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0521522501 - Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914 - Barbara Jelavich

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Russia's Balkan entanglements
1806–1914

This book examines the reasons for the Russian involvement in the Balkan peninsula and attempts to explain the connections that drew the Russian government into entanglements that were not only dangerous to its great power interests but contained emotional commitments that were difficult to control. The wars, waged at a high human and economic cost, limited the resources that could be spent on internal development and, in particular when they ended in defeat, led to domestic unrest and, after 1856 and 1917, to drastic internal change.

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BARBARA JELAVICH



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Preface



In the century between 1806 and 1914 Russia was drawn into six wars. Of these, five were due to its deep involvement, based on treaty rights and established traditions, in Balkan affairs; only one, the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-9, brought a clear victory both on the battlefield and at the peace table. A second, fought between 1806 and 1812, had to be ended quickly when the Russian armies were withdrawn to meet a threatening French invasion. The third, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8, resulted in a military victory, but a subsequent European congress drastically limited the advantages gained. Of the remaining two, the Crimean War was both a military and a political disaster; participation in World War I brought down the tsarist government and ended in a peace settlement in which the Bolshevik regime was forced to surrender large territories that had been part of the Russian state for a long period. These wars, waged at an extremely high economic cost, limited the amount that could be spent on internal development and, in particular when they ended in defeat, led to domestic unrest and after 1856 and 1917 to drastic internal change.

The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons for the Russian involvement in the Balkan peninsula and to attempt at least partially to explain the connections that drew the Russian government into entanglements that were not only often in contradiction with its great-power interests, but contained emotional commitments that were difficult to control. The emphasis is on the unique relationship that many Russian statesmen felt that they had with the Orthodox Balkan people, one that they believed was shared by no other state. At the same time an explanation is offered about why Balkan national leaderships did not reciprocate these feelings but were extremely happy to exploit Russian willingness to come to their assistance.

Preface

The following pages do not comprise a history of the Eastern Question, that is, the international controversies caused by the decline of the Ottoman Empire, or a detailed analysis of the many crises connected with this most lengthy and dangerous of the European controversies in the nineteenth century. Instead Russian policy is discussed in connection with the major Balkan national movements of each period. Chapter I describes the peace settlements following the Russo-Turkish Wars of 1768-74 and 1806-12. These agreements, extending the Russian territory to the Black Sea and the Pruth River, gave the Russian government certain definite rights in regard to the Balkan Christian population. This chapter pays particular attention to Russia's close relationship with the Danubian Principalities and its attitude toward the Serbian revolution of 1804. Chapter II covers the Russian involvement in the Greek revolution, the major European diplomatic controversy of the 1820s, and the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-9. The main subject of Chapter III is the Crimean War, which arose directly from the Russian association with the Balkan Christians and the rights apparently gained in the peace treaties. Russo-Bulgarian relations are the central theme of Chapter IV, which deals with the Balkan rebellions of 1875-7, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8, and the subsequent estrangement after 1885. Chapter V emphasizes Russian policy toward Serbia and the events leading to World War I. In the Conclusion, the Russian connection with the major events in these Balkan national revolutions is reviewed to determine the causes of Russian involvement and the degree to which the government lost or benefited by the association. Less attention is given in this narrative to the relationship with the Danubian Principalities, a subject that has been discussed by the author in another book, *Russia and the Formation of the Romanian National State, 1821-78*. No attempt is made to cover Albanian or Montenegrin events. Russia had little to do with the Albanian national movement; the often comic relationship with Montenegro led to only a few serious international incidents.

The spelling of personal names and geographic terms causes certain problems in any study of Russia and the Balkans. In general, standard systems of transliteration have been used except where another spelling is in general usage in English language publications. It is thus, for example, Giers not Girs, Izvolsky not Izvolskii, Hartwig not Hartvig, and Jomini not Zhomini. Many common first names, such as Alexander, Peter, Michael, Paul, and Nicholas, have been anglicized, as have the names of all rulers. Similarly, geographic place names are in the form used most commonly in diplomatic histories and in the documentation. The dates given in the text are in the Gregorian, or New Style, calendar, which in the nineteenth century ran twelve and in the twentieth century thirteen days ahead of the Orthodox Julian, or Old Style, calendar. Both dates are included in the

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footnotes when they appear on the documents cited or when they are necessary for clarity. All of the direct quotations retain the spelling of the source.

This study is based on research in the Bavarian State Archives, Munich; the Ethnographic Museum, Sofia; the Hariciye Arshivi, Istanbul; the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv and the Kriegsarchiv, Vienna; the Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki; the Public Record Office, London; the State Archives and Foreign Ministry Archives, Bucharest; the State Archives of Serbia and Foreign Ministry Archives, Belgrade; and the Wilson Center, Washington, D.C. The author would like to acknowledge the kind assistance given by the staffs of these institutions. She wishes also once more to thank Serge Giers for allowing her to use the papers of his grandfather. Although the Russian Foreign Ministry archives have not been open for research, this narrative has profited from the use of the publications of the Institut Slavianovedeniia i Balkanistiki in Moscow. Some sections of this book are based on articles which the author has previously published; they are cited in the footnotes. The material that appears on pp. 49-65 is reprinted here with the permission of Notre Dame Press.

This book has benefited greatly from the comments and criticism of Professors David M. McDonald, University of Wisconsin, Norman Rich, Brown University, Paul W. Schroeder, University of Illinois, and Mark, Peter and Charles Jelavich, all of whom have read the manuscript. The author would like to thank in particular Professor M. Jeanne Peterson and Dean Morton Lowengrub of Indiana University for their support and the Office of Research and Advanced Studies, Indiana University, for research and travel grants. She wishes also to acknowledge the expert assistance of her Cambridge editors, Louise Calabro Gruendel, Helen Greenberg, and Frank Smith, and of Debbie Chase, who typed the final manuscript.