

GREEK MACEDONIA AND THE CONVENTION OF NEUILLY (1919)

Among the problems created as a result of the Balkan Wars, few were so complicated as the problems presented by the ethnic minorities in Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia which were incorporated into these states following the annexation of lands which until that time belonged to the Ottoman Empire. In Macedonia, in particular, the problem was more acute because the territories annexed by the neighboring states were inhabited by a mixed population. Thus, some ethnic groups found themselves residing in a country with which they had no national affiliation, while, on the contrary, they were connected with ties of kinship with the neighboring one. This situation, of course, disturbed the national unity of the Balkan states which had succeeded Turkey in Macedonia, and endangered peace in this part of the world. Under the circumstances, the separation of these groups and their incorporation to the countries with which they felt akin seemed to be the only effective solution to the problem.

The idea of a "racial adjustment" originated first with the Prime Minister of Greece, Eleftherios Venizelos, in 1915, at a time when he was concerned with securing a permanent peace with Bulgaria so that he might save Hellenism in Turkey¹. This idea was further developed later in the Convention of Neuilly which dealt with reciprocal emigration of persons belonging to racial minorities.

Before attempting a detailed investigation, it would be useful to pay some consideration to the historic and ethnographic factors which constituted the background and finally led to the Convention of Neuilly.

The ancient Greek name *Macedonia*, which at the time of Philip II designated the land bounded by the mountains Olympus, Kamvounia, Pindus, Grammos, the lake Lychnitis (Ochrid), the mountain range which is known today as Nidjé Planina - Demir Kapu - Orbelos and Central Rhodope, was, after the establishment of the Byzantine themes, given to the region of Adrianople. It was from this region that the famous "Macedo-

1. S. P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*, (New York, 1932), p. 29.

nian” dynasty of the Byzantine Emperors derived its name. During the Ottoman rule, the name *Macedonia* survived in popular use and meant to designate the region which in classical times was known as Macedonia². The Turks, however, did not employ the term *Macedonia*. Instead, they gave the names of the principal cities of the region to the large administrative units to which they divided it. Thus, the vilayets of Thessalonike, Monastir and Skopje were formed. The name *Macedonia* began to be used again extensively toward the last quarter of the 19th century, when the Bulgarians began to push forward territorial claims over the region. From then on the name *Macedonia* was given each time a different connotation depending on the political ends which it was set to serve. After the Second World War, when Yugoslavia was organized into a federation and the region of Skopje constituted its southernmost state, the new leaders of Yugoslavia, desiring to get rid of the name “Bulgarians” by which the inhabitants of Yugoslav Macedonia were still commonly known, decided to appropriate the Greek name and called themselves “Macedonians” and their state “the People’s Republic of Macedonia” or “Vardar Macedonia”. At the same time, on the abuse of a geographical term, which in modern times has no ethnic connotation whatsoever, they put forward claims over the entire region, comprising also the Greek and Bulgarian parts of Macedonia. For the purpose of this study the term “Macedonia” will be used to refer to the lands which after the Balkan Wars were annexed by Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece and are known today as “Macedonia” in each of the three countries.

Notwithstanding the claims on Macedonian territories which each of the three interested countries pushed forward on the basis of ethnological reasons, the national composition of Macedonia at the time of the Balkan Wars, by and large, presented the following picture: The littoral of Macedonia along the Aegean as well as that of Eastern Thrace from the river Evros (Maritsa) to the Black Sea was entirely Greek. The same can be said for western Macedonia, along the line running close to Monastir and Florina. In the rest of Thrace and Macedonia, Greeks and Bulgarians were intermingled without any clear dividing line. Most of the towns were chiefly Greek³, with a flowering economy and a strong Hellenic cultural tradition

2. N. P. Andriotes, “History of the name Macedonia”, *Balkan Studies*, (1960) p. 147.

3. Such towns were: Monastir, Krusovo, Petritsi, Nevrokop, Philippople, Varna, Pyrgos, Anghialos, Stenemachos and others that have remained outside the borders of the Greek Kingdom.

maintained alive in the various educational institutions sponsored by the Greek communities. Greek aspirations did not extend to northern and northeastern Macedonia. These lands, where the Serbian interests were centered, were inhabited by uneducated South Slav peasants, who had no national consciousness of any sort before the Bulgarian propaganda began its work⁴. It is, of course, very difficult to translate the above mentioned facts in numbers. Statistical data were scarce and inaccurate at those times, because they were either biased or purely speculative. Sometimes, figures were distorted in order to serve the interests of the author⁵. Moreover, the migratory movements of populations, which had started since the beginning of the century and were due to reasons which will be mentioned below, made the ethnological composition of Macedonia still more difficult to ascertain.

Indeed, the Convention of Neuilly of 1919 was neither the first, nor the only cause of group migrations between Greece and Bulgaria during the first twenty years of this century. As a matter of fact, the Convention gave a solution to the problems that had been created by migrations prior to its application, by providing for the settlement and liquidation of properties of people emigrated from Greece to Bulgaria and vice-versa between December 18, 1900 and December 18, 1920. These migrations were due to various causes, which can be grouped *grosso-modo* as follows:

1. *The Macedonian Struggle* (1903 - 1908). During the Ottoman era, Macedonia was inhabited by a number of races, namely, Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, Albanians and Turks, who, far from being distinguished from each other by clear-cut demarcation lines, lived side-by-side under the Turkish rule, little caring about their national origin. It was only when the fall of the Ottoman Empire was imminent and the prospect of the partition seemed close at hand that the young Balkan States became interested in expanding their boundaries in Macedonia. The Bulgarians were the first in the field. Their aspirations for a Great Bulgaria were revealed by the Treaty of San

4. Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 8 ff.

5. The official Turkish census of 1904 in the three provinces (viliayets) of Thessaloniki, Monastir and Skopje, conducted by Hilmi Pasha gave a total of 648,962 Greeks, and a total of 537,734 Bulgarians. See A. Wurfbain, *L'Échange Gréco-Bulgare des minorités ethniques*, (Librairie Payot, 1930), p. 24; also St. Kyriakides, *The Northern Ethnological Boundaries of Hellenism*, (Thessalonike, 1955), p. 58. These numbers have been changed by A. I. Krainikowski, *La Question de Macédoine et la Diplomatie Européenne*, (Paris, 1938), p. 317. According to the latter, the Hilmi Pasha statistics gave a total of 896,454 Bulgarians and 307,000 Greeks.

Stefano, which marked the beginning of the struggle for supremacy in Macedonia. Indeed, the Bulgarian and Panslavistic propaganda used every possible means to alter the racial composition of Macedonia, and appropriate the various peoples living in it⁶. At first they used peaceful means; thus in 1894 they secured the consent of the Sublime Porte to the establishment of two Bulgarian bishops in Macedonia. Shortly thereafter, however, they resorted to force and armed bands of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), a Bulgarian terrorist organization, invaded Macedonia and used every means to impress upon the masses of Macedonian peasants the idea that they were Bulgarians, and that Bulgaria was to secure their freedom⁷. It was not until later that the Greek Government, pressed by the appeals of the oppressed Greek population and by the reports of its consular agents in Macedonia, decided to counteract by sending officers of the Greek Army across the border in order to help the hard-pressed Greek peasants of Macedonia to resist Bulgarian terrorism. The main enemy was, of course, the Bulgarians and their effort to bulgarize Macedonia. Yet, many bloody fights occurred between Greek bands and the Turkish army, the latter trying to keep Turkish territory free from foreign elements, who incited the peasants⁸.

Such was the situation in Macedonia on the eve of the Balkan Wars. The prevailing state of bitter fighting caused a strong current of emigration among the Christian minorities, considerable number of whom emigrated to the United States, while others sought refuge in Greece or Bulgaria, according to their ethnic affiliation⁹. The biggest wave of refugees, however, that was a sequel of the Macedonian Struggle, came from Bulgaria in 1906, after the destruction of the flourishing Greek minority in Eastern Rumelia, carried out by order of the Bulgarian Government under the pressure of the powerful leaders of the Revolutionary Committee¹⁰. In instituting this retaliatory measure the Bulgarians acted from an advantageous position, for, since there were no Bulgarians living in Greece proper, they had nothing to be afraid of¹¹.

6. Kyriakides, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

7. Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

8. See Ath. Souliotes - Nikolaides, 'Ο Μακεδονικός Αγών [The Macedonian Struggle], (Thessalonike, 1959), p. 16 ff.

9. Wurfbain, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

10. George Mylonas, *The Balkan States*, (St. Louis, Mis., 1946), p. 77 ff.

11. S. Seferiades, "L'échange des populations", *Rec. des Cours 1928*, p. 369.

2. *Military operations during the Wars.* The Second Balkan War (1913) caused about 15,000 Bulgarians of Eastern Macedonia to follow the Bulgarian army in its retreat¹². On the other hand, the invasion of the Bulgarian army in Eastern Macedonia during the First World War (1916) compelled the Greek population to seek refuge in Central and Western Greek Macedonia. A great number of Greeks who had not managed to flee were deported to Bulgaria, where more than half of them perished¹³. Only 16,000 out of 36,000 returned to their homes after the war.

However, the movements of populations caused by military operations cannot be considered as migratory movements—in the sense that the people left their homes with no intention to return,—for after the re-occupation of Eastern Macedonia by the Greek army (1918) most of the refugees, who had fled during the war, returned to their homes.

3. *The Transfer of territories by the Peace Treaties.* The Treaty of Bucharest, which divided Macedonia among Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, created reciprocal emigration of populations from and to these countries, which tended to establish ethnic homogeneity in them. But it was the Convention of Neuilly, a political sequel of the Treaty of Neuilly¹⁴, which attempted a radical adjustment of the national issues between Greece and Bulgaria.

In accordance with article 56, para. 2, of the Treaty of Neuilly and by decision of the Principal Powers, a Convention was signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine on November 27, 1919 by the Greek and Bulgarian plenipotentiaries concerning reciprocal emigration of minorities between the two signatory states. This Convention, containing 17 articles, can be summarized as follows:

The high contracting parties grant to their subjects, who belong to ethnic minorities of religion or language the right to emigrate freely in their respective territories (Art. 1). The Governments of the two states undertake the obligation to facilitate in every way the exercise of this right and to interpose no obstacle whatsoever, directly or indirectly, in the freedom of emigration. The pecuniary rights of the emigrants will also be

12. *Ibid.*, p. 369.

13. *Ibid.*; also Wurfbaïn, *op. cit.*, p. 38; Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

14. Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 28. Article 56 par. 2 of the Treaty of Peace signed in November 27, 1919 between the Allied and Associated Powers and Bulgaria at Neuilly-sur-Seine provided that "Bulgaria undertakes to recognize such provisions as the Principal Allied and Associated Powers may consider opportune with respect to the reciprocal and voluntary emigration of persons belonging to ethnic minorities".

protected (Art. 2). The task of surveying and facilitating the emigration will be entrusted to a Mixed Commission, composed of one member appointed by each of the contracting parties and two neutral members appointed by the League of Nations. The Chairman of the Commission is chosen from the neutral members and has a casting vote in case of equal division (Art. 8). The right of emigration will be exercised by means of a written declaration before the Mixed Commission or its representatives. The Commission will also see to the appraisal and liquidation of properties and, in general, it will take every necessary step to secure the enforcement of the Convention, and to solve every problem that arises in the course of emigration and liquidation of properties (Art. 4,9,10). The right of voluntary emigration may be exercised by any person over 18 years of age. The declaration filed by the husband implies also his wife and children under 18 years (Art. 4). The emigrants lose the nationality of the country which they abandon the moment they cross the border and acquire that of the country of their destination (Art. 5). They are free to carry with them all their movable property, no duty being imposed on them in this circumstance (Art. 6). The communities whose members exercise the right of emigration will be dissolved, and their movable property may be taken away by their members on the issuance of a permission by the Mixed Commission under the conditions imposed by the latter. Their immovable property will be liquidated under the same conditions. The term "communities" includes churches, convents, schools, hospitals and other establishments (Art. 6, 7).

Although the above mentioned articles apply to the minorities of the two signatory states, Greece and Bulgaria, the Convention in Art. 15 leaves an open window for the third Balkan State which was also confronted by a problem of minorities, namely, Serbia, by stating that the Convention will be open for a period of one year for other states which had common frontiers with Greece and Bulgaria to join in. The Greek delegation, in particular, spared no effort to persuade Serbia to adhere to the Convention, but the attempt failed as the Serbians were not at that time interested in participating in an agreement which might result in a strong population movement from their country towards Bulgaria, especially since there could be no much hope for a similar movement towards Serbia. They were probably of the opinion that the ignorant peasants of Serbian Macedonia, whose national conscience had been awakened by Bulgarian propaganda, had not yet crystallized a Bulgarian national conscience and after a short period of Serbian rule they might forget their former feelings and attach themselves to Serbia, which could offer them security and welfare.

Under this impression, Serbia was quite reluctant to enter the Convention of Neuilly, and the Serbian delegate to the League of Nations rejected without much consideration the proposal of the Committee of the New States, stating that though Serbia approves of the ideas inspiring the draft, she did not believe either in the necessity or the advisability of the proposed clauses. The Serbian view was that direct negotiations between the two interested states would be more satisfactory ¹⁵.

Thus the Convention was confined between Greece and Bulgaria. The draft of the Convention, though there was no legal obligation on the part of the Committee of the New States, was submitted to the Bulgarian delegation, which approved entirely of its provisions and noted that "it hastened to adopt its provisions all the more willingly because the composition and functions of the Mixed Commission were of such a nature as to inspire the greatest confidence" ¹⁶. This unreserved acceptance is of great importance, because it proves that the Convention was not forced upon Bulgaria as a consequence of the obligation imposed by article 56 of the Treaty of Peace; but on the contrary, the Bulgarian Government participated in it freely and voluntarily and by doing so rendered the Convention legally independent from the Treaty of Neuilly. At the same time it revealed its intention for a final settlement of the minority problem. This intention, shared equally by Greece, is clearly inferred by the effort of the draftsmen of the Convention as well as of the organ charged with its enforcement to increase as possible the number of people who might take advantage of it.

It seems that the language used in article 1 of the Convention is indicative of this effort. The final text of article 1, amending at this point the preparatory draft, refers to "ethnic minorities of religion *or* language" instead of the general term "ethnic minorities" used in the preparatory draft ¹⁷. By doing so, the drafters of the Convention, beyond confining themselves within the strict legal concept of the term "ethnic" considered it sufficient, for a person wishing to emigrate, to fulfil either of the two principal requirements of the concept of "nation", that is, religion *or* language.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

17. Article 1 of the Convention has as follows: "Les Haut Parties Contractantes reconnaissent à leur ressortissants appartenant à des minorités ethniques, de religion ou de langue, le droit d'émigrer librement dans leur territoires respectifs". The text of the draft submitted by the Greek delegation has as follows: "... grant to all their nationals within their territories who belong to ethnic minorities the right to express their desire to emigrate". Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

In view of the political and ethnological reality of the contracting states, the existence of a common religion or language provided indeed a safer criterion for determining the various national groups in this region, whose inhabitants had not as yet developed a national conscience. The criterion of religion, for reasons which will be stated below, proved the most reliable in determining the Greek from the Bulgarian, whereas the application of the criterion of language proved unfortunate and led to erroneous conclusions, marking the beginning of a misunderstanding which until today is exploited by Yugoslavs and Bulgarians in order to appropriate populations who have nothing in common with the Slavs but their language.

The situation in Macedonia as regards religion can be summarized as follows :

Both Greeks and Bulgarians belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church. Until 1870, when the Bulgarians obtained from the Sublime Porte the Firman which established an independent Bulgarian Exarchate, the Bulgarian Church was within the spiritual jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The creation of the Exarchate meant for the Bulgarians not only religious independence, but also constituted the foundations for the realization of their national aspirations¹⁸. For article 10, par. 3 of the Firman of 1870 provided that any district or locality in the Ottoman Empire might join the independent Bulgarian Church if the two-thirds of its voting population expressed the desire to do so¹⁹.

By 1898 seven Bulgarian Bishoprics had been established in Macedonia, but all of them were in an area north of Monastir, in the region which presently forms the Serbian and Bulgarian parts of Macedonia²⁰. This indicates clearly that in that early era, the Bulgarians did not have a hold in the region which today is Greek Macedonia and Thrace. On the contrary, they had secured a predominant place in what today is Yugoslav Macedonia²¹. As centers of propaganda, the Bulgarian Bishoprics were very effective in that they succeeded with priests, teachers and other agents to penetrate the ignorant masses of the Macedonian peasants. Where peaceful means were not effective, armed bands known as "komitadjis"

18. See Krainikowski, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 37; Mylonas, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

20. See Mylonas, *op. cit.*, p. 71 - 72, quoting Anastassof, who mentions the cities where Bulgarian bishops were installed. These were : Ochrid, Uskub (Skopje), Veles, Nevrokop (by 1894), Monastir, Strumnitza, Debra (by 1898). Thus from the 25 Orthodox Bishoprics of the entire Macedonia only seven were taken by Bulgarians.

21. L. Triniegorsky, *Yugoslav Minorities Abroad*, translated into Greek by D. Polyzos, (Athens, 1949), p. 44.

implemented the educational and religious work of the church with force and violence²². In this way, it is safe to conclude that by the end of the Macedonian Struggle those who had acceded to the Exarchate, had formed a Bulgarian national conscience, while those who remained loyal to the Patriarchate and bitterly resisted Bulgarian terrorism had affiliated themselves with Greece. Thus the religious conflict between Exarchists and Patriarchists in Macedonia established a firm criterion for the nationality of the individuals who took advantage of the Convention and applied for emigration²³.

Unfortunately, we could not say the same for the second criterion determining the national identity of minorities as established by the Convention; i.e. their language. The language problem in Macedonia deserves special attention, for it has been repeatedly exploited to create false impressions. The roots of the problem go back to the early years of the Turkish occupation and are inextricably bound with the origin of the recently coined "Macedonian language".

The Turkish landowners of the Balkan Peninsula, who owned vast estates in the fertile valleys of Macedonia, called "tsifliks", brought masses of Bulgarian baillifs to cultivate their lands, and thus a Bulgarian dialect full of foreign elements was introduced and spread particularly in Northern Macedonia. This dialect was simple and easy to learn, so the native Greek-speaking peasants and traders learned it in order to communicate with the Slavs who found it difficult to learn Greek, which required systematic teaching²⁴. The Greek language continued to predominate in the cities, in southern Macedonia, and in the littoral of Thrace and Macedonia, which today form part of Greece. Moreover, in mountainous regions, besides Greek and Albanian in the western parts, the Vlach language (a latin dialect) was also spoken²⁵. Under the Turkish rule, the language spoken by an individual did not necessarily classify him ethnically. One could speak one or the other language according to his needs, without this affecting

22. See Chr. Kalafates, *Ἐκθέσεις περὶ τοῦ Μακεδονικοῦ Ἀγῶνος* [Reports on the Macedonian Struggle], (Thessalonike, 1960), p. 20 ff.

23. However, this criterion was not applied in the case of Theodor Nicoloff. See Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

24. This dialect is now developed into a language, which was given the name "Macedonian language", and is used as a propaganda device serving Yugoslav claims over Greek Macedonia. For an excellent account and criticism of the "Macedonian language" see N. Andriotes, *The Confederate State of Skopje and Its Language*, (Athens, 1961).

25. Phil. Dragoumes, *Προσοχή στὴ Βόρεια Ἑλλάδα* [Watch Northern Greece], (Thessalonike, 1949), p. 54.

his national feelings. For example, the Greek-speaking Turks could by no means be considered Greeks on account of their language alone²⁶. The same is true of many villages in Macedonia, whose inhabitants, although speaking the Bulgarian dialect of Macedonia, had an active Greek national conscience and suffered many damages by the Bulgarian komitadjis during the Macedonian Struggle. Such villages were around Monastir, Castoria and Florina (Rokovo, Smardesi, Dapiane and others), from which came many leaders who fought and fell in the field defending the Greek cause, though they did not speak but Bulgarian²⁷.

The fact is that in Greek Macedonia there were three categories of Bulgarian-speaking inhabitants, a) those fanatically attached to Greece who were and still are the pioneers of Hellenism in the northern boundaries of Greece; b) those who had neither the moral strength nor a sufficiently developed national conscience to resist Bulgarian terrorism and propaganda. To this category belonged the greater part of the Bulgarian-speaking population of Greek Macedonia. It was precisely the nationality of these people which became the crux of the dispute over Macedonia between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, and c) those who proclaimed themselves Bulgarians, became agents of IMRO (the pro-Bulgarian, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) and worked for the Slavic plans concerning Macedonia²⁸.

It was, therefore, groundless and superficial to rely on language as the main criterion in determining the national conscience of those applying for emigration. Under the circumstances, the Mixed Commission, who was to decide on the eligibility of the future emigrants, relied more on the subjective criterion of nationality, namely the national conscience and aspirations of each individual, which were indirectly expressed by his will to emigrate²⁹. Moreover, the Commission decided that should any doubt be raised as to whether a person was really akin to the race, religion or lan-

26. These were the Turks of Ioannina, the "Valaades" of South-Western Macedonia, the Turko-Cretans, e.t.c.

27. Such leaders were: Capetan Kottas from Roulia, Vangelis from Strebeno, Kyrou from Zelovo and others. See K. Vavouskos, *Η συμβολή του Ἑλληνισμοῦ τῆς Πελαγονίας εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς Νεωτέρας Ἑλλάδος* [The Contribution of Hellenism of Pelagonia to the History of Modern Greece], (Thessalonike, 1959), p. 17.

28. Dragoumes, *op. cit.*, p. 67 ff.

29. Article 4 of the Convention required the filing of a written declaration by the persons wishing to avail themselves of the Convention. The Mixed Commission in the Arnaut-Madritsa case took into consideration the fact that their declaration of emigrations manifested their desire to be nationally attached to Greece. See Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

guage he professed, the case should be solved in favor of the person in question³⁰.

In taking this decision, as well as others, the Mixed Commission adhered to the policy of the drafters of the Convention which aimed at including as wide a measure for emigration as possible. Actually, it was the Mixed Commission that brought this policy to bear by interpreting broadly the conditions which regulated the admission of a person to the benefits of the Convention. For instance, persons who belonged to the first category entitled to the benefits of the Convention, i. e., the new emigrants, were required to be nationals of the country from which they emigrated. Thus Bulgarians established in Greece, or Greeks established in Bulgaria could not avail themselves of the benefits of the Convention. This rule however was "interpreted by the Commission as not excluding women belonging to the Greek or Bulgarian minority who would have been entitled to claim under the Convention but for their change of nationality by marriage. Such women were given the right to claim the advantages of the Convention for their own property, and this right was also recognized in favor of their heirs in the descending line"³¹. This decision was clearly opposed to the text of the Convention, but it was in keeping with its spirit, calling for a definite settlement of the pending minority problems.

The same flexibility was shown by the Commission interpreting the requirement that the emigration should be made from the country of which the would-be emigrants were nationals to the country to which they were akin. Although this requirement is clearly stated in the text of the Convention (... *Le droit d'émigrer librement dans leur territoires respectifs*), the Commission by its decision of March 3, 1923 "granted the advantages of the Convention to persons residing in a country other than the country of origin or the country of kinship who had preserved the nationality of the country of origin (Bulgarian, Greek or Turkish) or adopted the nationality of the country of kinship (Greek or Bulgarian) to the exclusion of any other nationality. Thus, Greek nationals, belonging to the Bulgarian minority in Greece, and established in the United States of America, could apply for the liquidation of their property by the Mixed Commission. No question of emigration arose in respect to these persons, but their application for liquidation implied their intention to be considered as emigrating to Bulgaria, their country of kinship"³².

30. Minutes of the Commission I, 7th meeting December 27, 1920.

31. Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

The second category of persons defined by the Convention (Art. 12) as entitled to its benefits were the former emigrants.

Since the Convention had not fixed a *terminus post quem* which should delimit this class of former emigrants who were entitled to apply for the liquidation of their property, it rested with the Mixed Commission³³ to supply that date. Taking into consideration the political situation in the Balkans and seeking to ascertain and follow the spirit of the Convention, the Commission, after long discussions and arguments, decided that Article 12 of the Convention should apply to persons who had emigrated between Greece and Bulgaria in the course of the *twenty years* preceding its enforcement, i. e. between December 18, 1900, and December 18, 1920³⁴. This decision, which extended the power of the Convention as far back as the beginning of the century, was criticized as not being within the intentions of its drafters; for the Convention concerning Reciprocal Emigration "was a document connected with the Treaty of Neuilly and was meant to deal with the effects of the same war. Any further extension of the period to which the provisions of article 12 were to be applied lacked all solid foundation"³⁵.

Another point, indicative of the desire of the contracting parties to clear up entirely, if possible, their respective territories from foreign minorities is illustrated by the repeated extensions of the period within which interested persons could avail themselves of the Convention. Article 4 of the Convention provided that the right of voluntary emigration might be exercised during a period of two years from the date of the constitution of the Mixed Commission, that is from December 18, 1920, to December 18, 1922. At first this period was extended to October 15, 1923, the extension being justified by the delay of the Mixed Commission to adopt the Rules of emigration and liquidation of properties. The period, however, was again extended successively to May 1, 1924, August 31, 1924 and December 31, 1924. Furthermore, a special extension until December 15, 1926, of the time limit for depositing declarations of emigration and applications for liquidation was granted in September 1926 to Bulgarian refugees

33. The jurisdiction of the Mixed Commission was derived from article 9, par. 3 of the Convention: "... D'une façon générale la Commission mixte aura tous pouvoirs de prendre les mesures que nécessitera l'exécution de la présente Convention et de décider tous les questions, auxquelles cette Convention pourrait donner lieu".

34. Minutes of the Mixed Commission II, 48th Meeting July 11 1921, p. 239.

35. Ladas, *op. cit.*, 82 ff.

from Greece. This extension was granted on the recommendation of a special Commission appointed to investigate the incidents of October 1925, on the Greco-Bulgarian frontier. This recommendation being part of the Report of the Commission (known as Rumbold Commission, from the name of its chairman) submitted to the Council of the League of Nations, pressed forward the view that the solution of the Macedonian Problem could only be effected if the Convention of Neuilly was applied to the exclusion of any other Treaty which might favor the existence of ethnic minorities. The time-limit for the deposit of declarations was finally extended by various decisions of the Mixed Commission until late 1928³⁶.

The intentions of the contracting parties of the Convention of Neuilly, as regards the final settlement of their minority problem, has been sufficiently illustrated both by the drafting of the Convention and especially, by the decisions of the Mixed Commission entrusted with its interpretation and application. But what seems, at first glance, to contradict the outspoken desire of both signatory states to achieve national homogeneity by clearing their territories from foreign elements is the *voluntary* character of the emigration provided by the Convention. Indeed, a compulsory exchange of populations would have been more effective and its finality would have hardly been disputed afterwards, at least from a legal viewpoint. A compulsory exchange of minorities, however, would have deprived the Convention of the great advantage to be consistent with the fundamental principles of human rights. It is, therefore, to the credit of the drafters that the Convention was intended to be a mutual stimulation for voluntary emigration depending upon the good faith of the contracting parties, instead of a forceful uprooting of populations. Moreover, the emphasis on the voluntary character of the emigration was expedient from a political viewpoint, too. For since there was no clear-cut objective criterion to determine the nationality of the minorities, it is easy to imagine the confusion which could have been created in case of a compulsory exchange. In its application, however, the Convention did not maintain its absolute voluntary character and thus proved to be more effective than expected³⁷.

The event which proved instrumental in this respect was the swarming in Greece of Greek refugees from Asia Minor as a consequence of the defeat of the Greek army there in 1922. Those masses of desperate re-

36. Minutes of the Mixed Commission XXXI, 453 Meeting Nov. 6 1928, pp. 1, 6.

37. Wurf bain, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

fugees were settled mainly in the fertile lands of Central and Eastern Macedonia where, according to Ladas, "many of them were settled in the houses and on the lands of villages abandoned by Turkish or Bulgarian emigrants. Others were placed in the homes and were allotted the lands of natives, whether Greeks, Moslems or Bulgarians. As was to be expected, the Greek refugees settled among Bulgarians regarded the latter as undesirable foreigners. Notwithstanding the orders of Greek authorities, conflicts arose, and the Bulgarian minority suffered from the unfriendly attitude of the newcomers"³⁸. This situation created a climate of intimidation of the Bulgarian inhabitants of these territories, which caused a strong migratory current towards Bulgaria. As a counter-effect, discontented refugees in Bulgaria descended upon Greek villages, forcing their inhabitants to emigrate to Greece.

It is, therefore, obvious that the hostility in both countries against minorities and the various incidents that followed³⁹ extinguished the hopes of those who believed they could remain in the land of their fathers and live peacefully as a minority. The last blow against their hopes was waged by the Greek Parliament when, in its session of February 3, 1925, it rejected the Protocols of Geneva intended as an effort to ameliorate the position of the remaining populations by granting to the neutral members of the Mixed Commission the right to act as an advisory body for Greek and Bulgarian minority questions⁴⁰. Consequently the effort of the "Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization", acting for the official Bulgarian Government, to persuade Bulgarian peasants not to take advantage of the Convention so that Bulgarian aspirations in Greek Macedonia could be kept alive was destined to fail⁴¹.

In discussing the Convention of Neuilly, an effort was made to outline and investigate the main factors which tended to make its enforcement more effective. Now it will be examined to what extent was the Convention actually applied and which were the practical results of its enforcement. As far as the Greek population of Bulgaria is concerned, the Convention, as it appears from the statistics of the Mixed Commission, found a perfect application. Practically all the Greeks of Bulgaria left Bulgarian territory and emigrated to Greece. Indeed, 46.000 Greeks in all availed themselves of the Convention. Of them 16.000 were former emigrants,

38. Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

39. *Ibid.*, 108 ff.

40. Wurfbain, *op. cit.*, p. 62 ff., Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 110 ff.

41. Mylonas, *op. cit.*, p. 137, Wurfbain, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

who had emigrated prior to the entry into force of the Convention⁴². On the other hand, a total of 92.000 Bulgarians left Greek territory as a result of the Convention. Of them 53.000 were new emigrants who had crossed Bulgarian borders after 1923⁴³. According to the figures published by the League of Nations, the number of Slavophones residing in Greek Macedonia at that time was 77.000, that is 5,1% of the total population of this region. This number, though it could hardly exercise any substantial influence on the ethnical homogeneity of this territory, it could, nevertheless, create doubts as to the Convention, if it were proved that these people remained in Greece for reasons other than their ethnical affiliation to Greece. Unfortunately all statistics published were based on the criterion of language, which, of course, was not a reliable criterion for determining national conscience. In the case of the Slavophones of Greek Macedonia at least, its reliability was seriously questioned, for these people gave repeated proofs of their Greek national conscience. The tragic days of World War II and the Guerilla War which followed was a test of allegiance to Greece for the Bulgarian - speaking population of Macedonia, which disappointed the proponents of a slavic minority in Greece. Perhaps it was not accidental that the village Rokovo (Krateron) was again burnt and its inhabitants suffered the cruelty and brutality of the communist guerillas⁴⁴. The majority of the Bulgarian - speaking peasants proved themselves as being indissolubly connected with Greece. There was, however, a small number of them who, during those days, acted against the interests of the Greek State. Some of them were those who had been forbidden by IMRO, in 1920, to take advantage of the Convention of Neuilly in order to remain in Greece and serve, on given occasions, the plans of the panslavistic propaganda. So during the Guerilla War of 1946 - 1949 the neighboring States tried to exploit the Bulgarian - speaking inhabitants in Greece utilizing them for purposes of subversion. Those who had compromised themselves by collaborating with the enemy fled, after the defeat of the Communist guerrillas in 1949, to Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia. In their way to the north they kidnapped and took with them a considerable number of loyal Greek Slavophones and children. The total number of Bulgarian speaking refugees from Greek Macedonia was officially estimated at 49,356⁴⁵. According to the official census of 1951 (conducted just after

42. Data taken from Ladas, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

44. Dragumes, *op. cit.*, p. 39 ff.

45. George Zotiades, *The Macedonian Controversy*, (Thessalonike, 2nd ed. 1961), p. 45.

the Guerilla War) there existed in the entire territory of Greece 41,017 persons whose mother tongue was slavic. Among them only 10,346 declared slavic as their usually spoken language ⁴⁶.

The question now arises whether those mostly bilingual people are entitled to any protection as a national minority. Strictly legally speaking the Convention of Neuilly deprived all remaining inhabitants of the benefit to avail themselves of the various treaties protecting minorities ⁴⁷. It is widely accepted in International Law that every exchange of populations means the renunciation of the protection principle ⁴⁸. But apart from this theoretical view, it becomes obvious, from what was stated above, that the Convention of Neuilly, as it was drafted and executed meant to clear up irrevocably the minority problems between Greece and Bulgaria. Twenty years later World War II and the Guerilla War came as a second screening of national allegiance. So now, more than ever, any doubt as regards the ethnic conscience of the remaining Bulgarian speaking population could by no means be justified. Memories of common struggles and sufferings have created unbreakable ties of kinship and made the few remaining Bulgarian - speaking peasants an inseparable part of the Greek nation needing no other protection than the one provided by the Constitution and the laws of Greece.

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46. *Ibid.*, p 46.

47. *Contra Seferiades, op. cit.*, p. 369.

48. See Dimitrios Constantopoulos, *Die Soziologischen Auswirkungen des griechisch - türkischen Bevölkerungsaustausches*, (Hamburg, 1940), p. 13 ff.