THE "INQUIRY" AND AMERICAN RESEARCH ON THE BALKAN BORDERS (1918)

CONSTANTIN ARDELEANU
(Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest)

This paper examines the work of the American "Inquiry" during World War I, focusing on its research and recommendations concerning the postwar borders of the Balkan states, with a special focus on the Romanian-Bulgarian boundary in the region of Dobrudja. Based on materials from the Yale Inquiry Papers – an archival collection that includes draft reports and internal documents – the study reconstructs the biographies and views of key members of the Balkan study committee (Clive Day, William S. Monroe, Albert Sonnichsen, and William S. Ferguson, among others). The paper highlights the diverse and often conflicting perspectives within the committee, shaped by personal biases and varying degrees of familiarity with the region. Through an analysis of internal reports, especially those authored by Day and Monroe, the article details the competing ethnic, economic, and strategic arguments that informed American proposals for the postwar peace settlement. An appendix includes a full transcript of one of Clive Day's reports on Dobrudja.

Keywords: Dobrudja, Romania, Bulgaria, Balkans, American "Inquiry", World War I.

This paper is based on preliminary research in the Yale Inquiry Papers, an amalgamation of documents dealing with the activity of the American commission that, in the final years of World War I, prepared maps, reports and recommendations to help US diplomats at the coming peace conference.[1] The Yale Inquiry Papers consist largely of duplicate material of the more complete 'original' collection housed in the National Archives' repositories in Washington DC.[2] However, as the Yale collection includes draft materials from among Clive Day's documents, it also allows historians to better understand the academic process that resulted in the production of the final reports used in Paris, in 1919, by the American Commission to Negotiate Peace.

Starting from several reports from the Yale Inquiry Papers, this article will provide some biographical information on the members of the study committee for the Balkans assembled to work as part of the Inquiry, as well as to detail their views on the postwar borders of Balkan states. Special emphasis is given to the

[1] Description of *The Inquiry Papers* collection, online at https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/12/resources/4421 (accessed on 22 October 2023).

[2] See *Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. Inventory of Record Group 256*, compiled by Sandra K. Rangel, Washington, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1974, online at https://www.archives.gov/files/research/foreign-policy/related-records/rg-256-inventory.pdf (accessed on 22 October 2023).

Romanian – Bulgarian boundary in the region of Dobrudja, one of the thorniest issues for American researchers and statesmen alike. The appendix makes one of the reports on Dobrudja available to all interested scholars.

THE STUDY COMMITTEE FOR THE BALKANS

By 1917, allied governments started to invest additional resources not only to win the war, but also to prepare for winning the coming peace. With nationalism as the driving force of a global war, knowledge about the history, literature, economic relations or political aspirations of belligerent nations around the globe was regarded as essential in galvanizing their support both during the conflict and at its end. By late 1917, academic centers for producing expert knowledge needed for the coming peace congress were fully functional in France, Great Britain and the United States. Governments recruited some of their most eminent scholars, who were invited to collect, organize and synthesize critical information into handbooks for the confidential use of their diplomats. Each of these scholarly groups relied on vast networks of experts and had access to some of the best research resources available in those times.[3]

The American team, the Inquiry as it came to be known, worked in the reading rooms of the New York Public Library under the academic supervision of philosopher Sidney Edward Mezes (1863–1931). The team later moved to the offices of the American Geographical Society and worked under the coordination of geographer Isaiah Bowman (1878–1950).[4] The group divided its activity into five fields of analysis, representative for an internationalist approach to the new world order: the powers (friends, enemies, neutrals); debatable areas and unfortunate peoples (from Alsace-Lorraine to the Jews and the nationalities of Eastern Europe); international business; international law; and international cooperation.[5]

The Balkan Peninsula was such a 'debatable area' inhabited by 'unfortunate peoples' and several experts were appointed to study the region's complex historical disputes and propose solutions as to its future organization. The study committee for the Balkans was led by historian Clive Day (1871–1951).[6] He had studied in Berlin

[3] See for instance Lawrence Emerson Gelfand, *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917–1919*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963, and Olivier Lowczyk, *La fabrique de la paix: du Comité d'études à la Conférence de la Paix, l'élaboration par la France des traités de la Première Guerre Mondiale*, Paris, Economica. Institut de Stratégie comparée, 2010.

[4] Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 2003, p. 113–138.

[5] Gelfand, *The Inquiry*, p. 347.

[6] *Ibid*., p. 58–60. References to the Austro-Hungarian and Balkan study groups in Tibor Glant, 'The Inquiry and the Paris Peace Conference: American Preparations for Peace and the Future of Hungary, 1917–1920,' in *Minority Protection. Joint Special Issue of the Institute for the Protection of Minority Rights and the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University*, Budapest, Institute for the Protection of Minority Rights, 2020, p. 85–124, here 94–98.

and Paris and got a PhD in Yale in 1899. When he joined the Inquiry, Day was Professor of Economic History at Yale, and his special assignments emphasized commercial relations in Europe.[7] In this capacity, he authored reports on the organization of the Austro-Hungarian economy or the commercial relations of imperial Russia, Austria-Hungary, Bohemia, Poland or Galicia.[8]

Day's team consisted of several scholars who had some form of direct knowledge of South-East Europe. Three of them seem to have shaped the early priorities of the study committee: William (Will) S. Monroe, Albert Sonnichsen and William S. Ferguson. I will briefly introduce them in the next paragraphs.

William S. Monroe (1863–1939) was an expert in Education who taught at the College of Montclair in New Jersey, an institution where he also served as director. Monroe was a graduate of Stanford University and he had also studied in Leipzig, Jena, Paris or Grenoble. He spent some time as visiting professor at institutions in the US, but also in Prague, Sofia and the Middle East. Monroe published two travelogues about his stays in the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria,[9] which turned him into an authority in Balkan history and politics. In the study committee for the Balkans, Monroe was the leading expert on Bulgaria and he authored several reports on its boundaries, past, present and future.[10]

Albert Sonnichsen (1878–1931) was a journalist, writer and adventurer who had travelled widely to report to the American public on the world's various conflicts. By early twentieth century he got to the Balkans, where he became supportive of the Bulgarian revolutionaries' cause. This resulted in the publication of a volume entitled *Confessions of a Macedonian Bandit* (New York, Duffield & Company, 1909). When he joined the Inquiry, Sonnichsen was working for the US immigration office, vetting Slavic immigrants arriving to America. In Day's team, his main works concerned the Macedonian question.[11]

William S. Ferguson (1875–1954) was a Canadian-born scholar. He had a PhD from Cornell University (1899), and he later studied or taught in Germany and in Greece (1913–1914). Although his main academic interests touched on Classical History (he would later be Professor of Ancient History at Harvard University), Ferguson was recruited to provide expertise on modern Greek history and politics.[12]

[7] *Obituary Record of Graduates of the Undergraduate Schools Deceased during the Year 1951–1952*, New Haven, Yale University, 1969, 10–11, online at http://mssa.library.yale.edu/obituary_record/1925_1952/1951-52.pdf (accessed on 23 October 2023).

[8] *Records of the American Commission*, p. 36, 41, 71, 76.

[9] W.S. Monroe, *Turkey and the Turks; an Account of the Lands, the Peoples, and the Institutions of the Ottoman Empire*, Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1907, and *Bulgaria and Her People, with an Account of the Balkan Wars, Macedonia, and the Macedonian Bulgars*, Boston: Page Co., 1914.

[10] Frank M. Cordasco, 'Will S. Monroe (1863–1939): The First Professor of Education at Montclair,' *Peabody Journal of Education*, 42, 1, 1964, p. 32–34.

[11] See biographical details in the description of the Albert Sonnichsen Papers preserved at the New York Public Library, https://archives.nypl.org/mss/2817, accessed on 23 October 2023.

[12] Gelfand, *The Inquiry*, p. 59–60.

Other members of the Balkan study committee included Paul Monroe (1869–1947), George Rapall Noyes (1873–1952), Leon Dominian (1880–1935) and Max Sylvius Handman (1885–1939), each of them tasked to cover a certain question, nation or state. Handman, for instance, was a Romanian-born American citizen, who migrated to the US in the early twentieth century. He had studied in several American and European universities (including in Paris and Berlin) and received a PhD from the University of Chicago. When he joined the Inquiry, he was teaching Sociology at the University of Texas and his special assignments concerned Romania.[13]

The team was eclectic, and working together proved very challenging. Members were selected based on their knowledge of South-East Europe, provable by their residence in at least one Balkan country, their knowledge of local languages and publication of scholarly texts relevant for the history and current situation of the Balkans. However, their expertise was oftentimes disputed and subjective. Dominian, for instance, was constantly assailed by colleagues who complained of his pro-Greek bias.[14] W.S. Monroe was well-known for his philo-Bulgarian views. His book, taken by many as an authority on Bulgarian issues, was full of anti-Greek clichés, with the Greeks portrayed as 'perfidious, and thieves.'[15] The main idea of the study committee was to look at the Balkans from all these various perspectives, and thus get to less-prejudiced and hopefully more objective conclusions.

The study committee was in contact with other experts in Balkan history and politics. In the documents I analyzed, three authors seem to be considered as leading authorities in connection with the Bulgarian – Romanian border: James David Bourchier (1850–1920), Jacob Gould Schurman [sometimes spelled Shurman] (1854–1942) and John Campbell White (1884–1967).

An Irish journalist and political activist, Bourchier was another famous philo-Bulgarian. He had long lived in Sofia and was extremely influential in the Anglo-Saxon world. His articles and his extensive relations were sympathetic for Bulgaria and the Bulgarians, and Bourchier tried to use his influence to support the Bulgarian cause at the coming peace conference. The Inquiry's archives refer to a couple of his letters and recommendations.[16]

Schurman was a Canadian-born American scholar and diplomat, with a respected career as a Professor of Literature and Philosophy at Cornell University, where he served as President since 1892. Schurman was US ambassador to Greece in 1912–1913, and his knowledge of Balkan politics made him extremely well placed to provide such expertise.[17]

[13] *Ibid*., p. 58–59.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 60.

[15] N.J. Cassavety, 'Bulgaria's Case: A Reply to Professor R.A. Tsanoff', *The Journal of Race Development* 9, 1918, 2, p. 145–156.

[16] *Balkan Peninsula*; (a) Letter from J.D. Bourchier to Will S. Monroe on Ethnic Frontiers; (b) Memorandum from R.H. Markham to J.D. Bourchier on Political Situation in Bulgaria. By Will S. Monroe. 12 June 1918. References to the former in Monroe, *Balkan Peninsula*, part IV, Proposed Balkan Frontiers, 1 March 1918, 80–84 in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8.

[17] J.G. Shurman, *Some Notes on Balkan Problems*, 31 December 1917.

White came from a diplomatic background and was a busy student of South-East European politics. The Yale Papers include several of his letters to the Inquiry with his thoughts on the past and future of the Balkans. His recommendations rested on long-term historical evolutions in the region, given that 'Balkan empires have been mostly ephemeral creations. Alexander's Empire was the expression of his own genius and Greek civilization; the mediaeval Bulgar and Serb Empires were unable to preserve their extent for more than two or three generations. The Byzantine Empire was a civilization, a city, and an administrative organization. It fought and controlled varying portions of the Peninsula, but its roots were never grounded there. On the other hand, the Balkans have served as the high road for the Turkish pressure towards the west, even as the Teutons now regard them as the high road to the east. In view of this fact a balance of power within the Balkans is peculiarly liable to be upset by pressure from without.'[18] Thus, as he concluded in a Memorandum sent to the Inquiry in early 1918, 'any Balkan settlement must do a certain amount of violence to ethnic considerations.'[19]

The study committee relied on many other pieces authored by academic collaborators based in the US or in allied states in Europe. Serbian geographer and ethnologist Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927) was extremely influential in relation to Serbia's national aspirations,[20] whereas the international status of the Danube was minutely analyzed by legal expert Joseph Perkins Chamberlain (1873–1951) or Orientalist Louis Herbert Gray (1875–1955).[21] Exchanges with British scholars to the likes of Colonel Sir Thomas Hungerford Holdich (1843–1929) at the Royal Geographical Society or with the historians associated with the Department of Political Intelligence of the British Foreign Office provided Day's team with the Britons' views on the Balkans' past and present.[22]

PROPOSED BALKAN BOUNDARIES

As Victor S. Mamatey clearly showed in his article, the American Government looked closely at Balkan politics during World War I. Their sympathy with Bulgaria had some strategic underpinnings, as Sofia was viewed as 'the weakest link in the chain of Germany's allies whose removal from the Central Alliance might expedite victory.'[23] Already in late 1917, President Woodrow

[18] J.C. White, *Memorandum on the Balkan Question*, 1, in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8.

[19] White to Colonel House, Washington, 15 January 1918, in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8.

[20] See Jeremy W. Crampton, 'The Cartographic Calculation of Space: Race Mapping and the Balkans at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919', *Social & Cultural Geography* 7, 5, 2006, p. 731–752.

[21] Constantin Ardeleanu, *The European Commission of the Danube, 1856–1948: an Experiment in International Administration*, Leiden – Boston, Brill, 2020, p. 1–8.

[22] See the list of documents in *Records of the American Commission*, p. 43–51.

[23] Victor S. Mamatey, 'The United States and Bulgaria in World War I', *The American Slavic and East European Review* 12, 1953, 2, p. 233.

Wilson (1856–1924) received some 'broad considerations' from his advisers that concerned five main issues with the future of the Balkan borders: 1) Southern Dobrudja was 'almost wholly Bulgarian in character, and should be returned' to Bulgaria; 2) the Ottoman – Bulgarian boundary should follow a slightly improved version of the Enos – Midia line, as proposed in 1913; 3) Bulgaria's southern boundary should stretch from Enos to the Gulf of Orfano (or Strymonian Gulf) along the Aegean coast; 4) The best way of securing Serbian access to the sea was through Thessaloniki, which would acquire some form of international control, to also guarantee the rights of ethnic minorities in Macedonia; 5) Independent Albania was 'almost certainly an undesirable political entity', and its territory was to be partitioned between Serbia and Greece.[24]

Slight variations of these five issues stood at the basis of the Inquiry's research of the Balkans in 1918. Several documents drafted by Clive Day directed the study committee towards these problems.[25] The second edition of Day's summary report already included some interesting preliminary remarks on how the American scholars based their recommendations. As recent conflicts in the Balkans had completely changed the 'racial (ethnic) distribution of peoples' in some of the highly contested areas as Macedonia, the Aegean Littoral and the Dobrudja, in their reports the American experts disregarded, in most instances, racial reasons for boundary changes, so that 'only economic, geographic and political factors remain.'[26]

The five important issues that the study committee analyzed in detail concerned: 1) Dobrudja; 2) Constantinople and the Straits; 3) the Greek – Bulgarian boundary; 4) Southern Albania; and 5) Northern Albania. For each of them, they also prepared maps (two for the southern Albanian question and a block diagram for Constantinople). Before moving on to detail the recommendations for Dobrudja, I will briefly refer to the American views on the other four sensitive points. The issue of Constantinople and the Straits was a combination of the point on the Ottoman – Bulgarian boundary and the future status of the Ottoman capital, given current opinions to have it organized as a 'neutralized state', 'under international supervision, with frontiers which need not be drawn according to military considerations.' The boundary between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire was to follow the Midia – Enos line, leaving the Adrianople region to Bulgaria: 'Adrianople economically belongs with Bulgaria, as history has shown, since the city declined when cut off from it.' As for the international state, it needed some more crucial infrastructure, such as waterworks to provide the population with drinkable water. The Greek – Bulgarian boundary was to run along a rough and thinly inhabited mountain crest, leaving the entire basin of the lower Struma River as an economic unit to Bulgaria. Greece was granted some good military positions

[24] *Ibid*.: 240, note 29.

[25] C[live] D[ay], *Preliminary Report on the Balkan Boundaries*, undated, in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8.

[26] Clive Day, *Boundaries in the Balkans*, 2nd ed., undated, 1, in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8.

to secure the defense of Thessaloniki, which could be granted to Greece, but under international control. The Southern Albanian issue concerned disputes between Greece and Albania. Again, 'economic unit' appears as a keyword, and given the poor transportation infrastructure of the region 'partition of this unified territory is inadmissible'. The Northern Albanian issue (the border with Montenegro) was as complicated, and the report refers to the non-divisibility of tribal lands beyond some other religious considerations.[27]

THE ROMANIAN – BULGARIAN BOUNDARY IN DOBRUDJA

The future of Dobrudja was one of the most complex issues and the Inquiry produced several reports on the Romanian – Bulgarian border in that region. Besides Day, W.S. Monroe played a central role in this. Monroe authored a report on the 'Acquisition of Balkan States at the end of the Second Balkan War', one on 'Balkan Peninsula Religious toleration; Effect of the stipulation of the Treaty of Berlin in Serbia, Montenegro, and Rumania that religion should be free'[28] and several special reports on Dobrudja.

In the more general report on the *Boundaries in the Balkans* coordinated by Clive Day, the author made ample references to the making of the Romanian – Bulgarian border in 1878, when Russian support secured Bulgaria with an advantageous position at Silistra. The 'principle of the straight line' was followed towards the Black Sea, but with a couple of divergences, 'apparently for unimportant topographical reasons.' The 1878 boundary, Day considered, posed some difficulties, including from an ethnic perspective, 'but according to the showing of most authorities, it conforms approximately to such an ethnic separation.' Day then detailed the disputes that led, in 1913, to Romania's participation to the Second Balkan War and the conclusion of the Treaty of Bucharest. The new border was, for the American historian, a bad one. It ran 'within 24 miles of Ruschuk and 12 of Varna, transferring 3,000 square miles of territory and a population of 247,000, among whom were 134,000 Bulgarians and 6,000 Rumanians.' As bad was the Treaty of Bucharest in 1918, which 'imposed upon Romania a frontier which ran within five miles of both Constantza and Chernavoda, and transferred to Bulgaria, by comparison with the line of the Treaty of Berlin, about 900 square miles of territory with a population of about 80,000 among whom were three or four times as many Rumanians as Bulgarians.' Day's conclusion was clear: 'The frontiers of 1913 and 1918 may be discarded, as not resting in either case upon the willing consent or the balanced advantages of both parties.'[29]

[27] Day, *Boundaries in the Balkans*, 3rd (final) edition, in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8.

[28] Also preserved in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8.

[29] Day, *Boundaries in the Balkans. The Dobruja*, in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8 (see the entire document in the Appendix).

The report continues with discussions on Silistra, which Day believed should remain in Bulgarian territory due to economic and military arguments. 'Silistria does not seriously threaten Rumania, for it has the broad Danube before it, while it is distant fifty miles in a direct line from Chernavoda, with a series of marshy lakes intervening. It has always been a position suited for the defense of the lands at the south and not for attack directed toward the north. In the hands of Rumania, however, it would become a military bridge-head threatening likewise at a distance of fifty miles, but with no special barriers intervening, the railway from Rustchuk to Varna.' Economically, Romania had railway lines going to Oltenița and Călărași, while Bulgaria had none to either Tutrakan or Silistra. Commercially, 'Silistria is the market town for a considerable Bulgarian area, within a radius of twenty or twenty-five miles, from which it should not be separated.' The defense of the Constanța railway was crucial, as it was the 'eastern outlet for the trade and travel of Wallachia. The defense of this railroad is concerned with a possible approach from the frontier due south of it, especially along the line of the new railroad from Varna through Dobritch to Mejidia. Improvement in the military sense can then be obtained by pushing the eastern part of the line of the Treaty of Berlin to the southwestward'.[30]

Day thus suggested 'to remove the western end of the frontier away from Silistria so as to pass through Lake Garlita or even through Lake Oltena. The indentation of the line can be straightened out, and then the east end be swung southward to pass through Lake Kartal, or even to a point near Cape Shabla. These adjustments could be arranged on a basis of equal value of land and equal population. A large part of the population is still Turkish and Tartar, and there are many Bulgarians on the Rumanian side near Silistria; few Romanians, however, dwell on the Bulgarian side south of Mangalia.' An alternative line was that from Popina to Lake Shabla, which would be a good borderline. However, it 'would separate Silistria from a portion of its market territory, and would transfer to Rumania a considerable Bulgarian population'.[31] Thus, Day's recommendations seem rather neutral and based on equitable principles.

In a different paper, Monroe summed up all opinions that had to do with the Dobrudja border. He and several other experts (White, Schurman and Bourchier) are cited as agreeing to the restoration of Southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria. For this he quoted ethnic, economic and historic reasons: '1. Ethnic reasons. (a) The people are Bulgarian, where they are not Turks. (b) There were practically no Rumanians in this part of the Dobrudja before 1913. 2. Economic reasons. (a) The area represents the best developed Bulgarian agricultural lands. (b) Bulgarian labor and capital have brought about this advanced state of agriculture. (c) The farms represent small holdings and not large estates as in Rumania. (d) The loss of the Dobrudja has greatly injured the port of Varna. 3. Historic reasons: Its retrocession

[30] *Ibid*.
[31] *Ibid*.

to Bulgaria "would revive a European decision which ought not to have been set aside by the treaty of Bucharest" (Bourchier). 4. Slight suggested modifications of the line before 1913. (a) Follow the decision of the Conference of Petrograd (March 1913) and award Silistria and a small circumjacent territory to Rumania (Bourchier). (b) Follow the frontier as it existed before 1913 to a point near Garlita and thence through Ostrov to the Danube, restoring to Bulgaria the suburbs of Silistria (Monroe).'[32]

Other scholars also submitted reports on the Romanian – Bulgarian border in the Dobrudja. In an ethnographic survey submitted on 14 March 1918 to the committee on anthropology, Frederick L. Hoffman stressed the strategic importance of the region. The population of Dobrudja 'can hardly be of importance in determining the future political fate of this country, since the mouth of the Danube must necessarily go with the remainder of the drainage basin and apparently, as a matter of right, to Roumania'.[33] William Howell Reed, the author of several reports on various Romanian provinces, argued the same in a document entitled 'The Dobrudja'. Reed showed that Dobrudja and Constanța had proven to be of 'distinct economic value' to Romania, but he also believed that Bulgaria should unquestionably receive Silistra.[34]

ON AMERICAN INFLUENCE IN THE BALKANS

Another interesting element that results from several documents preserved in the Yale Inquiry Papers has to do with the support for the Bulgarian cause shown by several American experts. W.S. Monroe was one of them. He was in contact with several American supporters of Bulgaria and included for the consideration of the Balkan study committee their letters. One of them was a note entitled 'Certain Favourable Features of the Situation in the Balkans' by R.H. Markham, the director of the American School at Samokov.[35]

In one of his reports, Monroe detailed the American influence in the Balkans, which from his personal observation was 'confined to Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania'. This was mainly the result of the role of American schools, such as the American Institute established at Samokov in 1861. 'Large numbers of these young men [graduates of the school] came to America to complete collegiate, technical, and professional courses' and 'many occupy responsible positions in the public

[32] Monroe, *Balkan Peninsula*, part IV. Proposed Balkan Frontiers, 1 March 1918, 80–84 in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8. Also cited in Bernard Cook, 'Wilson's Inquiry Group and the Peace Treaty with Bulgaria', *Macedonian Review* 4, 1999, p. 87–88.

[33] Cook, 'Wilson's Inquiry Group', p. 89–90.

[34] William Howell Reed, *The Dobrudja*, received 16 April 1918; Cook, 'Wilson's Inquiry Group', p. 90.

[35] The context in Cook, 'Wilson's Inquiry Group', p. 86–87.

service of Bulgaria.' The same was true for the American School for Girls at Samokov, deeply involved in education, social and religious issues in Bulgaria. A similar influence was visible in Macedonia, with a school in Monastir, and in Albania, at Korçë and Elbasan. The influence of the Robert College in Istanbul was unquestionable, as 'practically all the first statesmen of the new kingdom of Bulgaria [are] educated at Robert College' and 'many Ambassadors and Consuls to foreign countries [are] Robert College men', as it was also the case for civil servants.[36]

Clear evidence of American influence was, Monroe believed, the extraordinary decrease in illiteracy in Bulgaria. The percentage of illiterate recruits in the Bulgarian army decreased from 90 per cent in 1878 to 5 per cent in 1913. Moreover, the Bulgarians showed a 'greater religious tolerance, as in no country in the Balkans (Albania excepted) do the non-Orthodox peoples enjoy larger measures of religious freedom.' Bulgaria displayed a better development of public works; in agriculture, for instance, American farming implements were used more than in any other Balkan state, whereas the waterworks and railways were developed with the expertise of 'Bulgars educated in American technical schools'. Not least of all, Bulgaria showed a 'larger measure of democracy', given that it was the only Balkan state without 'restrictions on male suffrage' and that it secured a proportional political representation for minorities.[37]

CONCLUSIONS

In line with the recommendations of the Inquiry's study committee for the Balkans, the American diplomats proposed in 1919 that an ethnic border be drawn between Romania and Bulgaria, a compromise between the lines of 1878 and 1913. However, the European victors were less willing to deprive their Romanian ally of a territory it possessed before the war. In the end, Romania received the contested territory in Southern Dobrudja, to the disappointment of the Inquiry's coordinator, Isaiah Bowman, who on 1 December 1919 warned that the Treaty of Neuilly 'guaranteed future war.'[38]

As for the experts themselves, some of them employed their knowledge in future academic projects. Day, for instance, used his South-East European expertise in 1920, when he was invited to teach a course on the *Question of the Balkans* at the recently established 'Institute of International Education' in New

[36] W.S. Monroe to Dr. Bowman and Mr. Lippmann, *American Influence in the Balkans*, in *The Inquiry Papers*, Box 8.

[37] *Ibid*.

[38] See details in Sherman David Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference: A Study of the Diplomacy of Ioan I.C. Bratianu*, New York, Bookman Associates, 1962, and Cook, 'Wilson's Inquiry Group'.

York, an institution that started from the idea that educational exchange would incite increased cooperation between nations.[39] The Preface to Day's course syllabus explained his focus on past historical events, as they 'are still and will doubtless continue to be active factors in making history.' Also, students had access to good historical literature, whereas 'books on questions of the day are more frail in texture, are full of subjective judgments, and are apt to mislead the beginner.'[40]

Appendix

Clive Day, *Boundaries in the Balkans. The Dobruja*

Historical

Silistria and the Dobruja

Silistria is located at one of the limited number of points where the approach of firm ground on the low left bank of the lower Danube toward the high bank makes possible an easy crossing and the building of twin towns. With Ruschuk, Shumla, and Varna, it formed, before 1878, part of the famous defensive 'Turkish quadrilateral,' which several times encountered the shock of Russian invasion. Because of its central position, Silistria had been made chief town of a Turkish vilayet which extended between the Danube and the Balkans from the river Isker to the Black Sea. East and south of Silistria lay the Dobruja, a rolling steppeland, fertile but arid, inhabited in 1878 mainly by Turks and Tartars, with important proportions in some areas of Bulgarians and Rumanians. A large part of the Dobruja was included in the Sanjak of Tulcha, northeast of a line which left the Danube one mile west of Rasova, and pursued an approximately straight course to the Black Sea at a point five miles north of Mangalia. The Turkish government had already permitted the building of railroads between Chernavoda and Constantza, and between Ruschuk and Varna. The former was not connected with Bucharest, but the latter communicated by ferry and railroad through Giurgevo with the Rumanian capital. Both Constantza and Varna were unimproved ports of good possibilities, while Mangalia was distinctly inferior.

Treaty of San Stefano

It was provided in the Treaty of San Stefano (Article VI) that the Sanjak and Tulcha should be detached from the Vilayet of Silistria and given to Rumania in exchange for southern Bessarabia, which was to be ceded to Russia. In the negotiations which led up to the Treaty of Berlin the considerations were advanced that Rumania was not receiving full value in the exchange, which, furthermore,

[39] Chay Brooks, 'The Apostle of Internationalism: Stephen Duggan and the Geopolitics of International Education', *Political Geography* 49, 2015, p. 64–73.

[40] Day, *The Question of the Balkans*, Syllabus No. 5, New York, Institute of International Education, 1920, p. 3.

was being imposed upon her against her will, and that she ought to be able to build a bridge from Calarashi to Silistria as part of a direct road to the sea at Mangalia. Russia, mindful of the strength of the 'quadrilateral,' insisted that Silistria should pass to Bulgaria with the remaining three fortress towns, and also as a trading town for the local population.

Treaty of Berlin

The resulting compromise gave Rumania such a position for a bridge-end as to bring the frontier within eight hundred yards of the limits of Silistria, and so to intercept the main road to Varna and give Rumania the commanding redoubt of Arab Tabia, one mile from the town. The Russian representative on the Boundary Commission refused agreement until in 1880 an adjustment was made which released the Varna road, and the works at Arab Tabia were presently dismantled. The remainder of the frontier was drawn to an agreed point on the Black Sea coast, five miles south of Mangalia, so as to 'hold as nearly as possible to the principle of the straight line.' Nevertheless, two considerable divergences were permitted, apparently for unimportant topographical reasons. Both indentations were in the Rumanian direction, and the larger carried the frontier eight miles toward the Constantza – Chernavoda line, leaving the minimum distance only twenty miles.

1880 to 1912

Some uneasiness between Rumania and Bulgaria persisted until 1885, when the attitude of the former during the Serbo-Bulgarian war led to a state of good feeling, which continued uninterruptedly until 1912. The Turkish and Tartar population on both sides of the line declined slowly, while the Bulgarian and Rumanian proportions increased until they were distinctly dominant in their respective areas. The line is far from demarcating the Bulgarians precisely from the Rumanians, but according to the showing of most authorities, it conforms approximately to such an ethnic separation.

Conference at St. Petersburg, 1913

When, late in 1912, the success of the Balkan Alliance against Turkey promised noteworthy increase of territory to the states south of the Danube, Romania also began to desire enlargement. The only feasible possibility was the pushing of the Dobruja line in the Bulgarian direction. Extremists suggested that the whole 'quadrilateral' be surrendered, which would have taken from Bulgaria an area of about 6,500 square miles, with a population of about 600,000, including her third and fourth cities in size, which are her chief riverain and her chief maritime ports: the problem of defense would also have become very difficult for her. Though exasperated by such claims of extremists, and by the suggestion that Rumania demanded compensation for not attacking Bulgaria when she engaged in

war against Turkey, the Bulgarian government consented to conversation on the subject at St. Petersburg in April and May, 1913, between Bulgarian and Rumanian representatives, with assistance from the ambassadors of six Great Powers. The information at hand indicates that the Bulgarians offered part of the town of Silistria, elimination of the two salients of the line and a removal of its west and southwestward five miles so as to run through Lake Kartal. The Rumanians asked for a line from Popina on the Danube to Cape Kaliakra, though earlier suggestions had included Kavarna and even Balchik. After the Bulgarians had objected on the ground of the defense of Varna, the line proposed by Rumania was carried to a point north of Cape Shabla. The council of ambassadors resolved on May 8 that Silistria and an area extending about three kilometers around its limits should be given to Rumania. It does not appear that more than this was agreed upon, although the Questions Diplomatiques et Coloniales of May 16, 1913, published a statement to the effect that the Rumanian proposal as modified had been signed on May 10.

Lines of 1913 and 1918

Before action had been taken on this basis, the Second Balkan War broke out. Rumania invaded Bulgaria, and at the Peace of Bucharest August 10, 1913, obtained a new frontier, imposed upon Bulgaria, which ran within 24 miles of Ruschuk and 12 of Varna, transferring 3,000 square miles of territory and a population of 247,000, among whom were 134,000 Bulgarians and 6,000 Rumanians. This remained the legal frontier until May 18, 1918, when another treaty of Bucharest imposed upon Romania a frontier which ran within five miles of both Constantza and Chernavoda, and transferred to Bulgaria, by comparison with the line of the Treaty of Berlin, about 900 square miles of territory with a population of about 80,000 among whom were three or four times as many Rumanians as Bulgarians. The remainder of the Rumanian Dobruja was transferred at the same time to the Central Powers, and negotiations were undertaken, though without result, for the acquisition of the whole by Bulgaria. The frontiers of 1913 and 1918 may be discarded, as not resting in either case upon the willing consent or the balanced advantages of both parties.

Discussion

Disposition of Silistria

Two standpoints may be used in considering modifications of the Dobruja boundary, according as it is proposed to proceed on a basis of equality of transfer, or of the cession of some advantages by Bulgaria to Rumania. In favor of the former solution stands the fact of the long period of good relations between the two countries while possessing this common frontier. Rumania has connected Bucharest with Constantza by a railway link and a great bridge at Chernavoda, and has improved the port vastly. In consequence there is no prospect of a bridge at Silistria or a line by this route to Mangalia. Silistria does not seriously threaten

Rumania, for it has the broad Danube before it, while it is distant fifty miles in a direct line from Chernavoda, with a series of marshy lakes intervening. It has always been a position suited for the defense of the lands at the south and not for attack directed toward the north. In the hands of Rumania, however, it would become a military bridge-head threatening likewise at a distance of fifty miles, but with no special barriers intervening, the railway from Rustchuk to Varna. Rumania has lines already to Oltenitza and Calarashi, opposite to Tutrakan and Silistria, while Bulgaria has none to either of the latter points. Economically Silistria is the market town for a considerable Bulgarian area, within a radius of twenty or twenty-five miles, from which it should not be separated.

Defence of Constantza railroad

Undoubtedly the Chernavoda – Constantza railroad is of very great importance to Rumania, though henceforth the centrally located Danubian ports seem likely to have a more rapid development. It will probably always remain the main eastern outlet for the trade and travel of Wallachia. The defense of this railroad is concerned with a possible approach from the frontier due south of it, especially along the line of the new railroad from Varna through Dobritch to Mejidia. Improvement in the military sense can then be obtained by pushing the eastern part of the line of the Treaty of Berlin to the southwestward.

Suggested changes

It might be well to remove the western end of the frontier away from Silistria so as to pass through Lake Garlita or even through Lake Oltena. The indentation of the line can be straightened out, and then the east end be swung southward to pass through Lake Kartal, or even to a point near Cape Shabla. These adjustments could be arranged on a basis of equal value of land and equal population. A large part of the population is still Turkish and Tartar, and there are many Bulgarians on the Rumanian side near Silistria; few Romanians, however, dwell on the Bulgarian side south of Mangalia.

Alternative line at southwest

The principal argument in favor of placing the whole line farther southwest is that the principle of equidistance might well be applied to the defense of the Chernavoda – Constantza and Ruschuk – Varna railways. The modified Rumanian proposal for a line from Popina to Lake Shabla would meet this criterion exactly. Against it may be urged the considerations that it would separate Silistria from a portion of its market territory, and would transfer to Rumania a considerable Bulgarian population.