ He knew that the natural impulse of Great Britain would be to keep the lifeline to India open whatever the cost and that she would immediately oppose any Russian move designed to give the latter control of the Straits.

It was also obvious that Germany would have a smaller interest in the Balkans than her partner, Austria. Although the years since the Treaty of Berlin had seen little outside pressure on the Balkans in the form of foreign military intervention, the replacement of A. Goluchowski

⁸ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 46.

⁹ Ibid., Vol. XIV, pp. 531-563; Btlow, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 350-357.

by Aera von Aehrenthal in 1906 as Austria's foreign minister indicated that a change was at hand.¹⁰ During the past decade the foreign policy of the Dual Monarchy had been to a great extent dominated by the more aggressive diplomacy of its ally in Berlin and Aehrenthal was a member of that group of the influential Austrian intellegentsia who bitterly resented the subordinate position to which Austria had been relegated. His patron and one of his strongest supporters was none other than the heir apparent to the Austrian throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand.¹¹ Together with the new Chief of Staff, Conrad von Hoetzendorf, they formed the nucleus of the young group which was to play a major role in determining Austrian foreign policy in the future. Their plans were only ineffectually opposed by the ageing Emperor Francis Joseph and some of the elder statesmen.

It was Aehrenthal's hope that by means of a vigorous foreign policy he would be able to overcome all discontent within the Dual Monarchy, restore the prestige of his country abroad and end its dependence upon Germany. That he succeeded to a great extent in taking the initiative out of Germany's hands was demonstrated by his proposal for a conference on Balkan problems with Tommaso Tittoni, the Italian foreign minister, at Salzburg, Austria in August, 1908. Germany gained admittance to the meeting only after the request of Wilhelm von Schoen, German secretary for foreign affairs, in order to make a definite manifestation of the solidarity of the Triple Alliance.¹²

¹⁰ Bernadotte E. Schmitt, The Annexation of Bosnia, 1908-1909. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 4.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 5.

¹² Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 15.

The language of the request indicated that Germany did not want to offend the Austrians in any manner. This attitude was further demonstrated by the end of August, 1908, when Aehrenthal successfully approached the German Foreign Office over the matter of quieting the German Press. Somehow, the Berliner Tageblatt had discovered some information concerning the proposed annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in July, and was publishing such information in its daily articles. As this was highly embarrassing and troublesome to Aehrenthal, he applied pressure upon Germany to hush the matter up insofar as possible.¹³

Finally, German recognition of Austria's prior interest and initiative in the Balkans was evidenced by Bülow's memorandum to his deputy state secretary pointing out that German and Austrian interests in the Balkans were very similar and that Germany was willing to go hand in hand with Austria in further negotiations over the question of the control of the Straits, with Aehrenthal being given a free hand to handle Balkan problems since he was closer to the area and understood the situation more clearly.¹⁴

Germany's main interest lay in preventing the natural antagonism between Russia and Austria from involving the German Empire in a clash with the Triple Entente.¹⁵ She did not wish to support Austria too strongly therefore, unless it was absolutely necessary to do so. Yet, despite this apparent weakness in the Dual Alliance, there was never a time when Germany hesitated to come to the aid of her partner in a time of crisis. The fact that the alliance had been maintained for nearly thirty years

¹³ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 62-63.

¹⁴ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 47.

¹⁵ Bülow, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 351.

by the time of the Bosnian Crisis indicated that there were some compelling reasons for its existence.

In addition to cultural affinity and common social and political problems, another factor tending to promote a feeling of kinship between the two countries was the integration of the respective chiefs of staffs, which was greatly enhanced by the friendship between Conrad von Hoetzendorf, Austrian chief of staff, and Helmuth von Moltke, chief of the German general staff. Both men were of the opinion that the combined war machines of the two empires constituted the most powerful force ever assembled in European history. It was quite obvious, therefore, that they would both favor any policy that smacked of aggression and the use of that armed might.

So it was that although there were some differences between the two countries, their natural affinities forecast that their alliance would be a lasting one. The greatest threat to this alliance was that posed by Russia. Prior to his elevation to the office of foreign minister, Aehrenthal had been the Austrian minister to Russia for many years. During this time, although he failed to win the confidence of the Russians, he felt that he knew all the tricks in dealing with the Tsarist government, a belief that brought him perilously close to war during the months immediately after the annexation of Bosnia. The area over which Russia and Austria constantly struggled in an effort to expand their respective areas of influence was the Balkans.

CHAPTER II

GERMAN-AUSTRIAN PROBLEMS IN THE BALKANS

The Balkan situation was one of the most important factors in precipitating World War I. It heightened the tension between the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance, caused increased armaments, and led to the fateful assassination of the Austrian Archduke.¹ The nationalistic ambitions of Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Greece to expand their borders in order to include their nationals living under foreign domination as well as for strategic reasons brought conflict with either Turkey or Austria-Hungary or among themselves.

The Congress of Berlin of 1878 set up a new order in the Balkans which was supposed to settle the desires of these dissatisfied peoples. Instead, the terms reached at Berlin were resolved purely on the basis of the big power interests and little if any respect was shown either for the weak Ottoman Empire or for the Balkan peoples as a whole. A prime example of this type of diplomacy was Article 25 of the treaty which dealt with Bosnia and Herzegovina. It provided that these two provinces would be occupied and administered by Austria-Hungary, but that Turkish sovereignty would be upheld.² It was thus highly probable that sooner or later, the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin would be broken either by the imperial ambitions of a major power or by the local populations which were becoming more and more conscious of their own national interests.

The occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina definitely set the line for Austrian foreign policy for the following decades. Together with the Dual

¹ Sidney B. Fay, The Origins of the World War. (New York: Macmillan Company, 2 vols., 1929), Vol. I, p. 353.

² Bülow, Memoirs, Vol. II, p. 370.

Alliance, this meant that Austria would henceforth be at the opposite political pole from the Russians with their claims of predominant interest in the Balkans reinforced by a Pan-Slavism oriented against the Austro-Hungarian Empire.³ Furthermore, since the major portion of the population of the two provinces was made up of Serbs, the Austrian policy in Bosnia became gradually interwoven with her diplomatic relations with Serbia. Hence, the problems of dealing with the Serbs and other minority peoples within the empire already had a direct relationship to Austria's foreign policy.

Austria did her best to conciliate the Serbs and for a time she was successful. She signed a secret treaty in 1881 with Serbia which was good for a period of ten years. It provided that each country would follow a mutually friendly policy and would permit no intrigue against the other. The next year special tariff privileges were granted to Serbia on pigs and prunes. From this time up to 1903, Serbian policy under the Obrenovich dynasty was Austrophile to all intents and purposes.⁴ Domestic conflicts in that year, however, brought an abrupt change.

From the time of the accession of the Karageorgevich line in June, 1903 and the simultaneous rise of Nicola Pasitch to the premiership,⁵ Austrian prestige dropped rapidly in the Balkans,⁶ and Russia moved in quickly to replace her in Serbia and all other Slavic countries. Three

³ Joseph Redlich, Emperor Francis Joseph, A Biography. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 497.

⁴ Bay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 356-360.

⁵ This followed the assassination of King Milan and Queen Draga, the last of the Obrenovich line. The killings were caused by intense opposition to the personal activities of King Milan.

⁶ Redlich, op. cit., p. 498.

years later, with the outbreak of a tariff war between Austria and Serbia in the so-called "Pig War" in 1906, the Serbians turned even more resolutely to Russia. Germany and England replaced Austrian trade for the most part at this juncture and France increased her market for Serbian exports, a shift made possible when the Serbians got special commercial rights in Saloniki. The fact that prior to the "Pig War", nine-tenths of Serbian exports and three-fifths of her imports touched or left Austria-Hungary indicated the seriousness of the rupture to the Serbian and Austrian economy.⁷ The war, moreover, proved to Serbia that she must have an outlet to the sea or else be economically dependent upon Austria-Hungary and resulted in the complete military emancipation of the Serbians from Austrian domination.⁸

Another problem in the Balkans which faced the Central Powers equal in importance to that posed by minority peoples was the old and delicate issue of the control of the Straits. It was in a Russian move to control the Dardanelles that the Bosnian question had its origins. The chief purpose of the Congress of Berlin in 1878 had been to revise the Treaty of San Stefano which Russia had signed with Turkey following their war in 1877, and Chancellor A. M. Gorchakov had considered it worthwhile at that conference to forfeit Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria in order to prevent Austria from interfering in Russia's drive toward the Bosphorus.⁹ The Russian foreign minister left the time and the method of occupation of the two provinces to Austria and signed the treaty at Berlin in hopes

⁷ Harold W. V. Temperley, History of Serbia. (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1917), p. 293.

⁸ Ibid., p. 295. Up to this time, all of Serbia's military weapons and stores had come from Austria.

⁹ Bülow, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 370.

that this would gain him Austrian support for later Russian control of the Straits.¹⁰

Nothing further happened until 1897 when Austria and Russia agreed not to change the status of the Straits by any separate agreement, thus putting any modification of the earlier convention off for the next decade.¹¹ Two years later, Michael Nikolaievitch Muraviev, Russian minister of Foreign Affairs, tried to cajole Germany into signing a guarantee of Russian dominance in the Bosphorus. Bülow, who was then an influential adviser to the Kaiser, refused to put any statement in writing since he feared that Muraviev might inform England of the agreement and thereby endanger German-British relations.¹²

If the occupation of the two provinces was to have significant repercussions in the international policies of the Dual Monarchy, the domestic effects and problems were also of a serious nature. The cumbersome method of occupation after 1878 constantly generated trouble in Croatia, Dalmatia, Southern Hungary, and Bosnia. A joint Austro-Hungarian administration was established in Bosnia, while Austria controlled Dalmatia outright and Hungary had direct sway over the Croats and the Serbs in South Hungary.¹³ Since 1878, the rights of the Austrian

¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 371.

¹¹ Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 376-377.

¹² Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XIV, p. 531.

¹³ The Magyars had made an agreement with the Croats as early as 1868 but this broke down due to the coalition of the opposition parties in 1905 in Hungary and as a result of numerous scandals in the administrative practices of the Hungarians. The Croats were the literary and cultural leaders of the South Slavs and therefore, when they joined the cause of the Serbs, it far outweighed the declining activity of the Hungarian Serbs. Temperley, op. cit., p. 289.

Imperial Government in these provinces had steadily increased. Drafts were raised in the Emperor's name, the population took an oath of loyalty to him, the law was issued in his name, and all departments of the administration were manned by officials of his government. Any offence against the Emperor was treasonable, while an act against the Sultan was merely a rebuke against a neighboring ruler.¹⁴

Accompanying the steady increase in the powers of the Austrian throne in the two provinces, were a corresponding number of trying problems growing out of Austrian administrative policy, which were to plague the Dual Monarchy to the outbreak of war in 1914. Viennese policy was aimed at separating the two provinces as much as possible from their natural ties with the other Balkan countries and binding the resources and production of Bosnia and Herzegovina to its own economy. To this end all nationalistic sentiment was repressed and a constitution for Bosnia and Herzegovina was withheld in fear of the use of political power by the Serbs who formed nine-tenths of the population. The Austrian government also took great care to separate the railway systems of Dalmatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to prevent any possible cohesion of the economies of the two areas.¹⁵ One of the major reasons for unrest in the provinces was the circumstance that the government was in the hands of German and Magyar bureaucrats who were not in sympathy with the Slavic peasants, making the latter quite amenable to Serbian propaganda. Baron Burian, who was in charge of the administration of the provinces, was in

¹⁴ Joseph M. Baernreither, Fragments of a Political Diary. (London: Macmillan Company, 1930), pp. 57-58.

¹⁵ Temperley, op. cit., p. 292; Baernreither, op. cit., p. 189.

favor of introducing a more liberal system of government which would include some form of representation and concluded that this could be done more easily if Austria controlled the areas outright.¹⁶

According to the terms of the Ausgleich creating the Dual Monarchy in 1867, however, it was necessary that Bosnia be governed by a joint bureaucracy of both Austrians and Hungarians.¹⁷ This fundamental fact precluded any administrative change as well as any efficient control of the areas since each group of bureaucrats was intensely jealous of the other and failed to cooperate to any degree whatsoever. Due to this situation the theory of "Trialism" gradually evolved in Vienna which had many prominent supporters. It was a plan which would substitute for the Ausgleich with Hungary a three cornered arrangement with the South Slavs within the empire. The Austrians thereby hoped to dispose of the obnoxious Ausgleich and at the same time solve the problem of the Slavs in the Balkans.¹⁸ Such a program would have undoubtedly been very attractive to the South Slavs since they would have received greater prestige and privileges by pacific means than if they continued their intrigues with Serbia. Emperor Francis Joseph feared, however, that the Magyars would oppose any change in the Ausgleich arrangement and Count Wekerle, the Hungarian prime minister, came out strongly against any Trialistic union with the South Slavs.¹⁹

In reaction to the dissatisfaction over Trialism, Aehrenthal devised

¹⁶ Schmitt, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁷ Temperley, op. cit., p. 294.

¹⁸ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, pp. 3-7.

¹⁹ Baernreither, op. cit., p. 45.

a policy of developing a Greater Austria which would inspire confidence in the administrative efficiency and progressive character of the Austrian government. The basic aim of the plan to create a Greater Austria was the expansion of Austrian territory wherever possible in order to achieve a richer economy based upon the mutual exchange within the empire of the various special products of each section. It included a vigorous foreign policy which might appeal to the Serbs and the Croats outside the empire and a general conciliatory domestic policy to pacify them. Aehrenthal also saw in the plan for a Greater Austria an effective way of countering the propaganda for a Greater Serbia which was emanating from Belgrade. Greater Austria became the axis upon which the Austrian foreign policy revolved from 1906 to 1911.²⁰

²⁰ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 4.

CHAPTER III
THE ANNEXATION

The first formal statement concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Congress of Berlin in 1878 was included in an exchange of notes between Austria and Russia. In 1884, the two countries agreed to permit Austria, if she should so decide, to transform the occupation of the two provinces into an annexation.¹ This agreement was in accordance with the views of the Russian Foreign Office expressed at the time of the Berlin Treaty six years earlier, and confirmed in a formal manner the tacit understanding reached between the two powers at that time.² During the following years no change was made in this arrangement to hamper Aehrenthal when he strode onto the European diplomatic stage so he found an old, settled policy which he thought could be put to definite advantage.

When he replaced A. Goluchowski in 1906, Aehrenthal initiated his general policy by turning to the Balkans since this area presented the only, and at the same time, the most urgent field for action and the one best adapted for expansion. Turkish power was rapidly declining, Serbian propaganda was increasing, and the new Russian foreign minister, Alexander Petrovitch Izvolsky, wanted to accelerate Russia's drive toward the Straits.³ At this juncture the internal situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was deteriorating to an alarming extent from Austria's point of view. Baron Burian's proposals for some form of representative government in the two provinces was finding marked support in the Austrian court

¹ Btlow, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 371.

² Ibid., Vol. II, p. 370.

³ Schmitt, op. cit., pp. 4-6.

circles and among government officials. Furthermore, plans for the economic development of the areas had been hampered by the lack of political stability and production of foodstuffs had decreased considerably.⁴

Soon after a conference at Reval in 1907 which settled the outstanding disputes between Russia and England,⁵ Izvolsky sent proposals to Aehrenthal to the effect that the appropriate moment had come to begin negotiations for the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the opening of the Straits since the 1897 Austro-Russian agreement was about to expire.⁶ When the two ministers met at Vienna in 1907, Aehrenthal promised Izvolsky that he would inform him in good time should Austria take any action to annex the two areas.⁷ This discussion opened a diplomatic exchange concerning the political changes in the Balkans which were embodied in an agreement reached at the famous Buchlau Conference the next year. At the residence in Buchlau, Austria, of Count Leopold Berchtold, the Austrian minister to Russia, on September 15, 1908, without consulting the other powers that had signed the Treaty of Berlin, the Russians approved the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in exchange for an Austrian offer to give Russia a free hand in the Straits. Furthermore, Austria was to abandon the Sanjak railroad project⁸ and to withdraw all Austrian troops

⁴ Baernreither, op. cit., pp. 150-152.

⁵ This meant that Russia had solved numerous boundary and trade matters with England so that she might turn her attention to the Straits again. For England, it marked another step in her drive to obtain friends on the continent to offset the threat posed by a growing Germany.

⁶ Bülow, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 374.

⁷ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXII, pp. 82-84.

⁸ A proposed railway running through the Sanjak of Novibazaar between Serbia and Montenegro through the Varga River Valley to Saloniki.

from the garrisons in the Sanjak.⁹ Other provisions included the endorsement of the pending independence of Bulgaria and the annexation of Crete by Greece.¹⁰ Since there was no definite date designated for the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ample room was provided for serious misunderstanding.

Izvolsky's version of the meeting is given in the report of Wilhelm von Schoen, German foreign secretary, concerning a conversation with the former in Vienna shortly after Buchlau.¹¹ After a discussion of Macedonia, the Sanjak railroad and Germany's role in Persia, Izvolsky alluded to his conference with Aehrenthal concerning the proposed annexation declaring that a complete solution of all Balkan questions should precede any move by Austria-Hungary. Izvolsky had the impression, according to von Schoen, that Aehrenthal was being forced into the annexation more by internal pressure (the Serb problem) than by the foreign developments. The Russian minister felt that the annexation question contained many difficulties and constituted a threat to European peace and was certain that Turkey would want a revision of the capitulations and perhaps further compensation.¹² Izvolsky was therefore of the opinion that a conference should be held or that the consent of the signatory powers to the Treaty of Berlin should be obtained before any actions were taken in the Balkans.

⁹ In reality, Austria was not giving up anything valuable since terrain surveys by Austrian engineers had revealed that railroad construction would be most difficult and costly if not impossible.

¹⁰ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, pp. 37, 58-60.

¹¹ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, pp. 39-43.

¹² Ibid., Vol. XXVI, pp. 40-41. Capitulations were the various conventions made by the Turkish government granting special privileges to foreign governments, somewhat similar to the spheres of interest and extraterritorial arrangements in China.

At the same time that Schoen reported Izvolsky's statements, Aehrenthal forwarded a communication to Bülow describing the Buchlau meeting. Although Bülow received this letter on September 26, 1908, it was presumably written the day immediately following the conference. Since this message was for German consumption its accuracy is open to some doubt as to the actual events and proceedings of the conference. It does, however, give a definite indication of Aehrenthal's concept of the alliance with Germany. He asserted, first of all, that Izvolsky informed him that Russia would have to follow a peaceful policy for at least twenty years because of the unsettled conditions in Russia and insisted that Russia only wanted control of the Straits in order to protect her Black Sea littoral.¹³ These two statements indicate both Aehrenthal's desire to pave the way for his future moves in annexing the two provinces and his recognition of the necessity for allaying any possible German fears that his foreign policy would lead to an outbreak of general hostilities in Europe.

To further reassure Germany, Aehrenthal intimated that should Austria decide to carry out the annexation, Izvolsky was to have sufficient time to return to Russia and to prepare public opinion there for the Austrian action if and when it occurred.¹⁴ Izvolsky also indicated that he was quite worried about the German-English tension over the matter of naval armaments, and further apprised Aehrenthal that the German policy in the Moroccan Crisis might force Clemenceau into the arms of England in case of any Anglo-German conflict. The Austrian foreign minister may have hoped that by relating these matters to Bülow, he would force him to

¹³ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, pp. 86-92.

¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 87.

concentrate upon affairs in the West allowing Austria a free hand in the Balkans.

Two days later, Heinrich Leonhard von Tschirschky, the German ambassador to Austria, sent a secret dispatch to the German Foreign Office regarding a conversation with Aehrenthal in which the latter further developed his views. He had stated that the uncertainty of Bulgaria's position¹⁵ could not be used much longer as an excuse for postponing the annexation, since the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was daily becoming more untenable due to growing economic paralysis and increasing political tension.¹⁶ Aehrenthal believed that the nationalistic Young Turks would be satisfied with a de facto annexation, if this were accompanied by a simultaneous withdrawal of Austrian troops from the Sanjak of Novibazaar. The Austrian was of the belief that this latter step would constitute proof to the whole world that Austria was not making a move toward Saloniki. He surmised that the annexation would actually make for a better diplomatic understanding between Austria and Turkey since it would remove the irritation arising from the occupation of the two provinces.¹⁷ Aehrenthal further remarked to Tschirschky that the annexation would constitute Austria's answer to the Greater Serbian propaganda which was coming out of Belgrade and would also alleviate the pressure of the political groups in Austria. Apparently to make his program more palatable to Germany, Aehrenthal also pointed out that the annexation would clear the way for the negotiation of an open treaty with

¹⁵ Bulgaria had been on the verge of declaring its complete independence from Turkey for some time. Aehrenthal apparently hoped that the declaration would precede the proclamation of the annexation of Bosnia.

¹⁶ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 44.

¹⁷ To which Kaiser Wilhelm remarked: "Naive, first rob, then play friends." Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 45.

Turkey and emphasized that anything that would make the prestige of the Austro-Hungarian Empire greater and stronger would be of advantage to the German-Austrian alliance.¹⁸

To this summary of Aehrenthal's views, Tschirschky appended his own observation that the newly annexed provinces would not be governed by Austria or Hungary in any separate manner but that probably a joint administration would continue to handle affairs as in the past.¹⁹ This in effect meant that the poor administration of the two provinces would be continued since the Magyars were definitely set against permitting any type of local autonomy or representative government in any minority area. Neither Germany nor Austria evidently recognized the possibility that this would only increase, not diminish, the efforts of the Serbians to procure the two areas whatever the cost.

As late as October 2, Austria's two allies, Germany and Italy, were still in the dark concerning Aehrenthal's plan for sudden action.²⁰ Both Tschirschky and Avarna, the Italian ambassador to Vienna, had the impression from Aehrenthal that no date had been set at Buchlau and that the annexation was still some time away. The German ambassador was aware, however, of the seriousness of the proposed annexation as the Russian ambassador to the Ballplatz had imparted to him that Izvolsky's portfolio would be in grave jeopardy if annexation occurred under any circumstances. It seems apparent that Izvolsky had not informed his colleague of his plans, and the latter had learned of the approaching annexation through

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 44.

¹⁹ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 45.

²⁰ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 55.

rumors circulating in Vienna.²¹ Aehrenthal himself had apparently decided to announce the annexation on October 3, 1908, but something happened to change his mind and a suspend-action order was passed to all Austrian ambassadors to refrain from transmitting the formal notes announcing the annexation to the other powers.²² The only reasonable explanation seems to be that the Emperor Francis Joseph was still undecided about the affair and that further persuasion was needed to bring the aged monarch around to the program of the annexationists. Whatever the reason, this delay later caused some friction between Germany and Austria.

On October 5, Bülow sent communication to the Kaiser in relation to Aehrenthal's message about the Buchlau Conference urging support of the Austrian policy. He declared that Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina would set the stage for the declaration of independence of Bulgaria and for the union of Crete and Greece.²³ Since the latter two events also constituted a violation of the Treaty of Berlin, Bülow was apparently intimating that perhaps Austria's move would be more likely to succeed. Bülow further noted that since Aehrenthal was supposed to have Russia's approval and considering the delicate diplomatic situation in Europe, Germany could not afford to oppose the Austrian wishes. Her position would become very hazardous, he felt, if Austria were to lose interest in her and to pull away from the alliance between the two countries. Bülow therefore held that Germany must assume a most submissive

²¹ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 55.

²² Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 56.

²³ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 50.

consideration for Aehrenthal's dispatch without affecting any restraint. The future German policy should be to stand aside and reassure Austria of her determination to support her ally.²⁴

On the very same day that Bülow was persuading Wilhelm to follow the lead of Austria in the matter of annexation, the wily Aehrenthal was leaving no stone unturned to guarantee the success of his plans. He sounded out both Italy and Russia on the possibility of an entente between the three powers which would concern itself with the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean.²⁵ It was Aehrenthal's hope that Italy and Russia would approve of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in return for Austrian consent to free passage for Russian warships in the Straits and a pledge of non-interference in Albania and Montenegro by both Austria and Italy.²⁶ Tschirschky reported on Aehrenthal's manoeuvres and on a conversation with the latter on October 6, 1908, in which the Austrian foreign minister indicated that it was only out of courtesy that he was notifying Germany's ambassador to the Ballplatz. As Aehrenthal viewed the international situation, he was quite confident that Germany would have no other alternative than to support Austrian policy, and just how confidence Aehrenthal had in his line of reasoning was indicated by his ill-planned, uncoordinated attempts to lure Austria's traditional foes, Russia and Italy, into an understanding without consulting Germany.²⁷

Perhaps if Aehrenthal had been able to read the dispatches of Baron Adolph von Marschall, the German ambassador to Constantinople, he would

²⁴ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 51.

²⁵ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, pp. 130-131.

²⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 61-62.

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 130-138; Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 62.

not have been so secure in his implicit faith of firm German support. Marschall kept up a continuous flow of dispatches to Berlin relating the effect of Aehrenthal's unilateral action in violating the terms of the Treaty of Berlin.²⁸ He pointed out that unless Germany took immediate action to offset the Austrian move, all German influence would be lost in Turkey. Marschall stated that the greatest amount of hostility in the Turkish capital was directed against Germany since she heretofore had been regarded as a friend, while Austria never had been trusted. Marschall emphasized very strongly his belief that Aehrenthal had acted in complete disregard of Germany's interests in the Sublime Porte.²⁹

In the same tenor as Marschall's warnings of the serious potentialities of the annexation were the remarks of the Kaiser attached to Bülow's note of October 5, 1908. Wilhelm realized that England would point out at once to Turkey that evidently Austria, Germany, and Bulgaria had everything arranged beforehand and that this would put Germany in a very embarrassing diplomatic role.³⁰ He regarded the coincidence of simultaneous declarations by Aehrenthal of the annexation and the proclamation of Bulgarian independence by King Ferdinand as a cardinal error, although he realized that Aehrenthal was hoping to play Bulgaria off against Russia as a buffer state.³¹ In a word, the Kaiser was none too happy and to make matters worse the correct procedure for delivering the official proclamations of Emperor Francis Joseph announcing the annexation was badly bungled

²⁸ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, pp. 99-100.

²⁹ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 99.

³⁰ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 53.

³¹ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 54.

with the result that France was officially informed before Berlin.³²

The Austrian Foreign Office was not too worried about this latter affair, however, since it already had received assurances from Bülow that Germany would support Austria in the annexation question.³³

³² Austria had sent notes on September 29 to all of her foreign ambassadors announcing the annexation as effective on October 7 and these were to be delivered on October 5. Bulgaria, however, declared full independence on October 5, so Aehrenthal notified Turkey on October 6. The trouble developed when Count Khevenhüller, the Austrian minister to Paris, evidently failed to receive an order to suspend action on October 3 and delivered the proclamation to the French government. This highly incensed Wilhelm, since he did not receive any notification until three days later. Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, pp. 123-125.

³³ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 138.

CHAPTER IV
THE PROTEST AGAINST ANNEXATION

Before entering into a discussion of the storm of protest that was raised against the action of Austria in annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina, it would be of value to recapitulate the background for these protests which were based upon past diplomatic procedure and tradition. The annexation act was clearly a unilateral violation of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878. Article 25 of that treaty stated that the two provinces were to be administered by Austria-Hungary, but that Turkish sovereignty was to be maintained. Austria's move, therefore, meant that all the rights of the Ottoman Empire in Bosnia and Herzegovina which were guaranteed to it through the Treaty of Berlin by the major powers of Europe were to be cast aside by the decree of one country. It was just because of such unilateral procedure on the part of Russia in 1877 at San Stefano that the Berlin Congress had been called the next year.¹ If Austria were permitted to carry out her plans concerning the two provinces without being called to account at a conference, the value of international treaties and their prestige would receive a severe setback. This violation of an international agreement became the basis for most of the diplomatic exchange following the proclamation of the annexation.

On October 6, 1908, Count Berchtold, the Austrian ambassador to St. Petersburg, reported that Russia, feeling itself challenged and its prestige in the Balkans at stake, immediately took the position that the annexation was a flagrant violation of the Berlin Treaty and that it could be changed only by an international conference meeting for that specific purpose. France, England, and Germany were aware of this stand by Russia

¹ Following her complete victory over Turkey in 1877, Russia forced Turkey to yield concessions that would have given Russia control of the Straits and other Balkan areas of vital significance to the other powers.

at an early hour after the annexation. The Russian reaction was all the more hostile because Aehrenthal had not given Izvolsky sufficient time to return to St. Petersburg before the proclamation was issued and this placed the Russian foreign minister in an extremely delicate position. He immediately sounded out the French and British Foreign Offices to see how far they would go in supporting Russia's position, but was only further embarrassed by both British and French refusals to consider Russian domination of the Straits.² In addition, both Western Powers were rather evasive in their views on the calling of an international conference to settle matters. To make Izvolsky's position worse, his prime minister, Peter Stolypin, in an effort to maintain Russian prestige ordered him not to withdraw Russian support for Serbia who was demanding compensation either in land or money. This meant that having lost British and French support, Russia might have to face the combined forces of Germany and Austria should Serbian nationalists attack Austria.³

Immediately upon receipt of the announcement of the annexation, Bülow notified Austria that: "In case complications or difficulties arise, our ally can count on us." Austria was to be the judge concerning what must be done about the Serbian question.⁴ This represented a complete concession to Austria and although Wilhelm was quite nervous about the matter he felt constrained to support his ally. On October 7, 1908, Marich Szögyeny, Austrian ambassador to Berlin, had a morning conference with Wilhelm and transmitted the Kaiser's verbal approval and best wishes in

² Izvolsky apparently thought that if he could get approval for Russian control of the Straits this would compensate for the setback to Pan-Slavism.

³ Eyck, op. cit., p. 488.

⁴ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 106.

regard to the Bosnian annexation. Szögyeny considered that the Kaiser was fully aware of the import of the crisis.⁵ The Kaiser regretted that the Bulgarian declaration of independence issued simultaneously with the annexation proclamation would make it appear as though it had been a prearranged plan. Wilhelm conveniently regarded the Bulgarian move as a violation of the Treaty of Berlin, whereas the annexation was acceptable as having been long since forecast by the steady decline of the Ottoman influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁶ As a means of conciliating the Russians, he favored the calling of a conference with its agenda limited to matters other than Bosnia and Herzegovina, since such a convention might ease Russia's position in her support of Serbia. Nothing came of this, however.⁷ It must be kept in mind that Germany was trying to remain on friendly terms with Russia, and the Kaiser was quite fearful lest St. Petersburg turn completely away from Germany.⁸

The change in the Kaiser's attitude toward the annexation from one of extreme disapproval at first to verbal assent later was evidently the result of the efforts of Bülow. On the morning of October 7, the two men met for the first time following the annexation and the Kaiser was very disconcerted over the chain of events and was definitely bitter in describing the actions of his ally. Bülow soon calmed him, however, by carefully calling his attention to the diplomatic situation, always laying

⁵ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 148.

⁶ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 156.

⁷ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 157.

⁸ Note the Kaiser's attempts at Björko in 1905 to ally Russia with Germany. E. Malcolm Carroll, Germany and the Great Powers 1866-1914. (New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 1938), pp. 533-534.

particular emphasis upon the necessity for Germany to stand by her partner even though Austria's recent moves had been taken without due consideration for the position of Germany.⁹ Two days later, Szögyeny wired Vienna that the Kaiser was content to follow Austria's lead as long as the Dual Monarchy kept Germany well informed in advance, so that the German government could have time to prepare public opinion for any new developments.¹⁰

The German decision to support Austria completely was soon put to a minor test by the visit of Ahmed-Biza-Bey, President of the new Young Turk government in the Ottoman Empire, to Prince von Bülow. The Turkish President hoped to have a thorough discussion with Bülow concerning the annexation and to gain his support for the conference which he was to have a week later with Aehrenthal.¹¹ Ahmed-Biza-Bey must have realized in advance that he had little chance of securing any aid from Germany since he represented an element in Turkish political life to which the Kaiser was definitely opposed. Indeed, the German monarch had based his entire diplomatic campaign in the Ottoman Empire upon support of Abdul Hamid II, the Sultan deposed by the Young Turks. Wilhelm had recently gone out of his way to proclaim his friendship for the Sultan and the Kaiser realized that the overthrow of Abdul Hamid might signify the beginning of a movement to undermine the prestige of Germany which he had built up in the

⁹ Although no primary material is available on this discussion, most secondary sources indicate that the conversation between the two men was along the above lines. Some hints of the Kaiser's feelings are indicated in the reports of Szögyeny to his home office following his interviews with Wilhelm. Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 252; Eyck, op. cit. pp. 482-485.

¹⁰ Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 157.

¹¹ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 77.

Empire.¹² Ahmed-Biza-Bey, therefore, left Berlin with little if any accomplishment to mark his visit. He had perhaps been led to misunderstand the real intentions of German policy by the attitude of Baron Adolph von Marschall immediately following the proclamation of the annexation. The German ambassador had misrepresented the facts by stating publicly in Constantinople that the action taken by Austria had not met with approval in Berlin, and that the German Foreign Office would not support Austria.¹³ Szögyeny, in Berlin, at once inquired at the German Home Office concerning these statements, and was reassured that Marschall's remarks had not been approved by the foreign office and that they represented only his own opinions. Pressure was brought to bear at once upon the German ambassador and in a short time, Marschall completely reversed his field and urged Turkey to accept the de facto annexation.

Equally as embarrassing to the German Foreign Office as the statements of Marschall were the articles being published in the Kölnische Zeitung, which blamed Austria for violating the Treaty of Berlin, criticized Germany for supporting Austria in this unilateral action, and demanded an international conference. Szögyeny brought these articles to the attention of Berlin and asked that the paper be urged to discontinue them since both Germany and Austria were inalterably opposed to any general European conference which would discuss the annexation. He felt that the demands in the German press for a conference to readjust the international situation were creating just the opposite public opinion to that desired by the two foreign offices. Bülow urged the papers to cease agitating for a confer-

¹² Eyck, op. cit., p. 483.

¹³ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 189.

ence and confided to Szögyeny on October 13, 1908 that he feared that any meeting would find France, Russia, England, and perhaps Italy lined up against the Central Powers.¹⁴ Germany's distrust of international conferences stemmed from her experience at Algeciras in 1906 when the first crisis in Morocco had been settled. Yet if no meeting were to be held, the only solution of the Bosnian question possible would be a definite manifestation by the Central Powers of a determination to resort to armed force if necessary to realize their diplomatic goal.

In connection with this plan to use force if necessary, Bülow was not overly concerned about the possibility of any general armed conflict between the major powers. He believed that at the most a localized struggle between Austria and Serbia would be the only eventuality. As the German chancellor viewed the situation in Europe at the time, he felt that Russia was in no condition to wage war, France and England would certainly not be willing to fight over an Oriental question, and Turkey would be content with a number of protests in order to satisfy the nationalistic elements at home.¹⁵ In accordance with this line of reasoning, Bülow decided to give Austria complete military support and informed Szögyeny that: "Should any complication or difficulty arise out of [Bosnian] situation, Austria can reckon in any eventuality upon Germany."¹⁶

Having been reassured of Germany's position, Aehrenthal sent a long letter to Bülow relating the conditions of the Buchlau Conference.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 207.

¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 208.

¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 208.

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 215-217.

Aehrenthal herein claimed that he had informed Tittoni, the Italian ambassador to Vienna, of the annexation plans on October 4, and that he had obtained Italian consent to the annexation prior to his action.¹⁸ Since Tittoni's correspondence with his home office in Rome, however, does not bear out this contention, it would appear that Aehrenthal was trying to impress upon his German ally that he had not done anything without properly informing the third member of the Triple Alliance, for obvious reasons. Actually, he had neither properly informed Italy of his plans nor had he received Italian acquiescence to the outright annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That he had falsely informed the German Foreign Office indicated that Aehrenthal was not acting in good faith with his ally. These statements could not affect the formation of German policy in any way, however, since Bülow had already transmitted complete German approval and support for the Austrian moves. The communication from Aehrenthal represented an effort to give an account of his actions over the past month and to smooth over the relations between the two countries, which had been somewhat ruffled by the delay in the delivery in the early part of the month of the annexation notes and by the new aggressiveness of Austrian policy.

Aehrenthal proposed to concentrate the attention of the European powers upon the other problems in the Balkans in order to distract attention from the Bosnian question. On October 15, he requested the Austrian press to stress the fact that the remaining Balkan problems¹⁹ were to be worked out in friendly discussions between Russia, Italy, and Austria. He made no further statements concerning the Bosnian affair until he was

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 216.

¹⁹ The most pressing problems were the Straits and the question of the Sanjak area between Serbia and Montenegro which was now void of Austrian troops.

forced to do so when he became aware of the proposed visit of Izvolsky to Berlin on his return from London to St. Petersburg. In order to neutralize any argument which the Russian foreign minister might present to Bülow, Aehrenthal issued a statement to the press three days before Izvolsky's arrival in Berlin to the effect that if Izvolsky did not cease his agitation for a general European conference which would include the Bosnian question on its agenda, a detailed account of the proceedings at Buchlau would be published.²⁰ When Izvolsky did arrive in Berlin, Szögyeny met him before he had an opportunity to consult with any German officials and warned him that Austria definitely would not consent to any conference in which the annexation would be a subject for discussion.²¹

For his part, Izvolsky indicated that he wanted, first of all, a conference to discuss the problems raised by the annexation, and then he desired that Austria give some small compensation as a generous gesture in order to quiet the growing unrest in Serbia where the majority of the population was in favor of going to war against Austria.²² He felt that a rupture of Austro-Russian relations would be very dangerous to the general peace of Europe.

Actually, Aehrenthal's warning statements and German commitments to Austria limited the effectiveness of the Russian minister's interviews with Bülow, and Izvolsky accomplished very little.²³ Bülow received the impression that the Russian foreign minister was a man who was constantly

²⁰ Oesterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, pp. 268-269.

²¹ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 286-288.

²² Ibid., Vol. I, p. 287.

²³ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 235.

becoming more desperate, and who was fully cognizant of the difficulties which awaited him when he returned to Russia and faced his prime minister and the Duma.²⁴ If anything this circumstance strengthened the confidence of the Central Powers and sustained them in the "war of nerves" which they were playing. Szögyeny was informed that Bülow had refused to grant any of Izvolsky's requests and that Bülow had taken the stand that the annexation was an accomplished fact and not to be reopened.²⁵ The German chancellor did state publicly, however, that a conference would be held only if the matters to be discussed were definitely settled beforehand. This statement was made in order to give Izvolsky a little "face" before going back to Russia.²⁶ Bülow evidently wanted to play the role of the middleman between Russia and Austria in their disputes, an old policy which had been laid down by Bismarck in the days of the Dreikaiserbund prior to the advent of Wilhelm II to the German throne.

On October 30, 1908, Bülow informed Aehrenthal in more detail of Izvolsky's visit. He stated in his message that it was Germany's policy to maintain the independence of Turkey as well as to support Austria. The question of the Straits should be settled at a conference, and since Bülow had guessed that Izvolsky had not received any satisfaction in France or England for his plans to control the Dardanelles, he was by now not averse to bringing it to open discussion.²⁷ Bülow closed his communication on a note of confidence and again gave Aehrenthal a free hand to decide whatever

²⁴ Bülow, Memoirs, Vol. II, p. 375.

²⁵ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 302.

²⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 308.

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 342-345.

was necessary in Balkan matters since the Austrian government was closer to the problems there and was better acquainted with them.²⁸ Germany's position on any conference had been on every point in favor of whatever decision the Austrians might make and Bülow was opposed to the granting of any territorial compensation to Serbia.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 345.

²⁹ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 331-332.

CHAPTER V

GERMAN INTERVENTION IN THE BOSNIAN CRISIS

The first few days following the proclamation of the annexation witnessed a wholesale exchange of diplomatic notes between the various European capitals. After the first shock wore off, the correspondence slackened and definite lines of policy began to take shape. This period of more deliberative action, which lasted up to the end of the crisis in March, 1909, brought into clear relief the respective positions of Austria and Germany on one hand and of Russia and Serbia on the other.¹

After the violent attacks against Austria in the Belgrade newspapers as well as the numerous warlike statements emanating from that city had failed to have any influence whatever upon the designs of Aehrenthal, the Serbians decided to test Germany to find if perhaps some form of compromise could not be reached through Austria's partner. The basis for this belief lay in the consistent German policy which had been aimed at minimizing the antagonism of the Balkan peoples toward the Central Powers.² On October 20, 1908, Milovanovich, the Serbian foreign minister, appeared in Berlin and requested to see Bülow.³ Milovanovich was not so naive as to believe that he could persuade the German chancellor to force Austria to renounce the annexation of the two provinces, but he did hope to receive some form of compensation which make the unilateral action of Aehrenthal more palatable to the Serbian nationalists.⁴ He hoped to obtain, in fact, either a part of the Bosnian area, a strip of the Novibazaar,

¹ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, pp. 287-383, 665-750.

² Ibid., Vol. XXVI, pp. 53-54.

³ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 270.

⁴ Baernreither, op. cit., p. 259.

or a strip through the two provinces to the Adriatic Sea so that Serbia would no longer be too dependent upon Austria in international trade.⁵

With the Austrian ambassador to Berlin, Szögyeny, carefully following the discussions through the German Foreign Office and reporting repeatedly to Vienna, Milovanovich failed to make any progress whatsoever since Germany refused to take any action that might embarrass her ally, and refused to concede that Serbia might have some chance of gaining compensation. The German state secretary, Schoen, advised the Serbian minister to exert all his influence at his cabinet session to quiet the anti-Austrian propaganda in the Serbian press, since he felt that if such activity continued Baron Aehrenthal might give way to his military strategists who were advocating an immediate war upon Serbia.⁶ Germany thus indicated that she would continue to give Austria her complete support even though Bülow now realized that he was in a large measure sacrificing the traditional policy in the Balkans of maintaining friendly relations with those small countries in order to gain commercial and strategic concessions. That Aehrenthal realized the importance of Germany's refusal to meet Milovanovich halfway was evidenced in a letter which he sent to Bülow on October 28, expressing his warm gratitude for the firm stand taken by Germany, and describing the times as vital in Austrian history.⁷ Aehrenthal was silent, however, on the fact that the annexation did have some bearing upon Russian security and traditional policy in the Balkans, thereby hoping to minimize German

⁵ See map opposite page 458 in Walter P. Hall and William S. Davis, The Course of Europe Since Waterloo. (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1941).

⁶ Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 271.

⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 328-329. Aehrenthal offered his services a week later to aid Germany in the negotiations with France concerning Casablanca in appreciation for Germany's actions. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 407.

attention in that respect. There was no way, however, that he could prevent the German Foreign Office from discerning that the annexation had dealt a severe blow to German prestige in the Near East. Schönburg, the German ambassador to Bucharest, could report on November 19, that the prestige and influence of the German Empire in the Balkans had dropped at least fifty percent because of the support given to Austria in the annexation controversy.⁸

The loss of her dominant position in Turkey was a hard blow for Germany to endure. Prior to the annexation, German diplomats and military officials had enjoyed vast privileges and rights in that country. The advent of the Young Turks to power shortly before the annexation of Bosnia made the Turkish reaction against the Germans all the more forceful. They had risen to power on a platform of reviving the glories of the old Ottoman Empire, and were, therefore, highly incensed at Austria's unilateral action in annexing the two provinces. Immediately after the promulgation of the annexation by Emperor Francis Joseph, the Young Turks retaliated with a boycott against Austrian articles of export. So strong in fact was the hostility of the nationalists and public opinion in Turkey as a whole that Baron von Marschall felt impelled to call for a disavowal of the annexation even at the risk of dissolving the alliance with Austria, but he was admonished from Berlin to cease all agitation along such lines.⁹

Aehrenthal had foreseen the consequences of his actions, and had already devised a plan with which he hoped to compensate Turkey for the loss of her nominal sovereignty over Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁰ He felt

⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 472.

⁹ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, pp. 99-103.

¹⁰ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 369.

that since the Young Turk government was sorely in need of funds, that a liberal offer of payment in exchange for recognition of the annexation would successfully forestall any foolhardy nationalistic attempt to regain the lost provinces. He therefore offered the Turkish government from two to three million Turkish pounds in January, 1909.¹¹ Aehrenthal planned to meet the expense of the bribe by exploiting the woods and forests of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He further planned to make these payments only if the Turkish government consented to lift the boycott against Austrian commodities.¹² Thus, he hoped to make his illegal gains pay for themselves in the form of increased Austrian trade and on February 26, 1909, the Turkish government accepted the Austrian offer, and published a protocol which transferred the sovereign rights over Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria. The Austrian government then paid Turkey two and one half million Turkish pounds for the loss of crown property.¹³ This success in buying off the opposition of Turkey to the annexation belongs mainly to the German and Austrian diplomats in Constantinople, who constantly applied all diplomatic pressure possible to insure a quick solution of the problem.¹⁴ They hoped to smooth matters over as rapidly as possible in order to forestall the diplomatic recovery of Great Britain, whose consuls had been quick to fill the gap created by the unpopularity of the Central Powers in the Ottoman Empire immediately after the annexation.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 704.

¹² Baernreither, op. cit., pp. 69-71.

¹³ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, pp. 886-890.

¹⁴ Offers proposing that Austria take over part of the Turkish national debt had been made as early as November 2, 1908. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 369.

¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 713.

The acceptance of financial compensation by the Turkish government not only solved the sharp issues between Turkey and the Central Powers, but it also had important consequences for the other Balkan country most directly concerned with the annexation of the two provinces, that is, with Serbia.¹⁶ The Turkish action only served to further incense the Serbians since they had counted heavily on Turkish support in their demands for a conference to discuss the whole Balkan situation, and especially the matter of the annexation.¹⁷

Faced with the steady refusal of Aehrenthal to discuss the annexation at any conference, the Serbians likewise got no strong support from their Russian ally despite Izvolsky's promises during the winter months of 1908-1909 were of little help to the Serbians at best. He found himself in an increasingly delicate if not impossible situation, for although he made definite promises to the Serbian Foreign Office that Russia would support its claims for a conference, his prime minister, Peter Stolypin, ordered him not to take any action that might lead to hostilities. As a result, Izvolsky's promouncements to Serbia and to diplomatic Europe as a whole varied with his personal influence in the ruling circles in St. Petersburg. To further complicate matters Tsar Nicholas II frequently changed his mind as to what course Russian foreign policy should chart.¹⁸

Whereas Russian policy toward Serbia during the crisis was somewhat hesitant at times, the Austrian Foreign Office which had so carefully planned its strategy foresaw the unrest which would inevitably result in

¹⁶ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, pp. 454-473.

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, pp. 480-488.

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, pp. 587-665.

Serbia, and Aehrenthal moved quickly to crush the anti-Austrian agitation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Imperial control over the two provinces became all the more repressive and wholesale arrests of agitators and suspected traitors were carried out. Newspapers were severely censored and the police replaced all local authorities.¹⁹

The Austrian military party was strongly in favor of declaring war on Serbia, feeling that such a conflict could be localized without involving any other nation except the two participants.²⁰ This group had its counterpart in Germany, and on November 30, 1908, Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter, State Secretary, informed Szögyeny that perhaps a partial Austrian mobilization order would tend to quiet agitation in Russia, Serbia, and Turkey.²¹ Early in December, 1908, Conrad von Hoetzendorf, chief of staff, actually carried out "brown" mobilization. This meant calling up the last two classes of reservists and putting them on a war footing. This action by Austria might have precipitated a conflict but for the fact that the Russian government advised Serbia to submit for the present.²² Probably the basic reasons for the Russian advice to Serbia to soft pedal her actions were the political, economic, and military conditions in Russia at the time. The army had not sufficiently recovered from the Russo-Japanese War just three years earlier, the government was attempting fundamental constitutional, agrarian, educational, and labor reforms, and there was widespread dissatisfaction among the great mass of Russian people

¹⁹ Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 384-385.

²⁰ Redlich, op. cit., p. 432.

²¹ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 530.

²² Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 386-387.

over land, food, and working conditions. In view of these circumstances, the only logical course open to Russia was to postpone as long as she could the day when armed conflict would involve her with the Central Powers.

Emperor Francis Joseph's message to the Tsar at this time indicated that his country too, was divided on the advisability of immediate warfare. The Emperor reviewed the controversy over the annexation expressing the belief that his government's policy of maintaining a steadfast course had prevented war in the Balkans. He insisted that Austria did not want to take any action that would be antagonistic to Russia.²³

Following the Turkish acquiescence to Austrian action late in February, 1909, the intensity of feeling against Austria steadily mounted in Serbia and the international situation became so tense in early March, 1909, that Germany offered Russia a formula on the fourteenth to reconcile the dispute between Aehrenthal and Izvolsky over the question of the convention of an international conference.²⁴ The Germans proposed that the matter could be resolved by an exchange of notes between the powers giving their consent to the Austro-Turkish note of February 26, 1909, transferring the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this way, the violation of the Treaty of Berlin would be legalized by all the signatory powers without a conference. If Austria were to dispatch communications asking for approval in the various capitals for her action, a means of saving face for the Russians would have been devised. The sine qua non of the German proposal, however, was the demand that Russia agree beforehand that she would give

²³ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. I, p. 556.

²⁴ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 669.

her approval of the Austrian note.²⁵

When Bülow learned on March 21 of the "yellow" mobilization order of Austrian troops beginning on March 15,²⁶ he immediately asked St. Petersburg for a definite answer to the German proposals of March 14 providing for a solution to the crisis.²⁷ Russia quickly accepted the German proposals the next day and the Tsar expressed his thanks for the German formula since it permitted a settlement of the trying without a resort to arms.²⁸

With the defection of Russia, Serbia was left without an ally, and faced a rapidly mobilizing Austrian army. To make the pill she was forced to take even more bitter, Aehrenthal announced that he would approve of the German peace formula only if Serbia would formally declare that the annexation had not infringed upon her rights. Furthermore, Serbia was to cease all agitation and protestation against Austria.²⁹ With no course open to her except national suicide, Serbia gave up the struggle on March 31, 1909, by complying in full with Aehrenthal's desires and her minister to Vienna delivered a note which declared that the annexation had not infringed upon her rights and that all anti-Austrian propaganda would be

²⁵ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 670.

²⁶ This meant calling up more troops and sending them secretly to the Serbian frontier. It signified a victory for the Austrian militarists who were now arguing that this was the time to crush Serbia while Russia was still weak, Turkey satisfied, and Rumania was still loyal. Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 390.

²⁷ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, pp. 693-695.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, pp. 700-701.

²⁹ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 703.

repressed.³⁰ The Austrian army was soon demobilized and this brought to a close the crisis which had been developing since October 6, 1908.

³⁰ Ibid., Vol. XXVI, pp. 731-732.

CHAPTER VI
REACTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The immediate reaction to the termination of the annexation crisis was evidenced in the expressions of joy in both capitals of the Central Powers and the exchange of best wishes on the part of their monarchs. On April 22, 1909, Emperor Francis Joseph sent a note to Wilhelm II expressing his sincere thanks for the strong support that Germany had given to his country during the recent crisis.¹ In return, the Kaiser paid a personal visit to Vienna on May 14, which marked a high point in the intimacy and close relationship between the two countries. Even before the crisis had resolved itself Wilhelm had congratulated Aehrenthal for renovating the prestige of the Dual Monarchy and instilling new life into the army.² Although the sentiment expressed in the diplomatic messages between the respective leaders of the two countries accurately reflected the opinions of the top officials, the reaction of the man-in-the-street and the press was of greater variance. The population of the Austro-Hungarian Empire appreciated the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina since it elevated the prestige of their country.³

The reaction in Germany was quite different from the very onset of the crisis. The German press continually attacked the foreign policy of Bülow and the Kaiser for not giving Austrian officials better advice in the first place and for following a policy that was causing the gulf between Russia and Germany to steadily widen.⁴ The chauvinists on the other

¹ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. II, p. 858.

² Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 244.

³ Nintchitch, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 224.

⁴ Carroll, op. cit., pp. 593-612.

hand loudly praised the Austrian move since it had increased the standing of the Central Powers and heartily concurred in the statements of Bülow, who wrote that the great lesson of the Bosnian Crisis had been that Germany's great continental power had destroyed the encirclement tactics of King Edward VII of England.⁵ With Bülow they, in all probability, also felt that relations with Russia had not been impaired, that France had played only a minor role, and that Italy had remained with the Triple Alliance throughout the crisis.⁶ Yet, there were many elements, especially among the intellectuals, who seriously doubted the wisdom of casting aside international treaties in the ruthless manner with which Aehrenthal had abrogated the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin and criticized German support of such actions.

If the reaction both official and unofficial in Germany and Austria was varied, the opinion in the third member of the Triple Alliance was definite and unified. The Italians were highly incensed for several reasons. In the first place, Aehrenthal had violated his pledge to the Italians that if he made any aggressive move in the Balkans some compensation would be given to Italy. Secondly, the Austrian foreign minister had not informed Italy properly of the annexation and had falsely notified Germany that Tittoni had given his consent to the annexation. Thirdly, Aehrenthal's actions during the entire crisis represented a singular disregard for the Italian state, and he had often described it as being the weakest of the great powers.⁷

⁵ Bernhard von Bülow, Deutsche Politik. (Berlin: Verlag Reimar Hobbing, 1916), pp. 60-63.

⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

⁷ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. II, p. 1735.

In June, 1909, von Jagow, the German ambassador to Rome, reported that the Bosnian Crisis had reawakened the old Italian fears and traditional hatred for Austria which had been somewhat dissipated during recent years. He even expressed fear of an Austro-Italian conflict and the possibility of a general European war.⁸

Whereas the reaction in the countries of the Triple Alliance differed in kind, the opinion in the Triple Entente varied only in degree. The mildest reaction to the policies of the Central Powers in the Balkans came from France since she was not directly involved in the disputed area. Moreover, despite the Alsace-Lorraine problem, Franco-German relations were on a comparatively amicable level at this time.⁹ France's neighbor across the channel, Great Britain, however, was only further antagonized against the Central Powers since she regarded any move in the Balkans as a threat to her lifeline in the Near East to India. In addition, she was becoming more and more sensitive over the comments in the German press concerning British leaders and Germany's maritime and diplomatic policy in general.

To compensate for the lack of violent reaction in the two Western Powers of the Triple Entente, the feeling in Russia was all the more intense. Although Emperor Francis Joseph and Nicholas II exchanged notes of a very friendly nature on April 24, 1909, this did not represent a rapprochement between Austria and Russia.¹⁰

⁸ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, pp. 819-822.

⁹ This was occasioned by the settlement of the dispute over commercial rights in Casablanca between the two countries. Wilhelm had declared that he was ready to shake hands over the matter so that he could devote full attention to the Bosnian situation. The good feeling between the two nations was highlighted when the Kaiser bestowed the Order of the Red Eagle upon the French ambassador to Berlin.

¹⁰ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik, Vol. II, pp. 1564, 1584.

The personal bitterness of Izvolsky toward Aehrenthal was no more hostile than the sentiment of most Russians against Austria-Hungary for seizing absolute control over the destinies of the Slavic peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Izvolsky expressed his fears to Pourtales, the German ambassador to St. Petersburg, that perhaps Austria-Hungary's push into the Balkans might continue and that, therefore, Russia must look to her alliances for security.¹¹ Russia would have Germany force Austria-Hungary to forego any further extension of her power in the Near East.¹² The German ambassador was aware that with British-Russian relations becoming more amicable and Franco-Russian understanding now operating on a firm basis, in time, Russia would possibly assume an aggressive attitude toward Austria which might erupt into open warfare.¹³ The significance of the crisis for the Triple Entente was that it brought about a realization of the importance of developing stronger military forces in order to rectify its unfavorable diplomatic position to which it had been relegated by the military preponderance of the Central Powers during the recent months. As a report from a German military attache in St. Petersburg on May 29, 1909 stated, the essence of the policy of the Tsarist government could be formulated in the question: "How long will Russia go out of her way to avoid war?"¹⁴

Austria's actions had caused all the Balkan countries to draw closer together for security against any further moves of the Dual Monarchy. The

¹¹ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 812.

¹² Ibid., Vol. XXVI, pp. 804-808.

¹³ Nintchitch, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 211-212.

¹⁴ Die Grosse Politik, Vol. XXVI, p. 805.

fears of further Austro-Hungarian action were now obviously well founded and prevented Aehrenthal from establishing normal relations with the Balkan countries as rapidly as he desired. As bitter as Russia's response to the annexation was that of Serbia where the government found it impossible to live up to its agreement to stop all anti-Austrian agitation. Aehrenthal's hopes of playing Bulgaria off against Russia as a buffer state failed as the Bulgars for some time distrusted the Austrians and drew closer to Serbia.¹⁵

In general then although the Central Powers did carry the day and win greater recognition of their role in world affairs from the diplomatic triumph in the Bosnian Crisis, the effects of the annexation in a large measure counterbalanced whatever immediate gains they may have made. The needlessly callous treatment of Italy by Austria during the crisis played a major role in swinging Italian public opinion away from the Triple Alliance toward the Triple Entente. This was revealed only a few months after the denouement of the crisis when Italy and Russia came to an agreement at Racconigi in October, 1909, which pledged each nation to maintain the status quo in the Balkans.¹⁶

Furthermore, Aehrenthal's duplicity in his relations with Izvolsky and the strong German support given to Austrian policy in the Balkans dealt a severe blow to whatever hopes the Germans may have had of maintaining friendly relations with Russia. This meant that the encirclement of Germany had not been weakened but that on the contrary it had been strengthened, since Russia drew closer to France and England and coordi-

¹⁵ Nintchitch, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 228.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 238-239.

nated strategic plans with her allies which also hastened her military reorganization.¹⁷

The final result of Austrian diplomacy was not one of increased prestige throughout the world, but one of growing distrust of Viennese policy and a general condemnation of her tactics in most European capitals. Although this revulsion of feeling against Austria would probably have been much stronger if she had fought a preventive war against Serbia in 1908 or 1909, the brusque methods employed by Aehrenthal certainly did not redound to the benefit of the Dual Monarchy. The annexation even failed to solve two of the most pressing problems which faced the Empire, itself. The fact that the two provinces were to be administered by a joint bureaucracy meant that no real reform transformations would in all probability be introduced due to the attitude of the Hungarians toward minority peoples. Moreover, the reaction of the embittered Serbians and other Balkan peoples likewise seriously hampered Austrian plans for commercial development in the Near East.

The decline of Austrian and German prestige in the Balkans as a whole was never fully recovered, even though the immediate reactions of Bulgaria and Turkey were, for the most part, overcome by the support given to these countries in the first and second Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913. The stronger Russia's army became during the intervening years before World War I, the more Bulgaria and Turkey looked to the Central Powers for protection since both nations would be in the path of any Russian move to control the Straits.¹⁸

¹⁷ Nintchitch, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 303-304.

¹⁸ Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 440-455.

For the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the other hand, the transfer of their sovereignty from Turkey to Austria-Hungary meant practically no change in their dispositions. The constitution proposed by Baron Burian was cast aside on the grounds that the Serbian agitation across the borders of the two provinces would make the granting of political power even on a local level too dangerous to contemplate. If anything, the conditions of the people worsened as the Austrian police kept an iron hand over the activities of the populace.¹⁹

The annexation and the crisis which followed caused the lines of European diplomacy to be drawn more clearly, intensified the animosities between the networks of alliances, heightened the tension in Europe, and speeded the rate of military preparations and training for the conflict which appeared to be coming nearer and nearer.

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