

Roads and Railway Lines in Serbia after the Balkan Wars

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Abstract

This paper deals with Kingdom of Serbia's plans on roads and railways construction in the regions annexed 1913, after the Balkan Wars. Plans are presented in detail, as well as achievements until 1915, when the country was occupied by enemy forces in the World War One. It is shown that plans for future roads and railways network were made according to the changed geopolitical conditions in the Balkan Peninsula, created as the consequence of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913. The paper draws mainly on unpublished archival sources of Serbian origin.

Keywords: Balkan Wars 1912-1913, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo, roads, railways.

The victory in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) against the Ottoman Empire and then Bulgaria caused enlargement of the Serbian territory for 39,309 km² (81.4 % of its pre-war area). The new territories were in administrative sense divided in twelve districts – five in the north of the Šar Mountains (Prijepolje, Raška, Zvečan, Priština and Prizren), and seven in the south (Tetovo, Skoplje, Kumanovo, Tikveš, Ohrid, Bitolj and Bregalnica). According to the census in 1913, on the whole newly acquired territory there were 1,481,614 inhabitants (approximately 51% of the population in the pre-war Serbia). The population in the new territories was heterogeneous in religious, ethnic and national aspect (Jagodić 2013, 103-152).

Integration of the territories annexed to Serbia after the Balkan wars presented a significant and vital task for the Serbian Government. One of its aspects referred to roads and railways construction. Country's prewar area was poorly connected with its recent acquisitions, only by one dirt road, suitable for year round carriage traffic, and one railway. Both were leading from the Morava into the Vardar valley, connecting Vranje and Skoplje via Kumanovo. On the other hand, delimitation between Balkans states, established in 1913, created new strategic environment that had to be taken into consideration. Therefore, creation of suitable land traffic network in the new regions was an imperative for military and economic reasons. Aim of this paper is to determine what Serbia had done and what were its plans on that matter during the short three years period, from the outbreak of Balkan wars in 1912 until the occupation of the country during the First World War in the autumn of 1915.

Roads

Serbia's Constitution and legislation were not fully implemented in the new regions after the annexation for political and practical reasons. Some legal issues were regulated by Governmental decrees. Construction and maintenance of roads in the new regions was regulated by the Government's Decree on constructions, issued in September 1913 and amended in April 1914. Its provisions were slightly different from the "Law on public and land roads", which has been in effect in prewar Serbia since 1910. According to the Decree, all roads were divided into two categories: 1) national roads and 2) local roads. The former comprised roads of state, county, district and military importance, while the latter referred only to roads of community significance. Ministries or local (county, district or community) officials could require construction of a road. However, final decision was made by the Minister of Constructions. Ministry of Constructions and its county branches conducted technical preparations. "Larger artificial works", like cutting ways through the rocks, building bridges, diverting river flows etc, could be funded by the country's budget. All the other, "simple", works like digging, pebbling, transporting tools etc. were to be done by people's labor. Taxpayers were obliged to perform road constructing labor themselves, or to provide an adequate replacement. This was the main difference between the Decree and the Law. According to the latter,

people's labor could be ordered only in case of general mobilization or war; otherwise, road building was financed by national or county funds and executed by private contractors. However, since the money was scarce after the Balkan wars and necessity for roads was quite urgent, the Government has decided not to implement the mentioned provision of the Law in the new regions, but to resort to an unpopular measure, such as people's labor (Jagodić 2013, 58-61).

Serbia did not inherit many pebbled roads, suitable for year round carriage traffic, from the Ottoman Empire. Network of such roads, according to data collected by the Ministry of Constructions in exile in 1916, is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Pebbled carriage roads in the new regions of Serbia inherited from the Ottoman Empire.¹

Pebbled carriage roads in the new regions of Serbia			
Road	Section	km	Usability
Skoplje- Kičevo	Skoplje-Tetovo	45	Good; for automobiles
	Tetovo-Gostivar	25	
	Gostivar-Kičevo	42	
	Aggregate	112	
Skoplje- Bulgarian border	Skoplje-Kumanovo	36	Good; for automobiles
	Kumanovo-Kriva Palanka	72	
	Kriva Palanka-Bulgarian Border	12	
	Aggregate	120	
Kumanovo-Tabanovci-Preševo- Bujanovac- Ristovac		54	Good; for automobiles
Veles- Bulgarian border	Veles-Štip	42	Good; for automobiles
	Štip-Kočane	54	
	Kočane-Carevo Selo	30	
	C. Selo-Bulgarian border	15	
	Aggregate	141	
Veles-Sveti Nikola		26	Good; for carriages
Strumica-Radovište		42	Good; for automobiles
Strumica-Pehčevo		66	Bad
Štip- Strumica	Štip-Negotin	48	Good; for automobiles
	Negotin-Strumica	72	
	Aggregate	120	
Veles- Bitolj	Veles-Prilep	66	Good; for automobiles
	Prilep-Bitolj	40	
	Aggregate	106	

¹ Stated distances are approximate. AS, MG, F 5, 1914-1916, *Narodni putevi u novim oblastima prema izveštaju inženjera G. L. Zisića (Public roads in the new regions according to the engineer's G. L. Zisić's report)*, 11/24. 4. 1916, Nica (Nice).

Prilep-Kavadar-Negotin		61	Very good; for automobiles
Bitolj-Kičevo	Bitolj-Žvan	40	Verz good; for automobiles
	Žvan-Kičevo	42	
	Aggregate	82	
Prilep-Brod-Kičevo		84	Good; for carriages
Bitolj-Greek border (towards Florin)		14	Excellent; for automobiles
Bitolj-Struga	Bitolj-Resen	35	Verz good; for automobiles
	Resen-Ohrid	39	
	Ohrid-Struga	14	
	Aggregate	88	
Struga-Debar (partially through Albania)		54	Good; for carriages
Bitolj-Novaci		12	Good; for carriages
Prilep-Kruševo		30	Good; for carriages
Resen-Stenje (Greek border)		30	Good; for carriages
Total south of the Šar Mountain		1242	
Prizren-Uroševac		56	Very good; for automobiles
Lipljan-Priština-Podujevo-Merdare		63	Good
Mitrovica-Prijepolje	Mitrovica-Novi Pazar	45	
	Novi Pazar-Sjenica	48	
	Sjenica-Prijepolje	33	
	Aggregate	126	
Total north of the Šar Mountain		245	
Sum		1487	

The existing roads were more west-east oriented, like the Ottoman Empire, than north - south, like Serbia. County and district centers were connected by the road network up to a certain point. Pebbled carriage roads had exits to the main Mitrovica-Thessaloniki railway in cities Mitrovica, Uroševac, Kumanovo, Skopje, Veles and Negotin. The road network was the densest in the Bitolj County while it was quite sparse in the Counties north of the Šar Mountain.

The Ottoman Government signed a contract with the French consortium "Société Générale d'Enterprises dans l'Empire Ottoman" in 1910, referring to carriage roads construction in the whole Empire. Until the outbreak of the Balkan wars, the consortium has completed these sections on the territory ceded to Serbia: Bitolj-Resen-Ohrid-Struga-Debar; Resen-Stenje (on the Prespa lake's bank), leading to Korča; Bitolj-Kenali, leading to Florin and Bitolj-Prilep. All of them were, in fact, parts of the planned Drač-Thessaloniki road with accompanying tangential sections.¹ The Ottomans constructed the other roads, stated in the *Table 1*, themselves.²

1 AS, S/F, microfilm 62, N. S. Serbie, vol. 19, 1911-1919, Société générale d'Enterprises dans l' Empire Ottoman à Ministère des Affaires étrangères Française, 8. 11. 1913, Paris; Société générale d'Enterprises dans l' Empire Ottoman à Ministère d'Economie Serbe, 15. 10. 1913. with road map attached.

2 *Ibid*, Empire Ottoman, Ministère du Commerce et des Travaux publics, *Routes d'État*, Constantinople 1913.

Maintenance, renovation and construction of roads in the new regions have commenced immediately after battles of 1912. The works have been organized by military and civil officials and conducted by engineer corps units and local inhabitants. Priority was given to roads of military and strategic importance, in accordance with the existing war conditions. The following new roads have been cut through, built and put in use until the end of 1913: Mitrovica – Raška, Novi Pazar – Raška, Sjenica – Javor, Kokin Brod – Nova Varoš, Gnjilane – Bujanovac, Gnjilane – Preševo, Preševo – Vranje, Prizren – Vranište, Kumanovo – Sveti Nikola, Kumanovo – Kratovo and Skoplje – Veles, along the Vardar's right bank. Thus, connections have been established between the prewar Serbian territory and the new regions, mainly in Prijepolje and Raška counties, as well as between certain county and district centers. Construction of some roads has only begun during the Balkan wars, among which the section from Debar to Mavrovi Hanovi and Gostivar, along the river Radika valley, has been considered as particularly significant; it was, in fact, the missing link between Bitolj – Debar and Skoplje – Gostivar roads. Construction of the new section Debar – Lukovo – Struga, on the right bank of the Crni Drim, was initiated by the end of 1913, for the existing one, on the opposite side of the river, remained in Albania.¹

Road building labor has doubtlessly been hard and unpleasant obligation for the local population. In the Mitrovica district, for instance, where whole capable adult male population has been building the road towards Raška, the labor had to be aborted in the summer of 1913 so people could harvest their crops. Both Christians and Muslims have been equally engaged in roads constructing labor. However, the Muslim workers had been temporarily released from labor duty on the Mavrovi Hanovi – Debar road, during the first three days of Kurban Bairam holiday in November 1913. Still, the newly built roads were useful primarily to the local population, who was quite aware of that fact (Тодоровски 1979, 94-95, 105, 120-122, 165-166).²

There were other roads in the new regions of Serbia, besides the previously mentioned pebbled ones. However, they were not suitable for carriage traffic. For instance, sources claim that the road Peć-Djakovica-Prizren had existed only by name, while Podrimlje and Metohija districts did not have any road connection with their county center, Prizren, whatsoever. The road from Struga to Debar along the right bank of the Crni Drim was nothing more than a mere horse track. Average horseback ride from Ohrid to Debar lasted for two days in spring of 1914.³ Therefore, people and goods were transported more by caravans, on donkeys and horses, than by ox carts or carriages (Тодоровски 1979, 89, 94, 120-122, 130-131, 165-166, 226-227, 311-313, 391-392).⁴ According to a census carried out by the army at the end of 1913, there were 26969 ox carts and carriages and only 452 horse carriages in the new regions.⁵ Therefore, transportation infrastructure was unsuitable for economic development and it obviously required improvements. Minister of economy Velizar Janković correctly emphasized in December 1913 that any economic policy in the new regions should start with broadening of the road network.⁶

Automobiles traffic was virtually nonexistent in the new regions. There were only few privately owned cars in Bitolj in June 1913 (Тодоровски 1979, 226-227).⁷ Still, private entrepreneurs have regarded the automobile transport as a potential lucrative investment opportunity. A stock company, named "Serbian transport society", was established in Skoplje in February 1914, with founding capital of 250 000 dinars. Its aim was to introduce automobile traffic between main cities in the new regions, wherever possible. Ćeda Jovanović, a merchant from Skoplje conducted the subscription of shares.⁸ Another similar company, "Society for automobile transport", was founded in Bitolj two months later. The company's goal was to organize transport lines from Bitolj to Veles, Kičevo and Struga on a regular basis. Its representatives have addressed to the British and French Consulates in Bitolj, enquiring about purchase of two cars and ten lorries in the respective countries. They have expected a vehicle manufacturer to send drivers, mechanics and sufficient garage equipment. The transport should have begun in August 1914.⁹ These examples clearly show that the private entrepreneurs have gained enough faith in their new country by the early 1914, although their plans have not been effectuated because

1 AS, MID-PO, 1913, microfilm 410, R/6-8, Minister of Interior to Minister of Foreign Affairs, official, 18. 11/1. 12. 1913.

2 VA, P 2, K 19, F 14, № 1; K 22, F 36, № 1; F 44, № 2; K 52, F 20, № 2; K 59, F 2, № 23, 38; K 81, F 40, № 1, 2, 3; F 46, № 12; P 6, K 614, F 3, № 30/9; AS, MUD-P, 1913, F 15 R 41; 1914, F 4 R 97.

3 AS, MUD-P, 1913, F 15 R 41; MNP-P, 1915, M. Petrović to Minister of Economy, e№. 130, 14/27. 4. 1914; MID-SPA, 1914, 819.

4 AS, MUD-P, 1913, F 15 R 41.

5 VA, P 3, K 73, F 2, № 61.

6 Politika, 20. 11/3. 12. 1913.

7 AS, MUD-P, 1913, F 15 R 41.

8 Politika, 5/18. 2. 1914.

9 S/GB, microfilm 186, FO 368/1115, Greg to Krekenthorp, 23. 3. 1914, Monastir, S/F 62, N. S. Serbie, vol. 19, 1911-1919, viceconsul dans Monastir à Ministère des Affaires étrangères №. 12, 6. 6. 1914; Politika, 14/27. 4. 1914.

of the outbreak of the First World War. They must have been confident that Government would secure much needed law and order and take appropriate steps to improve and broaden the road network. Had they have a different impression, the entrepreneurs would not have been willing to invest.

Since the planning of a road network was an issue of high military and strategic significance, Serbian General Staff created a comprehensive proposal for construction of new roads in March 1914, at the request of the Minister of Defense. The study encompassed the road network in the whole country and categorized certain sections according to preference. The General Staff suggested the construction of sections in the new regions in the following order: 1) Skoplje – along the Treska river – Brod – Kruševo – Bitolj; 2) Mavrovi Hanovi – Debar, as the extension of the Skoplje – Tetovo – Gostivar – Mavrovi Hanovi road; 3) Kičevo – Slivovo – Novo Selo – Ohrid, thus connecting Gostivar and Ohrid via Kičevo; 4) Skoplje – Veles – Djevdjelija, along the Vardar's right bank, parallel with the existing railroad track; 5) Štip – Radovište; 6) Skoplje – Uroševac – Priština – Mitrovica (part of the road between Skoplje and Uroševac through the Kačanik gorge was specially emphasized); 7) Kičevo – Dolenci – Bitolj; 8) Mitrovica – Rudnik – Peć; 9) Sjenica – Bijelo Polje; 10) Gnjilane – Uroševac; 11) Prizren – Djakovica – Peć.¹ Obviously, the proposed sections were mainly of north – south orientation. Most of them should have been placed in the southwest of the country. This choice was predictable since the alternative communications for the movement of troops should have been secured, in case that the main traffic artery, the Vardar railway was cut. The General Staff's reasoning was based on the presumption of a Bulgarian attack. In fact, the komitas gangs, infiltrated from Bulgaria, have been trying to sabotage the railway since late 1913. Besides that, Skoplje and Bitolj should have been connected by the shortest route, along the Treska valley, through Poreče area and via Kruševo. Thus, the fast transfer of troops through the middle of western Povardarje area would have become possible.

As previously mentioned, the state should fund "larger artificial works" in road building. Serbia's 1914 state budget provided 1, 2 million dinars for "constructions on land and water" in the new regions, including roads (Ministarstvo finansija 1914, 180). According to the already cited report made by the Ministry of Constructions in 1916, building of the sections presented in the following table has commenced until the autumn of 1915.

Table 2: Pebbled carriage roads in construction.²

Road	km	Usability	Notice
Mitrovica-Peć	54	Not for automobiles	Assigned to private contractors
Gostivar-Mavrovi-Hanovi-Debar	65	Not for automobiles	Assigned to private contractors
Kičevo-Jama-Debar	58	For automobiles	Assigned to private contractors
Kičevo-Klasnovac-Ohrid	70	Not for automobiles	Construction has just begun
Aggregate	247		

From May to December 1914, 60 000 dinars were spent on financing works on the Mavrovi Hanovi – Debar road. Sources also mention that in November 1914 10 000 dinars were approved for the construction of the Štip – Radovište road. A contractor was supposed to be engaged by direct settlement, rather than by public tender, for the project was urgent. However, available sources do not reveal what, if anything, has been done on that matter.³ Jovan Marković, a construction entrepreneur from Skoplje has completed the strengthening of bridges on the Skoplje – Veles road just before the evacuation from Skoplje in the autumn of 1915.⁴

Construction of some local roads, mainly in the Prizren, Zvečan and Kosovo counties, which has been considered during 1914, could not have been achieved for the lack of resources and available engineers. These roads were the following:

1 VA, P 3, K 1, F 1a, № 1, 25. 2/10. 3. 1914. and 26. 2/11. 3. 1914.

2 Stated distances are approximate. AS, MG, F 5, 1914-1916, *Narodni putevi u novim oblastima prema izveštaju inženjera G. L. Zisića (Public roads in the new regions according to the engineer's G. L. Zisić's report)*, 11/24. 4. 1916, Nica (Nice).

3 AS, GKo, 1914, F 40 R 52; F 41 R 14.

4 AC, MG, F 6, 1916, J. P. Marković to Minister of constructions 4/17. 4. 1916, Rim (Rome).

Suva Reka – Orahovac – Velika Kruša; Prizren – Tetovo; Priština – through Drenica area – Kijevo; Lipljan – Štimlje; Priština – Gnjilane and Priština – Papaštica.¹

Since July 1915, construction efforts have been primarily focused on the section leading from Čafa San (a place on the south border between Serbia and Albania), via Elbasan and Tirana to Drač. It should have been an extension of the Bitolj – Struga road. The Serbian High Command expected Bulgaria to enter the war at that time. Thus, the prospect of cutting the Vardar railway seemed imminent. Therefore, the High Command considered the establishment of secure connection between southern parts of the country and the Adriatic coast as necessary. Works have begun immediately, as a joint Serbian and Albanian enterprise. However, providing and keeping sufficient labor force have proved to be difficult. Therefore, on September 30th 1915 the Serbian Government decided to use 250 000 dinars of the budget funds for financing the section from Čafa San to Elbasan; the amount included money for workers salaries. The Albanian side should have completed the rest of the road. Of course, the project has remained unfinished because the Serbian army was soon forced to retreat and eventually leave the Serbian soil (Janković, Hrabak 1976, 141).²

Railways

There were three railway lines in the new regions of Serbia. The main was the Mitrovica – Thessaloniki line, i.e. its section from Mitrovica to Djevdjelija (286 km). It extended across Kosovo (through cities Vučitrn, Priština, Lipljan and Uroševac), through the Kačanik gorge, via Skoplje and along the Vardar's right bank to the Greek border; only 14 km long part of the railway was placed on the opposite side of the river in Serbia, south of Veles, between Demir Kapija and a village called Davidovo. Other two lines were: 1) Zibevče (old Serbian – Turkish border) – Skoplje (93 km), which was passing through Bujanovac, Preševo and Kumanovo and 2) Bitolj – Kenali, i.e. Greek border (a short part of the Bitolj – Thessaloniki railway). The first line (Mitrovica – Thessaloniki) began to operate in 1874, second (Zibevče – Skoplje) in 1888 and the third (Bitolj – Thessaloniki) in 1894 (Mitrova 2011, 555-556, 559; Šematizam 1914).

The Mitrovica – Thessaloniki and Zibevče – Skoplje railways were owned by the Eastern Railways Company, with predominantly Austrian and French capital involved. The Company has had a concession for their exploitation, valid until 1958. Serbian High Command has been in control of all railways in the new regions during the Balkan wars. After demobilization and annexation of the new territories, the railways were put under temporary jurisdiction of the Serbian State Railways Directorate. In other words, they were kept in full Serbian control. Such decision was motivated by strong national, i.e. military and economic, interests. Since the railways represented the only Serbian commercial, although indirect, outlet to the sea and a connection with its ally, Greece, the Government was not prepared to abandon control over them. On the other hand, The Eastern Railways Company has begun to demand the return of the railways since the autumn of 1913. Thus, a legal and financial dispute has emerged and soon gained a diplomatic dimension as well, since Austria – Hungary has supported the Company's claim. Other Great Powers got involved in the bilateral negotiations between Serbia and Austria – Hungary over the railways in the beginning of 1914, so the issue became internationalized. Compromises were made by both sides, and a solution was reached. Austria – Hungary has agreed that, under certain conditions Serbia could purchase the railways from the Company. Serbian Government has estimated their value somewhere between 26, 5 and 31 million dinars, based on a calculation made by the State Railways Directorate's experts. The negotiations about the exact price and the manner of payment have proceeded during the spring of 1914, but they were aborted immediately after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo. The railways were eventually bought by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes from the Eastern Railways Company in 1923 (Čorović 1990, 551-558; Aleksić-Pejković 1965, 737-803).³

Since the prewar and new Serbian territories were connected by just one railway (Belgrade – Niš – Vranje – Kumanovo – Skoplje – Djevdjelija), construction of more lines was necessary. "Law on construction of new railways" was passed on

1 VA, P 2, K 77, F 1, Operativni delovodni protokol Kosovske divizijske oblasti (Operation's Protocol of Kosovo division) 17/30. 9. 1913. - 3/16. 6. 1914, № 195, 4/17. 2. 1914; № 252, 25. 2/10. 3. 1914; № 275, 4/17. 3. 1914; № 384, 26. 3/8. 4. 1914.

2 VA, P 7, K 59, F 6, № 21/27, № 21/28; AS, MID-SPA, 1915, 1892, 1915, 1930, 1935.

3 AS, MID-PO, 1913, microfilm 409, R/6-8, Minister of Constructions to Prime Minister № 26699/13, 3/16. 9. 1913; The Eastern Railways Company to Minister of Constructions, 31. 8/13. 9. 1913, Vienna; acting Minister of Foreign Affairs to envoy to Paris, 3/16. 9. 1913; Army Ministry to Minister of Foreign Affairs is № 1383, 4/17. 9. 1913; envoy to Paris to acting Minister of Foreign Affairs № 462, 7/20. 9. 1913; Minister of Foreign Affairs to Austria-Hungary's envoy to Belgrade, 4/17. 12. 1913; microfilm 410, R/6-8, Minister of Constructions to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2/15. 10. 1913; MG, F 14, Minister of Constructions to Minister of Finances, confidential, 20. 2/5. 3. 1914.

May 8th 1913. According to the law, construction of the normal track railways Niš – Prokuplje – Merdare, Kragujevac – Kraljevo – Raška and Kruševac – Jankova Klisura – to the point of connection with the Niš – Merdare line should begin. These lines have been planned before the Balkan wars, and they were all leading to certain points along the prewar border between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire. The enterprise was assigned to the company, named “French – Serbian Society for Industrial and Public Works”. The Law also authorized the Government to conduct studies for the normal track railways Raška – Mitrovica, Raška – Uvac (Bosnian border), Merdare – Priština and for the narrow track line Požega – Ivanjica – Sjenica. Thus, more railway connections between the prewar Serbian territory and the new regions should have been created (Milenković 1936, 250-262).

Before it has considered the road network, Serbian General Staff had defined desirable railway policy from the military and strategic perspective in November and December 1913, at the request of the Defense Minister. The General Staff made a thorough proposal about construction and the construction's dynamic of new railways. It was aimed at covering the whole country with railways network, which would allow fast and efficient transfer of troops from one potential borderline front to another. The Defense Minister initially requested the General Staff to propose the most suitable railway route between Skoplje and Bitolj. The latter concluded that it would have been unsafe to rely on the existing Skoplje – Djevdjelija railway, which could have been connected with Bitolj by construction of a line from Veles, via Prilep to Bitolj. In the General Staff's opinion, the Skoplje – Djevdjelija line was too close to the eastern border and thus overexposed to a possible attack or sabotage. It held that a new normal track railway, centrally positioned in the country, should be built instead and suggested the following route: Kruševac – Tulari – Merdare – Priština – Skoplje – Tetovo – Gostivar – Kičevo – Brod – Prilep – Bitolj. This line was given priority in the future construction. How detrimental was the absence of a railway for the southwest parts of Serbia can be clearly illustrated by the following example. A prominent commander of the comitadjis' units (*vojvoda*), Vasilije Trbić, who lived in the Brailovo village near Prilep, paid in 1914 more for transport of a mechanical thresher by an ox cart from Veles to Prilep, than from Bohemia, where he had purchased it, to Veles by railway (Trbić 1996, 41). Besides the former, the General Staff proposed construction of several others normal track railways in the new regions. They were sequenced according to priority in four categories as follows: 1) Mitrovica – Raška – Novi Pazar – Sjenica; Prilep – Pletvar – Gradsko – Štip – Kočani; 2) Prizren – Lipljan; Priština along the Drenica river – Lapušnik – the Montenegrin border at Dolac village or alternatively Mitrovica – Ribarić – Rožaj; Uroševac – Gnjilane – through the Končulj gorge – Bujanovac; Kumanovo – Kriva Palanka; 3) Bitolj – Resen – Ohrid – Struga; Požega – Ivanjica – Sjenica; Priština – Tenezdol – along the Brvenica, Tularska and Medvedjska rivers – Lebane – Leskovac – Vlasotince – Babušnica – Piroć; 4) Sjenica – Prijepolje – along the Lim or Uvac river – village Uvac on the border with Bosnia; Gostivar – Debar and Kočani – Carevo Selo.¹

Marking out the Merdare – Priština and Raška – Mitrovica routes and the Raška – Novi Pazar – Sjenica – Prijepolje – Uvac route was assigned to the “French – Serbian Society for Industrial and Public Works” in November 1913 and April 1914, respectively. The company commenced construction of the Niš – Prokuplje – Kuršumlija – Merdare railway in April 1914 with a modest ceremony. The line should have been extended to Priština afterwards (Milenković 1936, 180-181).² In the next month, the Government allocated the general marking out of the Priština – Prizren and Bitolj – Ohrid routes to “Lentz” company from Berlin and the Prilep – Kavadar – Gradsko – Štip – Kočani route to a certain financial group from London. The overwhelming dependence on the French capital in the railway construction enterprises was clearly undesired (Milenković 1936, 181).³

Planning of railways' construction in the new regions was not entirely abandoned when the World War One broke out. On December 3rd 1914, while the battle of Kolubara has been fought, Prime Minister Nikola Pašić sent a proposal of the “Law on new railways construction” to members of the State Council (*Državni Savet*) for urgent discussion. It was based on the previously mentioned General Staff's plan. The bill authorized the Government to commence construction of the following railways: 1) Merdare – Priština; 2) Raška – Mitrovica; 3) Skoplje – Tetovo – Gostivar – Kičevo – Brod – Prilep – Bitolj or alternatively Skoplje – through the Treska river valley – Brod – Prilep – Bitolj and Skoplje – Tetovo – Gostivar; 4) Priština – Štimlje – Prizren. The total amount provided for these railways was 103, 8 million dinars. According to the bill, construction the Raška – Novi Pazar – Sjenica – Prijepolje – Uvac and Prilep – Kavadar – Gradsko – Štip railways could have begun after the previously mentioned ones; the expense was estimated at 64, 8 million dinars.⁴ The bill has not been passed in

1 VA, P 3, K 1, F 1a, № 1, 20. 10/2. 11. 1913; 21. 10/3. 11. 1913; 24. 11/7. 12. 1913.

2 Politika 4/17. 11. 1913; 12/25. 1. 1914; 21. 1/3. 2. 1914; 13/26. 4. 1914; AS, MUD-P, 1914, Ф 8 P 101.

3 Politika 18. 4/1. 5. 1914; 29. 4/12. 5. 1914; AS, S/GB microfilm 186, FO 368/1115, Krekenthorp to Grey, confidential № 5, 6. 3. 1914, Belgrade.

4 AS, MID-PMS, 1914, Prime Minister to State Council 20. 11/3. 12. 1914.

Parliament until the occupation of Serbia in 1915, for reasons which cannot be determined. Just before the evacuation, the Government decided on September 17th 1915 that, after the completion of works on the Niš – Knjaževac railway, available labor force (i.e. prisoners of war) should be transferred and used for construction of the Skoplje – Gostivar and Užice – Vardište railway lines (Janković, Hrabak 1976, 131; Milenković 1936, 183-186).

During the occupation, the enemy has built, for its own military purposes, narrow track railways Skoplje – Gostivar – Kičevo – Ohrid and Gradsko – Prilep – Bitolj. The former was repaired after the war and extended via Struga to Moronište, a village on the Crni Drim's right bank; the latter was initially also repaired, but it was later replaced with a normal track railway. During the interwar period, some of the railways planned after the Balkan wars have been constructed (Milenković 1936, 295-296, 320-328, 364-366, 369-374, 417, 419).

The Serbian State Railways possessed 129 locomotives and around 3500 wagons in 1911. Since the number of wagons was insufficient to meet demand within the country, Serbia had to hire large quantity of wagons, mostly from Hungary. Number of locomotives and wagons has decreased during the Balkan wars, for some were heavily damaged and thus became unusable. Therefore, an increase of trains was obviously necessary for the enlarged Serbia. However, the state budget for 1914 did not provide any assets for purchasing new locomotives or wagons (Ministarstvo narodne privrede 1914, 41-42; Ministarstvo finansija 1914, 181-213).

The Serbian State Railways Directorate reduced railway fees for passengers in 1914, on the request made by the Ministry of Economy. This measure was expected to endorse and facilitate trade between the old and the new Serbian territories (Šematizam 1914, 267-268).¹ Railway tariffs, as well as passenger's ticket fees for certain routes, effective in 1913 and 1914, are presented in the following table.

Table 3: Railway tariffs and one way ticket fees in 1913 and 1914 (Šematizam 1914, 267-268 and appendix).

Train	Passenger's ticket fee per person and per km in dinars						Dinars per 10 kg of luggage per 1 km
	First class		Second class		Third class		
	1913	1914	1913	1914	1913	1914	
Express	0.135	0.11	0.09	0.08	0.06	0.05	0.003
Local	0.09	0.09	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.04	
Train	Passenger's ticket fee for the Belgrade - Djevdjelija route (629 km)						Dinars per 10 kg of luggage
	First class		Second class		Third class		
	1913	1914	1913	1914	1913	1914	
Express	84.915	69.19	56.61	50.32	37.74	31.45	1.887
Local	56.61	56.61	37.74	37.74	25.16	25.16	
Train	Passenger's ticket fee for the Mitrovica - Djevdjelija route (286 km)						Dinars per 10 kg of luggage
	First class		Second class		Third class		
	1913	1914	1913	1914	1913	1914	
Express	38.61	31.46	25.74	22.88	17.16	14.3	0.858
Local	25.74	25.74	17.16	17.16	11.44	11.44	
Train	Passenger's ticket fee for the Belgrade - Skoplje route (463 km)						Dinars per 10 kg
	First class		Second class		Third class		

¹ AS, MNP-T, 1913, varia, Minister of Economy to Minister of Constructions, t№ 7495, 29. 11/12. 12. 1913.

	1913	1914	1913	1914	1913	1914	of luggage
Express	62.505	50.93	41.67	37.04	27.78	23.15	1.389
Local	41.67	41.67	27.78	27.78	18.52	18.52	

The railway journeys were quite expensive. An express train's luxurious first class journey from Belgrade to Djevdjelija cost as much as a better cow; the same ride, taken in a third class, was equally priced as two or three sheep (Ministarstvo narodne privrede 1914, 307). Therefore, a discount was introduced for seasonal workers who travelled around the country. They could get tickets at the rate of 0,02 dinars per person and per kilometer under certain conditions. The workers had to travel from and to the same station, and in a group of at least ten persons; they also had to present certificates of Serbian citizenship to a railway official. This tariff was twice lower than the third class tariff. However, the workers were allowed to travel in freight cars only (Šematizam 1914, 267-268 and appendix).

Serbian Government was well aware after the Treaty of Bucharest that the annexed territories could not be fully integrated with the rest of the country without the appropriate land communication lines. Inherited roads and railways were insufficient and suitable for the Ottoman, not Serbian, needs. Some counties of the new regions hardly had any decent roads whatsoever. Therefore, the General Staff made elaborate plans on the construction of roads and railways by the end of 1913. They were based primarily on military and strategic interests. However, due to the unfavorable circumstances, little has actually been achieved. Only few new roads and none of the conceived railways have been constructed between 1912 and 1915. The plans remained postponed until the end of the First World War.

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Popisnik - Inventory 2: Balkanski ratovi – Balkan Wars 1912-1913 (P 2)

Popisnik – Inventory 3: Vrhovna Komanda – General Staff 1914-1920 (P 3)

Popisnik – Inventory 6: Ratna arhiva divizija – War archives of divisions 1914-1921 (P 6)

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