

Should war unfortunately again disturb the friendly relations between the High Contracting Parties, the convention of 1907 would not withstand the shock.

MACEDONIAN RAILWAYS AND THE CONCERT OF EUROPE

The announcement by Baron Aehrenthal, on January 27, of the proposal to construct a railway, under Austro-Hungarian auspices, from Uvac, the southern terminus of the Bosnian system, through the Sandjak of Novibazar to Mitrovitsa, the northern terminus of the Salonika line, opens a new chapter in the history of the Near Eastern Question. In 1897 Austria-Hungary and Russia substituted for their traditional rivalry in the Balkan Peninsula an *entente* whose purpose was the maintenance of the political *status quo*. The emergence of the Far Eastern Question was Russia's reason for coming to an agreement in the Near East; while Austria was impelled to consent to a policy of inaction by her serious domestic troubles. These causes have now largely disappeared and the old rivalry is again revived. It is true that the proposal to build the Novibazar railroad is not strictly a breach of the *entente*, since only the political, not the economic, *status quo* was guaranteed; nor is Austria-Hungary probably transcending her rights under the Treaty of Berlin, which confers upon her the privilege of building roads in Novibazar, although there is a difference of opinion as to whether the term *route* employed in that instrument may be interpreted as including railroads or should be confined to highways; nevertheless the *entente* is shattered. In spite of Baron Aehrenthal's insistence on the purely economic character of the road, the fact that it is to be narrow gauge and that all goods shipped from Central Europe will, therefore, require to be handled twice en route, as well as its greater length, makes it certain that it can never compete on equal terms with the existing line via Belgrade. On the other hand, its strategic importance, in giving Austria-Hungary a railway connection with Salonika, not liable to interruption by a hostile Servia, can not be gainsaid.

The Russian press at once accepted Baron Aehrenthal's announcement as equivalent to a change of policy, and the Russian Government has virtually acknowledged that the *entente* is at an end by actively supporting the proposal for a Danube-Adriatic railroad, which Servia has long sought. This road, after traversing Roumania, will probably find its northeastern terminus at Odessa, thus bringing Russia herself

into direct railway connection with the Adriatic. On March 10 the Servian minister presented a note to the Porte asking authorization for the construction of the Macedonian section of this line. Far more serious difficulties are presented, both to the engineer and to the diplomatist, by this line than by the Novibazar road. Two routes are discussed. The shorter, and that which would penetrate the richer country, crosses Montenegro and terminates at Antivari, which is an excellent port, but unfortunately subject to certain rights of occupation by Austria-Hungary under the Treaty of Berlin. One of the manifest strategic advantages of the Danube-Adriatic line would be the linking together of the Slav states, but this probably constitutes a potent reason why Turkey may refuse any concession through Macedonia which would secure this object. The alternative route avoids Montenegro entirely and terminates at the Macedonian port of San Giovanni di Medua, whose harbor is shallow and insecure and the improvement of which would be very costly. Much stronger policing would also be required for this route, against Albanian attack, than for the other. The Sultan might conceivably consent to the San Giovanni route, as it would really possess considerable strategic value for Turkey; but the prospect of commercial success is not so certain and the financing of the undertaking might prove difficult. It is, however, quite possible that Austrian and German influence at Constantinople may, in the present circumstances, be employed to block every railroad project which would have for its ultimate effect the development of a strong Slav barrier to the *Drang nach Osten*.

Other railroads in the Balkan Peninsula are being just now seriously mooted, including one which will connect Salonika directly with the Adriatic, either at Durazzo or Avlona, and one running south from Sofia to the Ægean. Athens is also to be brought into connection with the European system by the completion of the Larissa-Salonika section of road.

An era of railroad development is, in all probability, about to open for the Balkans which will go far toward solving the problems of disorder and lack of security in Macedonia. The rupture of the Austro-Russian *entente* also offers some prospect of constitutional reforms in Macedonia, which seemed utterly hopeless so long as the two powers chiefly interested pursued a common policy of inaction.