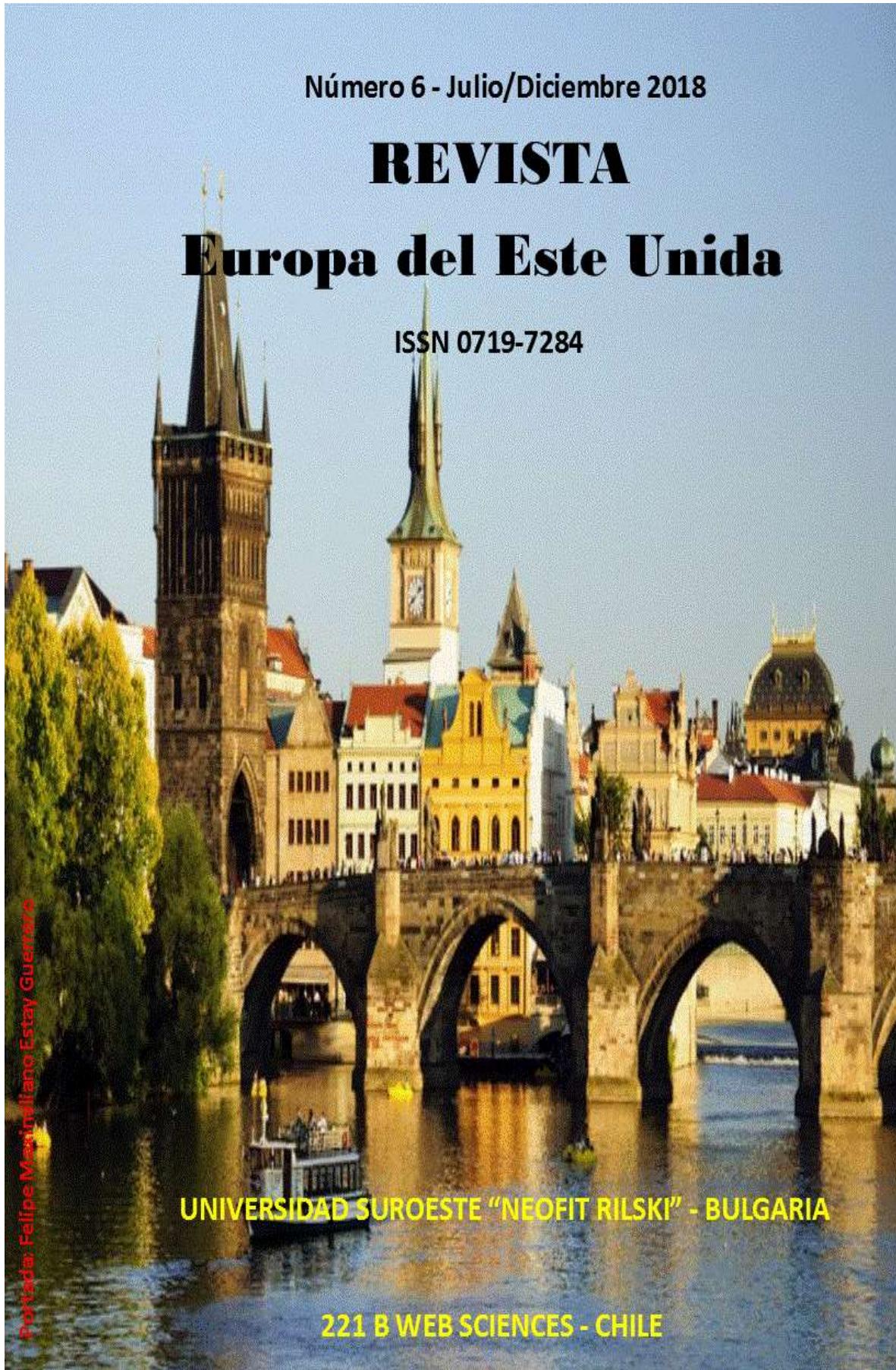


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THE BULGARIAN DRAMA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WORLDWIDE UNCERTAINTY IN 1918

EL DRAMA BULGARO EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA INCERTIDUMBRE MUNDIAL EN 1918

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Abstract

The article is an author's attempt to review the Bulgarian drama that happened 100 years ago. Bulgaria was defeated in the First World War and could not fulfill the desired idea for national unification. Between the government and the people has been created an abyss since then, and the division line of tension still has impact nowadays.

Keywords

Bulgaria – National unification – First World War – Macedonian question – Berlin treaty – San Stefano

Resumen

El artículo es el intento de un autor de revisar el drama búlgaro que ocurrió hace 100 años. Bulgaria fue derrotada en la Primera Guerra Mundial y no pudo cumplir con la idea deseada una unión nacional entera. Entre el gobierno y el pueblo se ha creado un abismo desde entonces, y la línea divisoria de tensión todavía tiene impacto en la actualidad.

Palabras Claves

Bulgaria – Unificación nacional – Primera Guerra Mundial – Cuestión macedónica – Tratado de Berlín
San Stefano

The year 1918 in the history of the Bulgarian national question marks a deep fault. Only 40 years after the Berlin Treaty, the Third Bulgarian State, its elite and people are forced to pay a high price for their participation in the Great War. Bulgaria, in the eve of its 40th birthday, has its biggest test.

During the last 100 years, the same questions are being asked and the lack of adequate responses keeps our national consciousness awake.

Why in the hot summer of 1915, the monarch, the ruling circles, along with the national liberation movement, chose the losing party in the First World War? Why did Bulgaria, which mobilized its demographic, economic and financial resources, failed to achieve its dreamed national ideal? Didn't the Treaty of San Stefano¹, unrecognized in the international law order during all these 40 years, create a beautiful dream, and didn't it lead to isolation of Bulgarian foreign policy? What led to piercing the South, Macedonian Front? Should we so cruelly accuse the "dobropolski traitors and criminals"²? Why was there no will for partial peace in Sofia? Was there light in the emerging tunnel of the hostile foreign political environment?

In fact, many of the questions are rhetorical. 1918 was not accidental and the familiar dramatic events have a result-residual character of the foreign policy decisions and the subsequent actions in 1915.

As early as 1878, the Berlin Treaty suffered a permanent blow. A real counterpoint to the fragmented Bulgarian ethnic area were the diplomatic initiatives and revolutionary actions taken against the Ottoman authorities since the beginning of the protest actions. In the context of international law, however, the result was not impressive. The unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and the proclamation of independence, the startling stunning victories of the Bulgarian army, paid with much blood, led to the London Peace Treaty. But at the core of these foreign policy peaks, national failures were also encoded. Within five years, the Bulgarian state and people twice, in 1913 and 1918, suffered a violation of their national ideal. These were not domestic catastrophes. They were named so, because of the great expectations of 1878 due to the total inconsistency with the successes of 1885, 1908 and 1912, and because of the number of victims, the shed blood, and the financial and material resources spent.

The final balance is not positive. Twenty years after the end of the war, in 1938, the number of fallen soldiers in the wars for national liberation and reunification was made public. A total of 157,510 people³, and a problem of military monuments and graves arises, as the vast majority of dead soldiers are in lands beyond the state borders.

There is an indicative fact - throughout the year 1918 three different prime ministers, from three different parties govern the foreign ministry, but the policy pursued by them until June and until September is incessant - instead of real attempts for separatist peace, struggles with V. Radoslavov and Al. Malinov "to the defeated end". The direction was only one - sequential failure and isolation.

¹ E. Kazakov, Bulgarian geopolitics during XX c. National, European and global view, 2007, 216.

² K. Nikolov, The oath-breakers. The Vladaya events in September 1918, 2002.

³ Archive of MNI. Sofia.

Naturally, the question arises as to why the Bulgarian state has been subjected to total aggression by its neighbours - the Christian kingdoms, Greece, Romania and Serbia - twice in five years and has itself led to a state of international isolation from the civilized world.

The San Stefano syndrome gave the Bulgarian foreign policy a purposeful conservatism which excluded the objectively effective principles of equilibrium in the international relations of Southeast Europe. The interest of neighbouring countries was not fully taken into account. The simple fact that the inter-allied war was declared in 1913, while it actually began in the geographic area of Macedonia 10 years earlier, was not taken into account.

The neuralgic Macedonia was a geopolitical space where not only the foreign policy priorities of the neighbouring countries, but also where all the interests of the Great Powers met. The Balkan diplomacy and the policy towards the fate of the Ottoman territorial heritage was not a constant figure. Success can be achieved when opposing the emerging conflicting groups among the leading European countries. Their warnings were not heard in the Balkan capitals in 1912.

Moreover, the well-organized community of Macedonian Bulgarians in Sofia and the country together with the revolutionary actors with various means unduly influenced the foreign policy decisions of the ruling. If Gotse Delchev did not want to put Bulgaria "barefoot in the fire", the "*voivodi and commiti*" from the circle of Todor Alexandrov, twice in 1911-1912 and 1914-1915, imposed, especially in the Great War, their free Homeland to fight with almost the whole world.

Traditionally, in 1918 the Bulgarian nationalism relies on demographic factor of the domestic ethnic environment in disputed areas - Macedonia and Thrace, on the existing cultural-historical heritage, the legal cause of national liberation and unification etc.

Home accounts do not have a heavy weight on the international market. The universal conviction is that the Bulgarian army fought for the freedom of their compatriots in Greece, Romania and Serbia, that Bulgaria does not have any imperial and conquestatorial motives and that the Bulgarian cause is scientifically defensible and noble, because it is in harmony with the announced by the US President Wilson principle of national self-determination. A principle contrary to the legitimate legal foundations of the world these days, with the international system applied by the Vienna Congress, based on monarchic law, balance of power, balance of interests etc.

The Alliance propaganda for peace, based on national self-determination, weakens the military spirit of the army, strengthens the attitudes of separatist peace and the desire for a more recent end of the war. It is this logic after the breakthrough in *Dobro pole* 100 years ago, which is expressed in the capitalization conditions of the known Thessaloniki ceasefire, described in detail also in scientific literature⁴.

And yet there is hope. Sofia and the country is not occupied by Serbian and Greek troops. The hope of preserving *Dobroudja* and Western Thrace is flaring up, relying on US and Italy to protect Bulgaria in the complex and acute Balkan ethnic-territorial conflicts. But

⁴ National Liberation Movement of the Macedonian and Thracian Bulgarians, 1878-1944, 1997, №, 3, pp. 383-387.

after the truce and the resignation of Al. Malinov under the new Prime Minister - Minister of Foreign Affairs T. Teodorov, it becomes clear that Bulgaria will be punished and the territorial clauses of the Bucharest dictatorship will be confirmed at the upcoming international conference.

It is not enough for a national goal to be academically protected and illustrated with signs and sources of homeland memory. It is important to pursue it purposefully, pragmatically and with a clear vision of the cause and effect of any political decision and diplomatic initiative.

But neither the monarch nor the executive, coalitions and opposition have proved to be at the height of their historical responsibility, unlike their people.

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