

ASPECTS OF BULGARIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Bulgarian policy conforms to a certain set of rules, valid for all communist countries in general, as well as to another set of rules which apply to Bulgaria particularly. We shall here outline briefly this latter set of rules, but it should be remembered that the resulting system of laws has a complementary character, while the formulation achieved is always subject to certain prerequisite conditions.

From the viewpoint of political psychology there exists, in the case of Bulgaria, an interesting complex: Bulgarian political behaviour is, at least indirectly, inspired by the lost vision of the Great Bulgaria of St. Stephano, which has left its indelible memory in the souls of the Bulgarian people and their leaders. No one perhaps can blame them for this. A people who, after many difficulties achieve a national conscience manage, within a very short time, to become momentarily the major power in the Balkans. Very soon, however, the great vision disappears, without their doing anything to lose it, just as they had done relatively little to achieve it. It is therefore natural that subconsciously this people should bear a grudge against an injustice for which, not knowing whether they should blame the Great Powers or their neighbours, they are consequently blaming both.

The second characteristic of Bulgarian political psychology is related to the repeated defeats at war suffered by that country. As in the case of the Germans, the Bulgarians cannot comprehend why they were defeated since they have fought bravely. The resulting repressions become even more intense as the Bulgarians seem unable to appreciate the forces which decide the course of history.

A third basic problem, bearing on the shaping of Bulgarian policy, lies in the fact that the inhabitants of the Pirin district have entered, by a high percentage, in the central government structure placing their distinctive seal on many expressions of Bulgarian public life. Many Bulgarians feel that this fact creates a historical dilemma for their country: Namely, the question arises whether the so-called "Pirin Macedonia" will remain Bulgarian, or whether it will develop into a new nucleus that will eventually absorb the Bulgarian state.

The question of the population of the Pirin district creates a fourth problem, concerning the existing balance in numbers between Serbs and

Bulgarians and the need felt by the latter to include in their population the inhabitants of the area between Pirin and Skoplje. In this way the Bulgarians hope to outnumber the other Slavic peoples of the Balkan peninsula, thus becoming the gravitational centre for a Slavic Federation of the South which, in their opinion, is a historical necessity.

A fifth basic factor, almost possessing the power of law, that determines Balkan politics, stems from a long pre-history of foreign interference in the peninsula. This interference has mostly strategic reasons, like the important position of the Balkan peninsula at the meeting point of three continents or is due to economic interests, that arose during the development of the industrial revolution and consist of the collection of a kind of superprofit by the more developed countries at the expense of the rural areas of Southeastern Europe. Moreover, foreign interference in the Balkans was also due to the age-old antagonism between East and West. In prehistoric times the Balkans were the field where the nomadic and rural populations of Europe clashed. This clash, which continued in historic times and particularly in the Middle Ages, is still going on today in a different form.

Indeed, according to geopolitics, the outcome of the antagonism between the Eurasian plains, identified today with the Soviet Union, and the coastal and insular powers, corresponding to the democracies of the Western type, will be decided in Southeastern Europe. Thus, he who controls the Balkan peninsula, secures control over the relations between the Eastern Block and the Western World. But if the Balkan peninsula constitutes the key for the arbiter between East and West, that crucial strategic space of the Central Balkan Peninsula, known as Macedonia and comprising the point where the Morava - Axios axis and the *Via Egnatia* cross, constitutes in turn the key to this key. In short, always according to geopolitical principles, the Central Balkan Peninsula constitutes a turn-table on which world balance rests. This principle has inspired Bulgarian policy, as it did inspire German policy. The failures of German policy, which was based on this geopolitical principle, would tend to render its validity questionable. But the fact that the last two world wars began in Eastern Europe, that the break between Ribbentrop and Molotov came over the question of dividing this area, that the Stalin-Churchill negotiations over the division of the peninsula into spheres of influence constituted a basic condition for the agreement of the Allies over the fate of Germany, that, furthermore, the first sign of Russian - American crisis appeared in 1947 in connection with the fate of the Balkan peninsula and the break between Tito and the Cominform was due mainly to Moscow's decision to prevent

the formation of a federation in Eastern Europe, all these instances prove the international significance of the Balkan peninsula.

There are still other historical laws which find interesting application in the Balkans and explain the traditionally dynamic pro - Russian policy followed by Bulgaria. The late K. Nikolaides, Professor of history in the University of Vienna and theoretician on the foreign policy of the Austrian Court, in his book «*Istoria tou Ellenismou*» (Athens 1923) explained certain aspects of one of these laws. Since 1633, he says, when the vanguards of the Cossacks reached the Pacific coast and the consequent clash of Russian and English interests in China resulted in the withdrawal of support to pro - Russian Patriarch Cyril Loukaris by British policy, an internal correlation, functioning with the regularity of a pendulum, is created between Anglo - Russian relations in Asia on the one hand, and the Balkans on the other. Since then, Professor K. Nikolaides maintains, any Russian action in the East leads to Western reaction in Macedonia and vice - versa.

But this historical correlation, also demonstrable by the coincidence of dates of Anglo - Russian activities in these two neuralgic areas, which to the rest of the world constituted distant and independent sectors, while in the London and Moscow Foreign offices they were considered organically related points on the globe, is not the only proof for the world-wide importance of the Balkan peninsula. According to Professor K. Nikolaides again, the strategy of Pan Slavism adopted by the authoritarian Tsarist policy and supported at the time by the liberal European movements, was not to the advantage of Moscow, which was thus for the first time facing the German factor and its influence on the Slavic countries of Eastern Europe. Professor K. Nikolaides brings interesting data to bear, according to which the Czar was involuntarily led toward Pan Slavism by Czech political refugees in Paris and London, who organized the Pan Slavic conventions of the last century in Prague. According to the same historian, England and France managed to create problems in the hitherto smooth Russian - German relations by means of the Czech refugees of that period, whom they influenced as they did Mazarik in 1918. As soon, however, as the Russians began using racial catchwords for their descent to the warm seas, it was natural that they should find themselves opposed in their course not only by the Germans and the Baltic peoples, but also by the Hungarians, Rumanians, and Greeks, present between them and the Aegean Sea. Since, moreover, the Russians had adopted the Pan Slavic policy, it was inevitable, according to K. Nikolaides, that they should also evince a definite interest in Mace-

donia, which was the last strip of land between them and the sea. It was therefore imperative that Macedonia should be proved Slavic; otherwise, the overall validity of Panslavic policy and the corresponding dogma were in danger of being overthrown.

There are additional political principles which form the background of Bulgarian activities in the Balkans. The first concerns the special relations between Greeks and Bulgarians. No other Balkan population has found itself in greater danger of absorption by Greek culture than the Bulgarians. When, in the Middle Ages, the population of Bulgaria revolted against the Byzantines, the clock of history had almost struck the twelfth hour in regard to the survival of Bulgarian nationalism, because their assimilation by the Greeks had already reached an advanced stage. Likewise the Bulgarians were once more threatened by assimilation by the Greek element during Turkish domination. Thus, the proximity to radiant Hellenism was the main reason for a delay noted in the development of a Bulgarian national conscience till only a few decades ago. This is furthermore the reason why the latent instinct of Bulgarian national self-preservation has always dealt violent blows to Greek cultural forces.

We explained earlier why Bulgarian political practice is threatened by dramatic contradictions in its stand on the great problem of its relations with the Serbs and the population of Pirin and the People's Republic of Macedonia. On the one hand the Central Balkans are necessary to Bulgaria if it is to dominate the entire Balkan peninsula while at the same time any emphasis on the Macedonian factor might endanger the more immediate interests of Bulgaria as a national entity. In other words we have here the necessity of winning over the quantitative strength of the populations of the Pirin and Skoplje areas, opposed by the fear of their quantitative superiority or by the fear of their being used against Bulgaria as a new independent state by Yugoslavia, Russia, or some other political force. This constitutes an interesting interpretation to the phenomenon that, while the Varhivist political currents of Sofia have always insisted on the incorporation of non-Bulgarian Macedonia, the Bulgarian Agrarian Party has always favoured the creation of an independent Macedonian state. Indeed the Varhivist circles were mostly identified with royalist, nationalist, and militarist Sofia circles, whereas, the Bulgarian Agrarians, being more democratic, sought a settlement of the relations between Sofia and Skoplje by gradual absorption of the mutually claimed areas through a transitional stage of an autonomous Macedonia, in accordance with the precedent of Eastern Roumelia. Moreover, the Court of King Boris saw in the Royal family of

Belgrade the dynasty likely to prevail in case a Southern Slavic Federation were created under one crown, and therefore opposed any approach between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. On the contrary, Bulgarian Agrarians felt an ideological solidarity toward Yugoslavian Agrarians, looked favourably upon the idea of a Balkan Federation, and did not wish to see the Macedonian question endanger a desirable common future of the two countries.

The above review of the differences in pre-war Bulgarian policy is of some interest because it leads to an interpretation of current Bulgarian policy as followed respectively by both the Communists and the emigrant element abroad.

Thus, the subject of the annexation of Macedonia constitutes today the prevailing policy of the "Bulgarian National Front", founded in Canada in 1950 with the participation of Varhovist pro-monarchists, the right-wing Liberals, the Fascists of Alexander Tsankov and the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union. The "National Front" is under the leadership of the ex-Prime Minister Kioseivanof and Balhausky. On the other hand, the "Bulgarian National Committee" founded in 1947 by Georghii Dimitrof-Gemeto, has its seat in Washington and comprises the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union, the left wing of the Socialist Party, the left wing of the Democratic Party and the Radical Party. This committee includes strong elements favouring the creation of an autonomous Macedonia as a first step to its annexation, or even without prospects of annexation, so long as an autonomous Macedonia is created without the context of a Balkan Federation.

It seems, moreover, that similar tendencies survive today within the framework of the Bulgarian Communist Party as well. There are indications that the right communist nucleus and particularly the higher ranks of its hierarchy who have still a Stalinist tint consisting of "Kutvists", trained in Moscow, oppose the idea of a Balkan Federation and walk along the nationalist line of Macedonian annexation. On the contrary, the lesser members of the Bulgarian Communist Party and those that achieved distinction through the internal resistance movement, continue along the old autonomist line of the Agrarians, which at present constitutes the official policy of Belgrade. The same elements look upon Titoism as a more democratic communist system, allowing the lower bureaucracy to advance itself at the expense of Stalinist oligarchy which, after having "frozen" higher administrative posts during the Stalinist era, returned to power in part when Khrushchev prevailed in the Kremlin following a brief "Malenkof interlude". All these lesser members of Bulgarian bureaucracy who natu-

rally favour a rapprochement with Yugoslavia and Titoism as the native Balkan communism, subscribe to the policy of an independent Macedonia, as the only course capable of removing differences among the Slavs of the South. In the last analysis, reforms of the 5th and the 6th Conventions of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the shifts in policy of Sofia with respect to Belgrade and the Macedonian question, of which more will be said later, are determined by these two groups of Bulgarian communists and their interrelationships.

It is possible, moreover, that corresponding antagonistic forces are present in the Kremlin itself. The existence of "Stalinists" and "Titoists" not only in the Bulgarian Communist Party, but also within the Soviet Union, is not limited to foreign policy, but constitutes an organic phenomenon due to the very texture of the Soviet form of Government. The renewal rate of public service employees in Communist regimes where they represent a great social force, depends on the degree for which intra-party democracy is practiced. In these regimes, the leadership of the State and of the entire social body depends on party leadership. But this party leadership which in any case changes slowly (considering that only $\frac{1}{6}$ of the Politburo may be renewed after each Congress, sometimes called only every 15 years) is renewed even less frequently during "Stalinist" periods of "cult of personality" of the Secretary General. This "idolization" is usually expressed by a tacit discontinuation of meetings of collective instruments of the Party on all levels, and by the consequent separation of the higher from the lower staffs. From that moment on, the latter form a common front with the people seeking the introduction of intra-party democratic reforms that would secure both the hierarchical advancement of the lower bureaucracy and the satisfaction of popular demands on Party leadership.

In these cases we have, in the Soviet Union as well, a repetition of the Bulgarian phenomenon of a split in the main body of the Party into "leftists" and into supporters of those reforms which the 6th Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Union introduced to the Statute in 1952. Precisely, these reforms have already been partly adopted by the 19th and 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, after the years 1953 and 1956.

It is natural, under these circumstances, for friends of the aforementioned reforms in the Soviet Union, to maintain that a more liberal discussion of Party policy would place on a more objective basis not only internal problems, such as the need for renewal of the higher bureaucracy, but related foreign affairs as well. The latter would in turn include the restoration on unity in the international communist movement, the alliance

of "Titoists" against the Chinese "leftist" deviation and a review of Stalinist nationalistic policy, which long wavered trying to choose a centre of Balkan policy between Belgrade and Sofia, finally deciding in favour of Sofia, as more Stalinist and conducive to a short-term nationalist policy. Naturally, the Soviet position on the Macedonian question is likewise effected accordingly, depending on which of the two factions prevail over the mechanism determining political decisions.

All this, however, does not mean that the strong Titoist character of southern Slavic communism is only due to ideological or geopolitical reasons. It is also due to special social, political and economic conditions, of which we shall here mention those related to the operation of Bulgarian collective farms. This specifically communist system of rural exploitation provides for the existence in each kolhoz of a comparatively large party-and administrative bureaucracy, indispensable because of the standardized form of the economy and the need for political control by the regime. In predominantly flat countries, like the Soviet Union, where the kolhoz are vast and cultivation extensive, production is so high, that this extravagant administrative system does not prove uneconomical. Yet in more mountainous countries, like Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, the yield is smaller and farmers have additional reasons to complain against their being burdened by great administrative expenses. This was one more reason for the reaction against the Soviet collectivistic system, a reaction which was finally identified with Titoism.

This special Bulgarian feature led to the following phenomena in the social structure of that country: While minor and particularly provincial bureaucrats form common interest groups of a Titoist nature with farmers, the higher Party members are bound in close collaboration of a Stalinist character with the managers of industrial enterprises.

The fact that the racial origin of Bulgarians and Serbs is not Slavic from an anthropological viewpoint, constitutes one of the reasons adding to the centrifugal tendency of their countries toward Moscow, with the result that they have always been warm supporters of an independent Balkan Federation, which forms the official and characteristic policy of Titoism. Actually, the racial background of the Bulgarians and Yugoslavs is Mediterranean, with the presence of a minority of Slavic origin which for reasons not concerning us here, managed to impose their language.

It is evident that in the case of the Balkans, too, a well known sociological law may be applied: After the establishment of Communism

in the Balkan peninsula, it was not its problems but their terminology that changed. The various scattered national minorities heretofore appearing in terms of political or religious peculiarities, are now present as ideological movements assuming a Titoist or Stalinist form. The policy of Belgrade aiming at an industrialization of the Skoplje area has won over the benefiting bourgeois population of the area, while the agrarian population has remained devoted to Bulgaria.

Moreover, the existence of an autocephalus church has always been considered, in the Balkans at least, as a prerequisite step toward the creation of an independent nation. Thus, the creation of the autocephalus Bulgarian church doubtless contributed greatly toward the shaping of Bulgarian nationalism. The efforts to create the Patriarchates of Ochrid and of Ipek tended in the same direction, for their initiators believed that these Patriarchates would contribute to the creation of an independent Macedonian State. In 1954 the case of an autocephalus Macedonian Church was again brought up, this time by the People's Federal Republic of Skoplje. The demand was made by Skoplje leaders, and Belgrade sanctioned their claims. For obvious reasons the Communist Party of Bulgaria, reacted strongly against this scheme accusing the Yugoslavs of chauvinism. Also, the then Patriarch of the Serbian Church Vikentios, was opposed to the idea, and has since been accused of Serbian expansionism. However, the time when the foundation of an autocephalous Church was a condition leading to the complete independence of a people has passed irrevocably in the Balkans. The establishment of a Bishopric of Ochrid and Ipek could have once served purposes which can now not be promoted by the creation of a Patriarchate in Skoplje. Thus, when, after the death of the Serbian Patriarch Vikentios, Tito taking advantage of the ascendance to the Throne of Patriarch Germanos succeeded in carrying out his plan of founding an autocephalous Macedonian Church, his move was no longer so significant as it would have been fifty or even twenty years ago. The establishment, meanwhile, of Communism in the central Balkans had minimized the political importance of the Church in that area.

As in the past the creation of an autonomous Macedonian State implied the necessity of a separate Macedonian Church, so today it implies the formation of a separate Macedonian Communist Party. After the fall of Yugoslavia, a struggle which had actually been latent since the end of the First World War, broke out in Skoplje and Pirin, between the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist Parties, for the attainment of control over this area. In this struggle it immediately became clear that the existing

confusion of authority between the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Communist Parties over the disputed Skoplje area might easily be removed by simply creating a Macedonian Communist Party. However, such a party has never come into existence, since current communist policy insists on one party corresponding to one separate State. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian Communist Party interfered in the affairs of Skoplje in 1941 during the regime of Bulgarian Occupation under the pretext that it was under the political jurisdiction of the Bulgarian State. The Yugoslavs countered, that in such a case the correspondance between Bulgarian State and Bulgarian Communist Party legalized the arbitrary German war decision by which the Skoplje area was ceded to Sofia. Thus, constant friction rose between the two parties. Nevertheless, the Yugoslav Communists themselves were opposed to a correspondance of Party to State because they would thus be obliged to found a separate Communist Party in Macedonia. The result of creating such a party would be that the central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party would lose control over Skoplje, a control practiced by Belgrade on the basis of that communist rule according to which members of the governments of the federal republics are politically independent in relation to the central federal authorities, while, as communists, they are, on the other hand, responsible to the Party, which thus secures unity of the federation.

Under these circumstances, the creation of an autocephalous Macedonian Church in Skoplje only partly contributes toward the political independence desired by the inhabitants of the area. Actually, this Church merely entails an improvement of Yugoslav control over the rural masses around Skoplje, the creation of an additional Titoist argument for propaganda by political emigrants abroad, and the acquisition of a weapon by the bourgeoisie of the Skoplje area.

The interpretation of recent Balkan history attempted here would be incomplete if it did not include the various views maintained from time to time by certain Balkan countries on the disputed question of creating or not an independent Macedonian State. It must first be said that changes in the stand of the Greek Communist Party on this subject have depended on the periodic adoption of revolutionary tactics, when the support of Slavic communists was sought, or popular front tactics, in which case the necessity for collaboration with Greek bourgeois parties required a renunciation of the question of Macedonian autonomy.

Likewise, in the period between the two wars, the Yugoslav Communist Party had clashed with Moscow and Sofia because it refused to

accept the principle of an autonomous Macedonia for internal political reasons. On the contrary, as soon as it realized, upon appropriate indication by Stalin himself, that the federal principle could be used to restore Yugoslav unity, this Party began to maintain the existence of a distinct Macedonian nationality, on condition of its inclusion within the Yugoslav framework as a separate political entity.

On the other hand, following a declaration by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern at its 2nd Congress, to the effect that the Macedonians are Bulgarians, Bulgarian communists supported the idea of an existing distinct Macedonian nationality after the 1922 Congress of the Balkan Communist Federation and during the entire period between the wars, in order to dispel Yugoslav suspicions inspired by the Comintern. Finally, in 1948, having realized that the Yugoslavs were those mainly favoured by this theory, the Bulgarians maintained, at the 5th Congress of their Communist Party, that "although the Macedonians differ racially from the Bulgarians, they do not need administrative autonomy due to their close cultural, political and economic ties with Bulgaria, which create in them a Bulgarian conscience".

Yet if the Bulgarians no longer believe in the existence of a separate Macedonian nationality, it is inexplicable why, since 1950 and in collaboration with the Greek Communist Party, they have been trying to promote Macedonian cultural autonomy by means of the organization ILI-DEN.

In actual politics, moreover, this wealth of the nuances of the question is expressed by the post-war existence of manifold secret revolutionary organizations, of the old Varhivist and Comitadji type. In actual fact, ILI-DEN, OHRANA, NOF, SNOF, KOAIM, and the "MPO" organization of the U.S., as many others, constitute transformations of the initial I.M.R.O. (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization).

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