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# Romanians and Bulgarians at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Political assassinations, border incidents and the attempted anarchist/terrorist plot against King Carol I (1900-1901)

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## Abstract

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At the beginning of 1900, Romanian-Bulgarian relations were very tense, being fuelled by both the incidents at the Southern border and the attacks that took place on the Romanian territory, thus, on the agenda of the Romanian politicians, the problem of the Aromanians from the Balkan Peninsula and Macedonia, the province coveted by Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbs, where comitagii gangs, the antarti and the cetnic fought both for the liberation of the countrymen from Ottoman rule and with the Turkish troops. In this context, assassination came to be used as a weapon against opponents, being present in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. At the end of the 19th century, Romanian society was suddenly awakened to reality, facing the consequences of the barbaric manner in which one of these revolutionary secret committees acted, whose anarchist subcommittee was established in Bucharest – nowadays we frequently use the phrase terrorist cell for something similar. Thus, it received the mission to commit several bombings on the Romanian territory, as well as the assassination of King Carol I and Romanian dignitaries, while, at the Southern border, the Romanian border guards reported daily incidents at the common border whose purpose was to destabilize and maintain a tense state on the conventional demarcation line between Romania and Bulgaria.

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## Keywords:

asymmetric threat; secret committee; nationalist terrorism;  
border incident; political assassination.

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## **Bucharest under the terror of the anarchist group/terrorist cell Supreme Macedonian Revolutionary Committee. The assassination of Cyril G. Fitowski**

The proclamation of the Bulgarian Exarchate, on February 28, 1870, by an order of the Sublime Porte signed by Sultan Abdul-Aziz, spurred the latent aspiration to fulfil the national ideal of the Macedonians, liberation from the Ottoman Empire. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Macedonia, the Ottoman province, had a varied ethnic composition with different religious orientations. However, the Macedonian dioceses joined as a result of a referendum on the Bulgarian Exarchate, which influenced the formation of the first local, revolutionary, militia formations, who fought for freedom and identity against the Turkish occupant. In 1891, in Thessaloniki, a small group of young Macedonian insurgents began organizing paramilitary bands whose merger led to the creation in 1893 in the same city, of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation. Shortly after, inspired by the Macedonian insurgents, in 1895 in Sofia, at the congress organized by several cultural associations, it was decided to establish the Macedonian Supreme Committee, an anarchist terrorist organization, which gradually came under the coordination of Bulgarian military personalities. One of them was General Danail Nikolaev, who fought in the Serb-Turkish war (1876-1877) and then as commander of a company of Bulgarian volunteers in the Russian-Romanian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, distinguished in the battles of Sipka and Sejnovo.

In 1899, the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation decided to work with the Supreme Macedonian Committee in Sofia for a limited period, being appointed to coordinate joint actions, Boris Sarafov. Moreover, it should be noted that starting in 1895, detachments of comitagi from the Macedonian Supreme Committee or national liberation fighters, as they were perceived by Bulgarian society, raided Macedonia alongside members of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation. About the cruelty of these attacks and their atrocities on the poor Greeks and Aromanians in Macedonia, the media of the era reported facts that were also reflected in the diplomatic correspondence in their home states. If initially, the struggle of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization was regarded with sympathy by the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula and not only, at the moment when Bulgarian comitagi began to operate on the territory of the province under Ottoman occupation and the Macedonian Supreme Committee became the platform of Bulgarian government interests in Macedonia, which, under the pretext of liberating the Bulgarian brothers from Ottoman rule, sought and managed, in large part, to diminish the performances of the indigenous Macedonian revolutionary movement, the Bulgarian cause in Macedonia was perceived as a threat to the interests of the Great Powers on the Balkan Peninsula. Bulgaria gradually became a supplier state of instability in the region by supporting anarchist/anarchist attacks/terrorist members of the Macedonian Supreme Committee on the national territory of neighbouring states whose reaction could trigger an armed conflict.

In this context, in the second half of November 1899, a subcommittee/subsidiary/cell of the Macedonian Revolutionary Supreme Committee was established in Bucharest, an anarchist/terrorist group, whose headquarters was, as I mentioned, in Sofia. The Committee's management consisted of Boris Sarafov – President, D. Davidov - vice president, Vladimir Covacev – secretary and George Petrov – cashier. The main purpose of this organization was to obtain by revolutionary means the autonomy of Macedonia and its adherence to the Bulgarian Principality, which is why the members of this committee used propaganda not only in Bulgaria but also among the Bulgarians who emigrated to other countries and gathered the money contributions to maintain turmoil and prepare the revolution. In Bucharest, the Committee was led by Alexandru Trifanov and consisted of members such as Nicola Bogdanov called Hagi, Anghel Pop Arsov and Marcu Bosniacov. Soon the group was completed with students George Theodorov, Cristu Carambulev, Coti Zafirov and Traiciu Zvetcov. All of them swore an oath on a dagger and revolver. The founding of the cell in Bucharest in December 1899 was attended by the Committee chairman Boris Sarafov Sarafov ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

Almost two months after its establishment, the members of the anarchist cell in Bucharest received a first mission: the assassination of the Bulgarian Cyril G. Fitowski (Adevărul 1900) accused of treason, as he was considered a Turkish spy. On the evening of February 1, 1900, Cyril G. Fitowski was killed on Ceaus Radu Street. According to the indictment drawn up by the first prosecutor of the Ilfov Tribunal, Emil Miclescu, „commissar of the 41st section was notified that, in the house at no. 2, located in Ceaus-Radu Street, the building belonging to Adolf Solomon, was found near the pavement, a man badly hit and in insensibility. The judicial authorities at the scene found that the unknown near which was also a thrown axe, had already ceased from life and that, no doubt, a murder had been committed” ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

The main suspects of the crime were immediately identified, namely the members of the Macedonian Committee: Boiciu Iliev, Alexandru Trifanov, Nicola Mitev, Mitu Stoicev, Cristu Carambulev, George Theodorov, Marcu Ivan Bosniacov, and others, Anghel Pop Arsov, Traiciu Svetkov, Coti Zafirov or Zamfirov. Accomplices or, according to the indictment, provocative agents were identified the following: Boris Sarafov, Vladimir Kovachev, Gheorghe Petrov and D. Davidov ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

The investigation established that there were several people sent from Sofia: the named Boiciu Iliev, with the duty to commit the crime, Nicola Mitev – the coordinator of the murder of Cyril G. Fitowski - and Mitu Stoicev. They were helped in order for the mission to be carried out in good conditions by Cristu Carambulev, Marcu Bosniacov and student George Theodorov ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

From the hearings that took place during the investigation, the scenario of the assassination emerged. The crime was prepared in Sofia by the members of the

Macedonian Supreme Committee, for which, in mid-January 1900, Nicola Mitev was summoned to the chancellery of the Committee, where Boris Sarafov brought to his attention the suspicions of espionage that appealed to Fitowski, as well as the death sentence pronounced by him and his companions. Boiciu Iliev received the special mission to assassinate Fitowski with the axe, Nicola Mitev and Mitu Stoicev were only supposed to assist the former, and, if Iliev failed to kill him, one of the two men had to intervene to take the life of the spy who, as Sarafov claimed, had claimed, he betrayed the Turks in 1897, the location of a secret weapons depot in Vinita, Macedonia. In addition to the axe, the group assigned to carry out the assassination received another dagger, two revolvers and 150 lei ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

On January 25, 1900, Mitu Stoicev, Boiciu Iliev and Nicola Mitev entered Romania through the port of Giurgiu ([Dreptul Magazine 1900](#)). The days of January 29 and 30, 1900, were exclusively dedicated to identifying and finding the most favourable place to commit the crime, following that, on January 31, 1900, a meeting took place in Trifanov's house to discuss and establish the last details of the execution plan. In short, for the evening of February 1, 1900, it was decided that Trifanov would leave the cafe Iosef (Calea Dudesti), arm in arm with Fitowski, and under the pretext of a walk on the streets of Bucharest, to lead him to a dark, back alley where every participant in the assassination knew very well what to do. Therefore, on the evening of February 1st, 1900, Chiril G Fitowski collapsed on the Ceaus-Radu street under repeated axe blows by Boiciu, applied from behind with so much skill and power that the victim could not even scream for help ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

Who was Cyril G. Fitowski? A supporter and devotee of the Bulgarian cause in Macedonia. He defected from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Rusciuc Infantry Regiment in 1899. He was a member of the Macedonian Committee and spied on the Turks by putting his life in danger, which was why he was given the mission to buy weapons for the Committee from Romania if possible, however, he stole money to achieve this goal. Under the pretext of a patriotic act, in fact, it seems that the assassination had a trivial motive: a quarrel over the lack of a sum of money between a simple soldier acting outside the law and his bosses ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

This action was coordinated with those that took place in Bulgaria. At the end of February and the beginning of March 1900, a few Aromanian merchants were also threatened with death, which is why our diplomatic agent in Sofia, Nicolae Misu, intervened. Bulgarian authorities arrested those Macedonian agents but soon released them. On April 6, 1900, on one of the main streets of Sofia, the president of the Romanian colony, the merchant Papa-Gheorghe was attacked with knife blows, but still managed to escape from the hands of the killers. On April 25, 1900, at Braila, the Bulgarian merchant Stelian Stefanovici was mortally wounded with the dagger by Gh. Nedelkov. On 24 June Theodor M. Kradja the great merchant in Sofia, the Romanian submissive was seriously injured in front of his shop by several revolver shots. The assassin was in the service of the Macedonian Committee (although he was

of Macedonian Romanian origin but was banished from his father's family for bad behaviour). At the protest made by Nicolae Misu, a protest also made known to the ministers of Italy, Germany and Austria-Hungary present in Sofia, from the provisions of our foreign ministry, Ion N. Lakhovari, chairman of the T. Ivanciov council, did not take action because, as some of the Bulgarian ministers said, as foreign diplomats did, on the one hand, the government was powerless before the Committee, on the other hand, provisions coming from the top of political power required it to be given a free hand ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1966, 43](#)).

On this issue, in the correspondence of the Romanian diplomatic corps in Sofia with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest there was mentioned the unconditional attachment and support of the Bulgarian society to the revolutionary secret committees fighting for the Bulgarian cause in Macedonia.

Assassination of Professor Stefan Mihaileanu. The plot against King Carol I. Aspects regarding the activity of the foreign minister Alexandru Marghiloman regarding the actions of the Supreme Macedonian Central Committee in Bucharest. Worsening the bilateral relations between Romania and Bulgaria.

Stefan Mihaileanu was born in 1859 in Ohrid, Macedonia. At the age of 10, he came to Bucharest where he attended the Sf. Sava where he obtained the Bacculaureate Diploma. He was licensed in letters at the University of Bucharest. For 17 years he was a professor of Greek and Latin at various high schools and private institutions in the capital ([Adevărul 1900](#)). In 1892 he founded the Balkan Peninsula newspaper in Bucharest, whose circulation was stopped in 1895. A good patriot, distinguished professor and pleasant writer, he had not given up, however, ever, the idea of restarting the printing of his newspaper, in which he had warmly defended the interests of the Aromanians and thus, the periodical reappeared on 23 January 1900 ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

On January 25, 1900, a secret meeting of the Supreme Macedonian Central Committee in Bucharest was held, led by Alexandru Trifanov, discussing the consequences of the reprinting of the Balkan Peninsula newspaper and the effects on Bulgarian propaganda for Macedonia. The conclusions drawn were sent to Sofia for the necessary instructions, but on February 2, 1900, all members of the committee were arrested in the case of the murder of Kiril G. Fitowski ([Dreptul Magazine 1900, 505-516](#)).

In this context, in the second half of March 1900, the Bulgarian Dimitrie Iconomov, a highly trusted man of the Macedonian Central Committee, was sent to Bucharest, with the mission, on the one hand, to continue the started propaganda, on the other hand, to establish communication with those imprisoned in the Fitowski business, so that they could be informed that Sofia was making every effort to get them out of jail, even an escape being planned, if, by judgment, they failed to obtain their acquittal. At the same time, Dimitrie Iconomov received the mission to organize the assassination of Stefan Mihaileanu as well as the murder of Alexandru Trifanov,

the president of the anarchist group in Bucharest. Thus, Iconomov, with the help of photographer Fackirov, the socialist Alex Burlacov, the grocer Spiru Alexov and the student Achim Petcov, found the one who executed the criminal sentence of the Committee, the assassination of Stefan Mihaileanu, namely Stoian Dumitrov, a simple tailor-worker, young, intelligent and fanatical, Macedonian, from the town of Uskub (Today Skopje, capital of North Macedonia), who was 19 years old ([Adevărul 1900](#)). However, expulsions of Bulgarian citizens in early June 1900 by Romanian authorities postponed the implementation of the plan devised for the murder. On June 17, 1900, at the insistence of Iconomov, Stoyan Dimitrov went to Sofia to meet Boris Sarafov, from whom he received the execution order. With the promise of continuing his studies and taking a solemn oath (the text of the oath: according to the statement given during the investigation was: “In the name of God, I swear, that I will fight for the Bulgarians in Macedonia and defend their interests”, ([Gazeta Transilvaniei Newspaper 1900](#)), followed by the solemnity of the kiss on the mouth of President Boris Sarafov and the other members of the leadership as well, Stoian Dimitrov left for Bucharest with the plan of the assassination in his pocket and the amount of 50 lei for possible expenses. The instructions received were clear: committing the axe murder and denying membership in the Committee if arrested by the Romanian authorities ([Dreptul Magazine 1900](#), 505-516).

Returning to Bucharest on 2 July 1900, Stoyan Dimitrov began to implement the stages of the plan conceived in Sofia. Thus, not having the ability and physical strength of Boiciu to handle the axe, he bought a revolver for 10 lei from a millet beer seller named Nicola who lived on Lucaciu Street. For the proper development of the plan, he was helped by the student Achim Petev, the grocer Spiru Alexov and the socialist Alexandru Burlacov, a native of Tulcea. Alexandru Burlacov was the one who helped him to identify Stefan Mihaileanu who used to go to the Macedonian cafe at the Nifon Palace. From that moment on, Stoian Dimitrov began to follow him for several days, step by step, in order to know his movements and habits. On the evening of July 22, 1900, after receiving the address from Spiru Alexov, 34 Iancului Street ([Adevărul](#), 1900), respectively, he remained in front of the building where Stefan Mihaileanu lived. Shortly after, accompanied by his wife and 10-year-old daughter, he left the house, heading towards the street Tepes-Voda where, at number 31, a friend lived, a school reviser of Putna, who he was going to spend a few hours with ([Gazeta Transilvaniei Newspaper](#), 1900, 2).

Around 24.00, Stefan Mihaileanu, on his wife's arm and with his daughter, left the location in Tepes-Voda Street being followed by Stoian Dimitrov. In the proximity of Stefan Mihaileanu's house, on the street of Linistei, corner of Iancului Street, Stoian Dimitrov approached the editor of the Balkan Peninsula newspaper and 3-4 meters away he fired a gunshot from behind. To be sure that Stefan Mihaileanu could not escape alive, he wanted to fire a second fire but the revolver did not work, which is why, panicked, he hurried away from the scene, losing his black beaver hat ([Adevărul 1900](#)). Frightened, bare-headed, and easily recognizable, he arrived on Plantelor



Street where he noticed a building (house) ([Adevărul 1900](#)) under construction and decided to hide in it until things calmed down to go unnoticed. The incident caused two street sergeants who were nearby to hear the noise of the gun and so, they followed in the footsteps of the killer after they arrived at the scene of the murder and informed themselves about the author's features. The first thorough investigation was made by police inspector Sava Grigorescu ([Adevărul1900](#)). Shortly after, the two sergeants, Tudor Constantin and Zornescu Gheorghe, reached the building in the street of Plantelor, where they found him lying down, pretending to sleep, identified without a hat, in the light of a match, Stoyan Dimitrov, whom they led to the Prefecture of Police. Meanwhile, although he was transported to Coltei Hospital, Stefan Mihaileanu died in prison, just 30 minutes after the crime was committed as the bullet had hit his lungs ([Dreptul Magazine 1900](#), 505-516).

According to media reports, the interrogation was led by a team of investigators consisting of Emil Miculescu, first prosecutor, (Jean) Ion Th. Florescu, the investigating judge, prefect D.Dobrescu, Sava Grigorescu and Puiu Alexandrescu, the head of the Security, who brought to the attention of the general public details on how the assassination was planned and executed ([Adevărul Newspaper 1900](#)).

The press of the time reported that Stefan Mihaileanu's father-in-law, Pompiliu Eliade, a week before the murder, while dining inside the Paris Garden, learned by chance about the possible assassination, but Stefan Mihaileanu ignored his warnings, despite the insistence of Paulina Stefan Mihaileanu, his wife, to be careful in this regard ([Adevărul Newspaper 1900](#)).

The press also mentioned the public protests that took place in August 1900. Amid these discontents of the capital's population, the investigators found out about the missions received by the Macedonian Central Committee from Bucharest. After the assassination of Stefan Mihaileanu, the Albanian Yashar Erebaro and the Bulgarian Nicola Gheorghiev were to be killed, suspected of such espionage on behalf of the Ottoman Empire and, at the same time, with these killings, the Sofia committee planned to operate several burglaries in Bucharest, but the plot against King Carol I outraged the entire Romanian society ([Dreptul Magazine 1900](#), 505-516).

One of the missions received by Dimitrie Iconomov from Boris Sarafov in the second half of March 1900 was the assassination of Alexandru Trifanov, president of the Supreme Macedonian Central Committee in Bucharest. The reason he was sentenced to death was found out by investigators during the investigation into the murder of Cyril G. Fitowski. Facing the full protection of Romanian justice, Alexandru Trifanov, confessed in detail the plan of the plot ordered by Boris Sarafov against King Carol I, in order to provoke disorder in Romania. While the king of Romania was being killed, there had to be a bomb attack at the Chamber of Deputies and because Romania was allied with Serbia, the Serbian sovereign was also to be killed ([Dreptul Magazine 1900](#), 505-516).

The proposal of this attack was enthusiastically received by the members of the Supreme Macedonian Central Committee in Bucharest. Mark Bosniacov and Anghel Pop Arsov were assigned to kill King Carol I. Immediately after the assassination, they had to declare that they were bakers and hide at the home of Nicola Bogdanov, until the favourable time to leave for Bulgaria. The plot was decided at the Unirea hotel in Bucharest, in the room that Sarafov occupied on 9, 10 and 11 December 1899 ([Dreptul Magazine 1900](#), 505-516).

On the occasion of the reconnaissance, the daggers bought by them were found to carry out the assassination, as well as their passports, necessary for the smooth crossing of the border. From the press of the time, it turned out that they followed the king when he came out of the palace stables and when he was walking in the company of a single aide, on the Dambovitei quay, near the state printing house ([Tribuna Newspaper 1907](#), 4). The attack did not take place simply because Mark Boineakov and Anghel Poparasov managed to flee to Bulgaria before the confinement of Alexandru Trifanov, being proposed for expulsion from Romania by police representatives without suspecting their role in the planned plot. Nicola Bogdanov also called Hagi was arrested and imprisoned at Văcărești prison by the investigating judge Th. Florescu ([Tribuna Newspaper 1907](#), 4).

The sentencing delivered by the Ifov Court of Justice to Bulgarian diplomatic representatives accredited in Bucharest was in line with the facts committed. For the murder of Cyril Fitowski, Boiciu Iliev was sentenced to life imprisonment. His accomplices, Nicola Mitev and Dumitru Stoicev, received 20 years of hard labour. This group also included Christu Carambulov who received 7 years of hard labor and Alexandru Trifanov who got 2 years of correctional imprisonment ([Telegraful român Newspaper 1900](#), 1).

The author of the assassination committed against Stefan Mihaileanu, Stoyan Dimitrov, received a sentence of forced labour for life, and his accomplices, Spiru Alexov received 20 years hard labour and Achim Petev received 5 years imprisonment ([Telegraful român Newspaper 1900](#), 1).

The group that planned the plot against King Carol I received punishments in money and years' imprisonment, respectively, Nicola Bogdanov a 10-year prison sentence and Alexov Petev and Stoian Dimitriv a fine of 10,000 francs ([Telegraful român Newspaper 1900](#), 1). Boris Sarafov and his helpers in Sofia were sentenced to life imprisonment. Iavconomov received a sentence of 20 years of hard labour ([Telegraful român Newspaper 1900](#), 1). From the statements of the Bulgarian anarchists, given during the investigation, Romanian prosecutors learned that the group in Bucharest intended to assassinate Take Ionescu ([Telegraful român Newspaper 1900](#), 1).

All these facts, the involvement of senior Bulgarian dignitaries in the work of the Committee, the publicity of the process, the presence of Bulgarian representatives, S. Shivachev –a member of the Rousiuc Court of Appeal (now Ruse) and Theodorov,



are all, the delegate of the Bulgarian diplomatic agency in Bucharest, in the courtroom at the time of the sentence against which they had no say in front of the administered probationer, the threat that floated on the Romanian sovereign and the indignation of the Romanian society that did not hesitate to say its opinion on, at least, the crime committed against Stefan Mihaileanu, vehemently, in the street, they determined the Romanian foreign minister, Alexandru Marghiloman, both during the investigation of the assassinations and the plot and after reading the sentence, to formulate according to the diplomatic procedure, protest notes suggesting a possible break in the bilateral relations between Romania and Bulgaria.

**Aspects regarding the activity of the foreign minister  
Alexandru Marghiloman regarding the actions of the Supreme  
Macedonian Central Committee in Bucharest.  
Incidents on the Southern border of Romania**

The reaction of the foreign minister Alexandru Marghiloman was immediate and firm, delegating Nicolae Misu, Romania's plenipotentiary minister to Bulgaria, to make an energetic protest in Sofia, as a result of which, if the Bulgarian government responded by delaying matters concerning the activity of the Macedonian Central Committee on Romanian territory, the Romanian side reserved the right to act according to international provisions in the field. The provisions sent by the Romanian foreign minister to Nicolae Misu on August 1, 1900, indicated the intention of the Romanian government to use all the legal instruments at its disposal, gradually, even to the breakup of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The facts had been brought to the attention of the Sublime Porte and some of the governments of the great powers, especially since Nicolae Misu had also received an anonymous letter in which he was threatened. At the first meeting between the Romanian diplomat and the Bulgarian prime minister, the latter defended the Macedonian committee and claimed that the assassinations of the Macedonian Romanians in Bulgaria – the Krajda case (On 24 June Theodor M. Krajda, a significant merchant in Sofia, a Romanian subject, was seriously injured in front of his shop by several revolver fires. The assassin was in the service of the Macedonian Committee so it was a personal struggle between the Macedonian Romanians in Sofia who sought to make all the discussion a personal quarrel with the Romanian minister ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 44](#)).

In the second audience, requested immediately after the assassination of Stefan Mihaileanu, the chairman of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, said that if the Romanian police were unable to take action, he could not be responsible for a crime committed in Romania ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 44](#)). From the discussions held by Nicolae Misu, the Romanian diplomatic agent in Sofia, with the other foreign ministers accredited in Bulgaria, it was obvious that the Bulgarian government and King Ferdinand, both, did not dare to start an internal investigation

into the work of the Macedonian Committee, for the simple fact that for the entire Bulgarian people, this anarchist organisation had actually become a national institution and was the main instrument for obtaining advantages for Bulgarians in Macedonia. Regarding the attitude of the Bulgarian king Ferdinand concerning Romania, in a report addressed to the foreign minister, Alexandru Marghiloman, Nicolae Misu said that he could not write on the map the conclusion he reached, which is why he had to travel to Bucharest to report personally ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 43](#)).

In this fragile bilateral context, which characterized the Romanian-Bulgarian relations, Alexandru Marghiloman asked Nicolae Misu for a report detailing the situation of Romanian traders in Sofia who had paid large amounts of money to the Macedonian Committee in the form of a loan. By August 1900, several merchants had been identified who had paid about 30,000 gold lei and refused to declare anything about the money. On these issues, on how Romanians in Bulgaria were practically robbed, Alexandru Marghiloman gave clear dispositions to the Romanian diplomatic representatives present in the Tsarist Empire and the Ottoman Empire to inform the respective governments about this situation ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 47](#)).

Moreover, Alexandru Marghiloman sent clear provisions in Sofia to Nicolae Misu to inform the Bulgarian prime minister, T. Ivanov, that Romania could order the expulsion of important Bulgarians from the country, which was finally put into practice, or take whatever measure he saw fit in them, unless he gets involved in finding the culprits that committed the assassination on the evening of July 22, 1900. Finally, under pressure from foreign ministers and protest notes from the Romanian foreign minister, the Bulgarian government specified that as soon as they were in possession of solid evidence regarding the criminals of Stefan Mihaileanu present on the national territory, they would take the necessary measures ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 47](#)). To support this claim, the investigation started in the case of the anarchist Ciolakov, who shot Theodor M. Krajda. Regarding the financial blackmail of the members of the committee, Ivanciov said that the Bulgarian justice did not take any action because no complaints were filed by the Romanian traders. Obviously, they were not submitted because, under the threat of the Macedonian Central Supreme Committee, they declared that they willingly gave the respective amounts of money, after which they left Bulgaria leaving in particular the abandoned shops at the discretion of the anarchist organization ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 47](#)).

On 10 August 1900, Alexandru Marghiloman was informed by the Romanian minister in Belgrade, C. Diamandy, that two agents of the Committee left Sofia with the mission to commit new attacks against King Carol and the politicians in Romania. Against the backdrop of this information, Romanian-Bulgarian relations deteriorated from hour to hour, which is why, when the Romanian diplomatic

representative in Sofia asked for a response from the Bulgarian government regarding the existence of rumours about the possible mobilization of the Bulgarian army, prime minister Ivanciov replied that Bulgaria could mobilize if Romania took such a military measure ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 48](#)).

The concern of the foreign minister Alexandru Marghiloman was well founded because besides the fact that there were signalled movements of troops on the southern border, on the Danube line the spirits were very agitated amid the rumours of the mobilization of three divisions from Northern Bulgaria to Vidin, Rusciuc and Sumla and the observation of an intense circulation of military ships and boats on the Danube. The presence of the Russian ship Bolgaria was reported in the port of Nicopolis where it was unloading weapons brought from Odessa. There were reports of border incidents. On August 24, 1900, troop movements attracted the attention of foreign observers, the concentration of reservists in the Silistra region was announced for military exercises and applications for a period of 3 weeks, while the Bulgarian War Minister inspected troops stationed at the border with Romania ([Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 48](#)).

In April 1900, the Ministry of War, Fifth Division, Marina, notified the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the finding of the commander of the Regiment no.5 Vlasca on taking possession by Bulgarians of the Covanlac. According to the minutes drawn up by him on the spot, *today March 27, 1900 according to the confidential order of the Ministry of War no.1440 of March 22, 1900, the undersigned in charge of investigating the possession of the Covanlac and Cama hostages proceeded as follows:1) On March 25, 1900 the undersigned, accompanied by elderly people who knew these localities closely, were transported with the Siret canon and I descended into both Islets, giving myself all the information necessary to solve this investigation; 2) On March 26, 1900, we were transported by land to the village of Malu which is located in front of these areas, from where, besides the observations made on their situation, we also took categorical information on the possession of these bodies from old people who had done the forest service before 1877; 3) With regard to the current Danube course and the current configuration of these islands, the Austrian map of 1853, as well as all the statements of the people who served us, give us clarification in this finding that fully assured us that the current course of the Danube and the configuration of the islands in matter are in everything as shown in the annexed documents;4) With regard to the list of the islands of the Ministry of Domain showing, namely, the fields and the trusses belonging to the Romanian state and all the information collected, we have the following results: a) the tail of the islet Cama shown on both sketches named by Bulgarians Perigos who has it in possession is attached to an islet in the possession of Romania. The two islands were separated by a Danube waterway just after 1877. At the time of the checks, they were joined as demonstrated when the waters were low* ([Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 48](#)).

A confidential report on the occupation of the Covanlac islet located on the left bank and at the back of the Cama islet by Bulgarian citizens submitted by the Boerescu

Cesar lieutenant to the Ministry of War signalled the presence on the islet of some Turkish fishermen who received a fishing permit from the Bulgarian authorities in Ruciuc. At the same time, the back of the Cama or Dinul, named by Bulgarians Pergos, was occupied by sheep. The shepherds and the four people who had started to build a hut were also allowed by the Bulgarian authorities. From the study of the tables with the names of the estates received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Domains, the two officers did not find mention of the Islet Covanlac, however, they noted that this island was present on the Danube map in 1898 where the figure close to the territory of Romania, being listed in 1898 as belonging to the Romanian state. The inconsistency started from the minutes of the Ports Inspectorate and the Forest Inspectorate that mentioned that Pergos belonged to Bulgaria although the two officers noted that it had united with the island of Cama. The proposal of Officer Boerescu Cesar was that in order to eliminate any possible divergences, a superior representative of the Ministry of Domains would be appointed to make a new recognition of these islands. After completing this process, it was planned to mark the territorial limits by terminals, so that the regiment responsible for border guard and forestry workers had the necessary landmarks to respect the Romanian-Bulgarian border line. A rigorous delimitation, adapted to geological and geographical changes, was beneficial for both the Romanian and Bulgarian fleets.

To clarify the issue, on July 27, 1900, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was notified by the Ministry of War, Fifth Directorate for the establishment of a joint commission consisting of a marine officer and a delegate of the Ministry of Domains to resolve issues related to the possession of Danube estates, establishing at the same time their area and production. Interesting was the proposal of the Ministry of War on the reasonable compensation of the losing state by changing the regime of the possession of the respective islands. In the case of united islets respect the dividing channel or if the channel disappears through alluvium deposits there is the possibility of delimitation through terminals. However, Romania had the oldest, largest, and richest islands formed on the right side of the Danube Thalweg, the Thalweg limit could not be invoked according to the nominal list established in 1830 under the Treaty of Adrianople. In order not to be suspicious, the participation of some Bulgarian delegates in the discussions was generated by the possible appeals to be analysed and resolved by the Romanian and Bulgarian governments in accordance with the provisions of international laws. In this regard, the appointment of Bulgarian delegates required the intervention of the Minister of Foreign Affairs ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 48](#)).

Against the backdrop of these incidents, Nicolae Misu sent to the Bulgarian government a note of protest brought to the attention of the foreign ministers present in Sofia. The diplomatic note mentioned the limitation of the rights stipulated by the international legislation. The measure ordered by the Bulgarian authorities regarding the refusal of entry in Bulgaria of Romanians even if they had passports with the visa of the Bulgarian

Legation in Bucharest and the impossibility of the personnel of the Romanian vessels sailing on the Danube to go down to ports for various manoeuvres necessary for a good river circulation ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 49](#)).

The situation at the end of August was very tense. The Romanian minister in Berlin was interested in the possibility of representing Romania's interests in Bulgaria by the German diplomatic agent in Sofia. Meanwhile, Romanian troops were discreetly concentrated at the southern border ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 50](#)).

On August 10, 1900, the Ministry of War, Fifth Division, The Navy delegated them to study the Danube islands on the Lieutenant Commander Boerescu Cesar of the Military Navy who knew and was aware of the topographical and hydrological works carried out until this date and lieutenant Stoyanovich Constantin whose mission was to help the members of the commission. The two were to report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on August 14, 1900. At the same time, the Ministry of Domains was notified to appoint its representatives. The two officers were remunerated from the Navy budget and the necessary materials were paid by the Ministry of Domains. The representative of this ministry, the forestry inspector Ghehaia, together with the officer Boerescu Cesar completed the map of the Danube in December 1900. On January 31, 1901, this map accompanied by two memoirs were sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania to start the necessary arrangements with the neighbouring states bordering the Danube to establish by mutual agreement river borderline ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 50](#)).

In the mediation of the Romanian-Bulgarian crisis in the summer of 1900 by Bahmetiev, the Russian minister in Sofia, the Bulgarian government ordered coercive measures against members of the Macedonian Central Supreme Committee and punished Boris Sarafov if he was to be found guilty of Romanian justice. In this context, on 6 September 1900, Bulgarian justice pronounced Ciolakov's one-year prison sentence and the possibility of his release on bail. On September 16, 1900, on the occasion of the opening of the works of Sobrania, during his official speech, Bulgarian King Ferdinand said that the disagreements between Romania and Bulgaria were to be resolved ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 50](#)).

Although a diplomatic resolution of the frequent incidents at the river border was attempted, on December 23, 1900, three Bulgarian soldiers from picket no.24 opened fire on a Romanian sentry of picket no. 5 who wanted to stop a Bulgarian smuggler who was clandestinely passing in Romania ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 50](#)).

In April 1901, the Romanian subjects Beitullah Bechir and Iusuf Ibrahim were killed on Romanian territory by Bulgarians Petcu Dinu and Iordan Ivanov, who, although found guilty following the investigation carried out by a joint commission, received a 5-day prison sentence based on their statements that the two victims were smugglers who did not respond to their summons ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 50](#)).

In the spring of 1901, the 2nd Army Corps Command reported to the Ministry of War forays of the Bulgarian inhabitants on the Gasca Mare, Gasca Mica, Cinghina and Bersina from where they were stealing wood. For the intercession of these facts, there was sent on patrol between Giurgiu and Turnu Magurele the „Arges” military boat that was stationed in Zimnicea. On this occasion, port captains in the region were ordered to request Navy ships whenever they found irregularities from Bulgarian and Serbian neighbours. In their support, the light boat type was sent, under the command of sub-lieutenant Coanda Gheorghe who was stationed in Gruia to perform the patrol service between Calafat and Turnu-Severin ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 50](#)).

On February 13, 1901, Alexandru Marghiloman ceased his prerogatives at the Foreign Ministry, shortly before the arrest and trial by the Bulgarian justice of those who planned the assassinations in Bucharest and the plot against King Carol I.

In early April 1901, the sentence handed down in absentia in Bucharest produced legal effects in Bulgaria, meaning that the chairman of the Macedonian Committee in Sofia, Boris Sarafov was arrested along with the other missing convicts. The process started by the Bulgarian judiciary ended with their acquittal on 1 August 1901, but Boris Sarafov’s influence and prestige on the committee declined. Bulgarian Prime Minister Petko Karavelov declared to Nicolae Misu immediately after receiving the sentence that he was not satisfied with the final result of the trial, but it was almost impossible to fight against a general political trend above the will of the magistrates. The new leadership of the Macedonian Central Supreme Committee had a moderate trend regarding the Romanian-Bulgarian conflict, encouraging the re-establishment of good neighbourly relations, as a result of the way in which the foreign minister Alexandru Marghiloman managed the Romanian-Bulgarian crisis from 1900-1901 river ([Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1966, 56](#)).

However, all these events foreshadowed the involvement sooner or later of the two countries in an armed conflict. The provocative attitude supported by the expansionist policy of the government in Sofia determined the involvement of Romania during the Balkan wars (1912-1913) and the asymmetric positioning of the two parties during them.

## Conclusion

The terrorist activity/the premeditated anarchy of the Central Macedonian Supreme Committee at the beginning of the 20th century changed and influenced Romanian-Bulgarian relations and the way in which Romania and Bulgaria related to what we call today the international security environment. While Romania was fighting for the preservation of the regional status quo established by the treaties concluded and assumed with legal consequences under international public law, Bulgaria in the 1900s was assimilated to a terrorist state/ an anarchist who provided instability in the Balkan



Peninsula and in the region. Obviously, the terrorist/anarchist actions of the Bulgarian revolutionary secret committees represented a threat to Romania's national security. Today, more than 100 years after the events mentioned in this article, we identify some common features of the actions of the Bulgarian revolutionary secret committees such as surprise, the diversity of terrorist/anarchist actions, the use of the human being as a weapon with the extreme valences of suicide attacks with explosive devices, the impetuosity, sometimes the lack of tactical and strategic coordination, elements that we quantify today in the phrase confrontation, war or asymmetric threat.

This article is a tribute to the Romanian border guards, Romanian justice, police bodies, Romanian diplomacy and Romanian society since the beginning of the 20th century who protested vehemently against terrorist activity/ anarchists of Bulgarian revolutionary committees aware of the effects of such actions.

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