THE MAKING OF YUGOSLAVIA'S PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Fifty years since the liberation of Macedonia, the perennial "Macedonian Question" appears to remain alive. While in Greece it has definitely been settled, the establishment of a "Macedonian State" within the framework of the People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has given a new form to the old controversy which has long divided the three Balkan States, particularly Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The present study tries to recount the events which led to its founding, the purposes which prompted its establishment and the methods employed in bringing about the tasks for which it was conceived.

The region of Southern Yugoslavia,[1] which extends south of a line traversed by the Shar Mountains and the hills just north of Skopje, has been known in the past under a variety of names, each one clearly denoting the owner and his policy concerning the region.[2] The Turks considered it an integral part of their Ottoman Empire; the Serbs, who succeeded them, promptly incorporated it into their Kingdom of Serbs and Croats and viewed it as a purely Serbian land; the Bulgarians, who seized it during the Nazi occupation of the Balkans, grasped the long-sought opportunity to extend their administrative control and labeled it part of the Bulgarian Fatherland. As of 1944, the region, which reverted to Yugoslavia, has been known as the *People's Republic of Macedonia,* one of the six federative republics of communist Yugoslavia.

The new name and administrative structure, exactly as the previous ones, was intended for the purpose of serving the aims of the new regime. At the top of the list of these aims was the search for a solution which would ameliorate the keen national antagonisms which were shaking Yugoslavia all through the inter-war era. Consequently, when the new leaders

1. According to the latest Yugoslav statistics in the area of 25,713 sq. km. of the P.R. of Macedonia live 1,387,000 inhabitants. *Statistical Pocket Book of Yugoslavia; 1961* (Beograd, Federal Statistical Institute, 1961), pp. 20 - 21.

2. This article is based on the author's forthcoming book, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia.*

in Belgrade decided to establish the "Republic of Macedonia" they were motivated not only by the regional Macedonian problem but also by the more general national problem which existed throughout the country.

The second aim, of equal if not greater importance, was the conversion to Communism of the masses. To achieve this they had to follow the prescriptions of Lenin and Stalin on the national problem. By granting a form of autonomy the regime was assuring itself of the unswerving support of the leading members of the region, who, being elevated to prestigious positions in politics, education, religion and particularly in the administation, never before envisioned, could be depended upon to execute the Party's and the Central Government's policies. These were the two major tasks which held true for each region of the country. To Macedonia, however, the communists had assigned another task which, as it developed, became a cardinal one for Yugoslavia's foreign policy. Finding themselves in an advantageous position which their country had never before enjoyed, the Yugoslav communist leaders viewed themselves as playing a hegemonist role in Balkan politics. To achieve this they had to revive in a new form the age-old "Macedonian Question" in such a way as to serve better their objectives. For, they rightly considered, that whoever controlled Macedonia, controlled the entire Peninsula.

The Rise of the Communist Movement during the Occupation

As soon as the Germans and their Bulgarian allies occupied Yugoslav Macedonia in April 1941, the communists, as if by signal, raised the banner of their partisan warfare which was to bring them to absolute power three and half years later.

The Regional Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party in Macedonia immediately showed signs of insubordination toward the Central Committee of the Party. The first clash came over the issue of the deportation by the Bulgarian occupation authorities of the thousands of Serbs who had settled over the inter-war years in Yugoslav Macedonia.[1] The local communist leader Metodije Sharlo-Shatorov favored the deportation which would de-Serbianize the region. The worse came when he began exhibiting separatist tendencies by trying to place the local communist organization under the control of the Communist Party of Bulgaria.

In less than two months from the German invasion, his attitude to-

1. Lazar Kulishevski's speech before the First Congress of the Communist Party of Macedonia at Skopje, 19-24 December 1948. *Archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (hereafter referred to as *GFM*) A/19630/Γ2/1949.

ward the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party hardened. He dismissed from the local Central Committee the Serbs, replaced them with pro-Bulgarians and declared that he would obey no more the orders of the Yugoslav Central Committee because his organization constituted a part of the Bulgarian Communist Party.[1] It was clearly evident that the pro-Bulgarian sentiment, then at high peak among the largest segment of the population of Yugoslav Macedonia, had trespassed ideological barriers and had afflicted even the Yugoslav communists.

It is interesting to note, that Sharlo's alliance with the Bulgarian Party remained firm even after Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union. At that time the Bulgarian Party publicly supported the Filov Govenment's annexationist policy.[2] The Yugoslavs accused their Bulgarian comrades that they went as far as to disseminate propaganda calling on Yugoslav Macedonians not to take arms against the occupation authorities — who were mostly Bulgarians — because, allegedly, the Macedonian people had found the realization of their national expectations under the Bulgarian regime.

The Yugoslav communists, organizing at that time their partisan movement, could ill-afford to loose control over their own party organization in Macedonia. Difficult as it was to convince the native inhabitants to take arms against the Bulgarian occupation authorities, it seemed almost impossible to fight jointly the nationalist and communist Bulgarians. In their frustration, they appealed to Moscow. Although during the inter-war period the Comintern had pursued a pro-Bulgarian policy over the Macedonian Question, the desperate need of the Russians to harass the Germans in their rear caused them to rule in favor of the Yugoslav Communist Party which was given control over Macedonia.[3]

For a time the situation remained unaltered. The Bulgarian communists and Sharlo's followers adhered to their policy of not attacking the occupation authorities.[4] On August 25, Tito set up a new Regional Com-

1. *Ibid;* Also, General Apostolsky "Reminiscences from August 2, 1944" in *Ten Years from the Establishment of the PFR of Macedonia,* Part II (Skoplje, 1954); Also, Vukmanivić Tempo's speech in Belgrade, July 24, 1948, *GFM* A/45511/Bal/1948.

2. During the session of November 21, 1941 the Sobranje accepted unanimously a resolution submitted by the communist deputy and former Minister of Justice Mintso Neichef, by which, among other things, he requested that regions which were unjustly detached from Bulgaria (in Thrace and Macedonia) be restored to her. *Narodno Zemdelsko Zname* (Sofia, Nov. 22, 1946).

3. Lazar Mojsov, *The Bulgarian Workers [Communist] Party and the Macedonian National Question* (Belgrade, *Borba,* 1948) p. 83.

4. Speech by Kulishevski. *op. cit.*

mittee under Kulishevski, but, although he had Comintern's support, he could not make any progress among the communists of Macedonia, let alone the masses of the people.[1] Tito tried in vain to get control of the situation. His appeals to the Central Commitee of the Communist Party of Bulgaria brought no change in the latter's Macedonian policy. Sharlo, and his followers continued to defy him. In September 1941, he was forced to denounce Sharlo openly.[2] Furthermore, Kulishevski's efforts to organize partisan units were frustrated when, in their initial baptism of fire, his men were badly defeated. As misfortunes piled up for the Yugoslav communists, Kulishevski was arrested and the communist movement passed under firm Bulgarian control. The Central Committee of the Bulgarian Party from Sofia dispatched Petar Bogdanov and later Boyan Balgarianov who pursued a policy of no opposition to the Bulgarian occupation authorities. Yugoslav sources admit that the rule of the Bulgarian communists over the Macedonian Party organization remained dominant until 1943.[3]

The situation did not change until the spring of 1943 when Tito's special emmissary Svetovar Vukmanovic - Tempo arrived in Macedonia. Tempo, in addition to his personal skills and the full backing of his chief, was in possession of an ambitious plan by which the Yugoslav communists hoped to keep at least Yugoslav Macedonia under their control. This program was delineated by Tito in a letter to the Regional Macedonian Committee on January 16, in which he had reproached the "outworn and liberal attitude towards autonomist tentencies of a national character", an obvious reference to the traditional pro - Bulgarian behavior of both the communists and the nationalists of the region. Instead, he promissed that "the question of the existence, freedom, and independence of all peoples, and, equally, of the Macedonian people" will be solved by means of the national liberation struggle. He went on to indicate that the principle of self - determination to which the Communist Party ascribed, was conceivable only under conditions of "brotherhood and equality of peoples".[4] Thus, in rather ambiguous terms, Tito, as early as the beginning of 1943, gave evidence of his desire to give to Macedonia a form of self - government within the framework of Yugoslavia.

As soon as Tempo took over in Macedonia, partisan units began to

1. Elizabeth Barker, *Macedonia; Its Place in Balkan Power Politics*, (London: Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1950) p. 89.

2. Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953) p. 173.

3. Speech by Kulishevski, *op. cit.*

4. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 91; (she quotes from Mojsov, *The Bulgarian Communist Party op. cit.* pp. 150, 168, 173).

make their appearance in the countryside and gradually to pass over to counter-offense. In accordance with his general plan, Tempo even came in touch with the Greek communist partisans and attempted to extend his influence over their organization as well.

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On August 2, 1943 (Iliden), the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia was formed in Prespa, which in turn initiated the formation of a "National Liberation Army". Early in October, the General Staff of the Army issued a manifesto which declared that the Macedonian people met all the requirements to win their freedom and independence, to gain, on the basis of self-determination, true equality, and to build their own state in brotherly unity with the Yugoslav peoples. It further added that within the framework of this unity, the Macedonian people had all the conditions for realizing their age-long dream, unification.[1]

This was the most explicit statement made up to that time defining Tito's plans for Macedonia. However, the dangerous complications of an open pursuance of such a policy at that time for the communist movement and partisan warfare in Bulgaria and Greece, apparently cautioned the Yugoslavs to soft-pedal their objectives.[2]

Thus, on November 29, 1943, the Jajce Conference of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia, which decided on the organization of Yugoslavia on a federal basis, avoided any specific mention of the frontiers of the proposed federative republic of Macedonia.

Even though no specific mention of boundaries was made, the Jajce Resolution became a historic landmark in Yugoslav history and the beginning of more complications for the perennial Macedonian Question. For, the Jajce Resolution put the Yugoslavs on record as, first, recognizing the existence of a "Macedonian nation" which had no historical foundation, second, establishing a Macedonian state which, though dependent on the Central Government at Belgrade, was accepted as equal with the other nations of Yugoslavia and with substantial authority in self-government; and third, completely disavowing Bulgarian pretentions over a land which was known for the pro-Bulgarian sentiment of its inhabitants. The Resolution stipulated that[3]:

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1. Barker *op. cit.* p. 93 quotes Mojsov *op. cit.* pp. 160-161.

2. Lazar Mojsov, "About the South-Slav Federation", *Kommunist* (Belgrade, July-September 1950, Supplement).

3. Text in Barker, *Macedonia, op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

> On the basis of the right of all nations to self-determination including the union with or secession from other nations,...the Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia passes the following decisions:
>
> ...Yugoslavia is being built up on a federal principle which will ensure full equality for the nation, of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Despite its initial hesitation, the Soviet Government and Party accepted the Jajce Program. This did not apparently impede the Bulgarian communists who, finding themselves reduced to a position similar to the one the Greek and Yugoslav communists had been placed in 1923-24, reacted strongly against the Yugoslav plans. The Fatherland front issued a declaration in December 1943, less than a month after the Jajce Conference. It reiterated the well-known theory which Bulgarians, irrespective of their ideological inclinations, have advocated over the years, namely, that Macedonia is the craddle of the Bulgarian renaissance for which the Bulgarians have fought costly wars. It rejected outright the Yugoslav federative plan for Macedonia and declared itself in favor of the old slogan "Macedonia for the Macedonians", and the creation of "an integral, free and independent Macedonia which would be guaranteed by the Soviet Union and the democratic powers".[1]

For the Yugoslav communists, this was going too far. Having suffered frustrating humiliations all through the inter-war period on account of the expansionist policy of their Bulgarian comrades over Macedonia, and having paid with prison terms and torture their stubborness to defend the unpopular Bulgarian-inspired directives of the Comintern, they could have no pity for the present position of the Bulgarians; especially at a time when Bulgaria was condemned for having allied with the invaders of the Soviet Union, and when the latter had already sanctioned the Yugoslav plan. In January 24, 1944, Tito wrote to Georgi Dimitrov, then in Moscow, denouncing the Fatherland Front's position as being identical to the policy pursued at that time by the Germans, a policy which was clearly "hostile to the national-liberation struggle".[2]

In fact, the Yugoslav communists needed not fear the Bulgarian objections. The tide of the war was reversing, and since they had already secured the Soviet approval to their plan, they had at least secured control over their own part of Macedonia. In the meantime, as events were to prove soon, the Yugoslavs had prepared a grand design which, had it

1. Speech by Kulishevski, *op. cit.*
2. Lazar Mojsov "About the South-Slav Federation", *op. cit.*

been realized, it would have rendered them the indisputed masters of a sovietized communist Balkan Peninsula. Their plan aimed primarily at driving the Bulgarians into a South - Slav federation in which Yugoslavia would be represented by her six federative republics with Bulgaria forming the seventh! Also insured in the realization of this a plan was the subordination of all three parts of Macedonia to Yugoslavia by way of the Federative Macedonian Republic whose nucleus would have been the Vardar region. To achieve the incorporation of Greek Macedonia which would have provided Yugoslavia with the long-sought exit to the Aegean, the Yugoslav communists attempted to extend their influence among the small Slav minority which lived at that time in Greece, as well as among the leadership of the Greek Communist Party. For, they clearly realized that were they to entertain any hopes for placing Greek Macedonia under their control they would have to lure first the Greek communists.

Yugoslav Macedonia emerged as a federative state on August 2, 1944. It was the first time since Alexander the Great that a "Macedonian" state made its appearance on the map. Only this time it was invented to serve a political purpose rather than to restore to memory a glorious past. The roots of the new Yugoslav federative state do not go very deep.[1] They are to be found in the German-Bulgarian occupation of the region, when the Yugoslav communists, under extremely adverse circumstances, succeeded, through their partisan movement, a truly Herculean task — to seize the initiative from the Bulgarians and to form a "Macedonian" state truly loyal to Belgrade. To further ensure the success of their plan and tip the scales in their favor they had to expand their influence over Greek Macedonia which appeared to be holding the balance in the Yugoslav-Bulgarian dispute over Macedonia.

The first official Yugoslav step toward this direction took the form of a visit by General Vukmanović to the headquarters of the Greek partisans in Greek Macedonia in the summer of 1943. In a conference held between Greek and Yugoslav partisan leaders, Tempo discussed ways and means to improve military cooperation against the occupation forces. Then

1. Notwithstanding recent attempts by Yugoslav Macedonian historians and political theorists who attempt to establish a history for their "Macedonian nation" which they trace back to the Middle Ages, if not further back to the time of the Slavs' descend on the Peninsula. Naturally, this attitude is not a rare phenomenon in our times. Recent history is replete with similar examples, particularly among the newly-established African states who are desperately searching for "historical" foundations of their existence.

he passed on to the subject of the Slavophones[1] whom for the first time officially claimed as Yugoslavs of "Macedonian" nationality. His first point was to work out a plan in cooperation with the Greek partisans, so that the thousands of "Slav-Macedonians" who had been attracted by the Bulgarian propaganda and had declared themselves Bulgarians, desert the enemy ranks. Such an attitude as exhibited by so many "Slav-Macedonians" was considered by the Yugoslavs as a deadly threat to their plans to make "Macedonians" out of the Slavs of the region. His second point was to convince the Greek communists to let the Macedonian communists of Yugoslavia organize the Slavophones of Greece under a unique command. Although the Greeks were indebted to their Yugoslav comrades for all sorts of assistance, they refused to accept the Yugoslav proposals.[2] Instead, they conceded to organize the Slavophones as an integral part of ELAS (National People's Liberation Army) and to put in true application the principle of "equal rights".[3] As a result, in partisan-occupied territories, where the Slav idiom was known to a large segment of the population, schools began to function in that idiom and papers to be published. Even more, Yugoslav-oriented "Slav-Macedonians" began to form their own organizations, among which SNOF (Slav-Macedonian People's Liberation Front) became the most important. SNOF made its appearance early in 1944 but there is evidence to suggest that clandestinely it had existed already for some months.[4] Although it seemed as if it were under the EAM (National Liberation Front) control, it has been ascertained by now that — to the frustration of the Greek communist leadership — its directives

1. Following the Balkan Wars and World War I, as well as the exchange of populations between Greece and Bulgaria, only 80,000 slav-speaking (Slavophones) inhabitants of Western Greek Macedonia chose to stay in Greece, declaring themselves to be Greeks despite the Slavic dialect they were speaking. Of these a considerable portion showed a Bulgarian conscience during the occupation, and sided with the occupation authorities.

2. Willian Hardy McNeil, *The Greek Dilemma; War and Aftermath* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1947) pp. 264 - 265.

3. Nikos Zahariades, former Secretary-General of the KKE (Greek Communist Party) writing after the Tito-Cominform split, said that the Greek communists had concluded during the occupation an agreement of cooperation with the Yugoslav communists but at the explicit terms that the Yugoslav comrades would cease their subversion of the Greek communist movement in Macedonia through propaganda among the "Slav-Macedonians". Nikos Zahariades, *Deka Hronia Palis* [Ten Yars of Struggle] 1950, p. 41.

4. Christopher M. Woodhouse, *Apple of Discord: A Survey of Recent Greek Politics in their International Setting* (London: Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 64.

came from Yugoslavia.[1] In the summer and fall of 1944 the seditious activities of SNOF and its open dependence on the Yugoslavs brought ELAS and SNOF units into open armed conflict.

The last effort of the Yugoslavs to force on the Greek communists their views on the question of the administration of the Greek Macedonian provinces, came in the form of a memorandum signed by the SNOF leaders Gotsev, Keramidjiev and two others. Addressed to the Regional Macedonian Bureau of the KKE, it was dated October 23, 1944, just one week prior to the evacuation of Thessaloniki by the Germans. The Yugoslavs, apparently believing that the Greek communists would retain control of the country, were hastening to put forward, through their followers in Greek Macedonia, a number of terms which, if nothing else, betrayed their desire to secure a foothole in the region, in anticipation of the conversion of Greece into a people's republic; a fact which would have facilitated the inclusion of Greek Macedonia to a united Macedonian state under Yugoslav tutelage.[2]

1. In early October 1944, El. Kentros, member of the KKE, visited, on orders of the Florina regional party organization, the leader of the SNOF battalion Gotsev, in order to investigate the situation. His report dated October 10, 1944 went as follows: (Original in *GFM* Archives)

"I called on Gotsev and I begged of him in the name of our friendship, to tell me what was actually happening... He told me: 'You can do nothing because my battalion obeys neither the KKE nor ELAS. We are connected with Serbian Macedonia from where we receive instructions and liaison men regularly... The Brigade of Serbia is giving us 5000 rifles and the appropriate number of sub-machine guns... If you (the ELAS) want to attack me, I will not fight you but I will withdraw to Serbia. The Serbs have told us that if they chase you, you should come to us'." *GFM* A 30946 Γ5/1947.

2. The memorandum provided for:

a) Freedom to draft the Slavophones of the regions of Kastoria, Florina and Edessa into "pure" Macedonian units. These were to have their own staff still remaining "under the lines and the political leadership of EAM/ELAS".

b) Permission to establish in the above-mentioned regions, a political organization—a "Macedonian National Liberation Front".

c) Permission to establish a people's administration in "Macedonian villages and towns". The organization and the government in these regions would be the responsibility of the "Macedonian National Liberation Front".

d) Complete freedom to conduct open propaganda and indoctrination among the entire Macedonia people, and to teach them "the age-old, historical and national ideals of the Macedonian people, and also that it is the inviolable interest of the entire Macedonian people to live free and *united*".

e) End of the persecution of the Macedonian cadres.

f) End of the persecution, terror and falsification of the true Macedonian conscience. (Original document in the *GFM* Archives.—italics by the author).

The failure of the communists to take over Greece after the liberation, caused many thousands of "Slav-Macedonians"[1] to flee from Greece fearing their due punishment either as collaborators of German-Bulgarian occupation authorities, or for having committed seditious acts as members of pro-Yugoslav organizations.

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The end of the war in the Balkans found the Yugoslavs with well advanced positions in the game of Macedonian politics. They had commenced without even being masters of their own part of Macedonia. During the inter-war period they had succumbed to the Comintern — then under the influence of such prominent Bulgarian personalities as Vasili Kolarov and Georgi Dimitrov — and had favored the policy of ceding their part of Macedonia to a unified Macedonian state which, they maintained no illusions, would have developed into a second Bulgarian state. Liberation found them in power in Yugoslav Macedonia — though not without local opposition — in strenuous diplomatic negotiations with the Bulgarians for control of Bulgarian Macedonia and in overt agit-prop activities in Greek Macedonia where they tried to win over to their cause the Slavophones and to put pressure on the Greek communists to adopt the Yugoslav plan for a unified Macedonia.

The Establishment of the PR of Macedonia

Yugoslav Macedonia became officially a federative state of the People's Republic of Yugoslavia on August 2, 1944 — "Iliden" — when the Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation of Macedonia [Antifasiskoto sobranie na naradnoto osloboduvanie na Macedonija] met for the first time and proclaimed the formation of the People's Federative Republic of Macedonia. The new state was immediately endorsed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Publicly, it was recognized that the PR of Macedonia, as all other republics of Yugoslavia, had the right to secede, but that was to remain purely theoretical.[2]

1. The number was estimated at 30 - 35,000.

2. U.S. Congress (Senate) Committee on the Judiciary, *Yugoslav Communism; A Critical Study* [author : Charles Zalar], (Washington : U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 97 [hereafter quoted as *Yugoslav Communism*] Dimitar Vlahov, late Premier of the new federative state, wrote that it was true that Macedonia had the right to secede, if it so desired, but, went on to say, that "there is not even one conscientious citizen who would like to secede from his common homeland, the PR of Yugoslavia, because, thus, our democracy would fall into the hands of the imperialists". Dimitar Vlahov, *Makedonija : Momentii od Istorijata na Ma-*

From the very beginning it became evident that the new state aspired not only at consolidating Yugoslav control in a traditionally irredentist-minded region, but also at providing a pivotal structure around which Bulgarian and Greek Macedonia would eventually be united. Thus, immediately after the establishment of the PR of Macedonia, the CC of the CP of Macedonia issued the following declaration:[1]

> Macedonian people: In your three-year popular liberation struggle you realized your unity and you established your own army and set the foundations of the federative Macedonian state. With the participation of the entire Macedonian people against the fascist occupiers in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece *you will achieve the union of all parts of Macedonia which the Balkan imperialists seized in 1913 and 1918.*
> As for the demand for the complete unification of the Macedonian people, there are today on your side all the other peoples of Yugoslavia, the Anti-fascist People's Liberation Council of Yugoslavia and the heroic People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia.

A little later, Milovan Djilas, in a speech at Kolarać on November 7, 1944, declared that "the question of the unification is today before the Macedonian people who have the right to unite themselves wherever they may live". He went on to explain that the unification of Macedonia was not merely a theoretical question but one which was *of vital interest to the security of Yugoslavia.*[2]

The new state immediately drew to itself the most diversified figures who, in the past, had played an active role in Macedonian politics, irrespective of the sides they had espoused at the time. The most illustrious of them all was Dimitar Vlahov, first Premier of the federative republic. Vlahov had been an outspoken Bulgarian during the Macedonian Struggle (1903 - 1908) and was later elected to the Turkish Parliament as a Bulgarian delegate. Later on he espoused the cause of the "federalist" Macedonians, and in 1925 he appeared as leader of the United IMRO, a leftist offspring of the organization of the Bulgarian *comitadjis*. It was during the closing years of the war that he emerged as an "authentic" Macedonian.

The leaders of the PR of Macedonia, trusted by the CC of the CP of Yugoslavia to place their communist loyalties over and above their regional chauvinism, were granted wide jurisdiction by the central government

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kedonskiot Narod [Macedonia: Moments in the History of the Macedonian People] Skopje, 1950, pp. 275 - 276 of Greek translation.

1. Text was reprinted in a brochure published at Skopje in 1954 under the title, "Ten Years from the Establishment of the PR of Macedonia" (author's italics).

2. *Politika*, Belgrade, November 8, 1944 (italics by the author).

to cultivate, among the traditionally Bulgarian - inclined inhabitants of the region, a Macedonian national consciousness and to combat any anti-Yugoslav tendencies that might occur. This sudden wide authority invested the newly appointed leaders with messianic zeal not only to turn Bulgarians into Macedonians but also to claim openly Bulgarian and Greek Macedonia as parts of one country. At the same time, they shifted their attention to removing the remnants of pre-war Serbian rule. But in their desire to cut off the Serbian heritage they were carried a little too far, a fact which the Yugoslav communist centralists in Belgrade were careful to regulate by themselves. Thus, when the Executive Committee of the Macedonian Religious and National Assembly appealed to the Serbian Patriarch to allow them to form their own independent Macedonian Orthodox Church, their petition was denied.[1]

Not for a moment did the new Yugoslav leaders hesitate to use the ace they had in their hands, i.e. "Macedonian statehood", to put pressure on their neighbors, the Bulgarians and the Greeks. If in following years they pressed so hard to win over Bulgarian and Greek Macedonia, they did it not merely to expand territorially, or, even less, to satisfy the regionalists of the Skopje regime, their ultimate objective — as events were to testify later—was the hegemony of the Balkans, and to that end they were not willing to retreat — even before the Soviets. The Macedonian Question was simply a very useful pawn in their dangerous game of power politics.

For Bulgarian Macedonia: Diplomatic pressure

On September 9, 1944, pro-Axis Bulgaria changed sides and in one day, in the best of Bulgarian tradition, a new state under the communist-led Fartherland Front emerged. Immediately, General Vukmanović and Lazar Kulishevski[2] met with the CC of the CP of Bulgaria in Sofia to discuss the future of Macedonia. Yugoslav quick action aimed at capitalizing on the weak diplomatic position of Bulgaria and the internal weaknesses of the Bulgarian Party. According to Yugoslav sources,[3] the Bulgarians accepted at that meeting the principle that wide autonomy be granded to the Macedonian population of Pirin — i.e. Bulgarian Macedonia — "to prepare

1. What they failed to win at that time, however, was granted to them in 1958 when the Macedonian Orthodox Church was established. However, the Serbian Patriarch continued to maintain nominal control over the entire Church.

2. Presently Secretary of the CP of PR of Macedonia.

3. Letter by Kulishevski to the CC of the CP of Bulgaria dated September 1944, reprinted in *Ten Years Since the Establishment of the PR of Macedonia, op. cit.*

them for the unification with the Federative Republic of Macedonia in Tito's new Yugoslavia". It was made clear that the slogan "united Macedonia" did not signify the immediate unification of the region, but that both parties accepted it in principle and that the necessary propaganda among the population would be conducted to prepare it for unification.[1] Apparently the Yugoslav leaders felt that it was not only the Bulgarian Macedonians who were not ready for unification, but that their own "Macedonians" were fairly much Bulgarians in their feelings. There were, undoubtedly, serious doubts as to whether so many Bulgarians in a newly-created "Macedonian" state could be absorbed. However, the Yugoslav leaders knew that time could easily turn against their plans and, consequently, they definitely turned down the Bulgarian proposal that unification be linked to the question of the signing of a close alliance between the two countries.

The results of this initial agreement between Yugoslav and Bulgarian communists followed closely the pattern of the war-time negotiations between the Yugoslav and Greek partisans. First, the Bulgarians recognized as a fact that the inhabitants of their part of Macedonia ceased to be Bulgarians and became "Macedonians" with an ethnic connotation to the word. The rest came naturally. It was agreed that Macedonian national units would be formed in Pirin Macedonia under the Bulgarian General Staff (the war was still going on in the Balkans), and that national liberation committees would be established in all Bulgarian Macedonian towns. On the political side, a Regional National Liberation Committee was to be formed under the supervision and control of the Fatherland Front to carry out in the Pirin district the tasks of the Bulgarian Government as well as to prepare the people for unification.

The second similarity between the Greek and Bulgarian attitudes toward the Yugoslav designs was the strong reaction which the initial acceptance of Yugoslav demands initiated within the ranks of the respective parties. Mention has already been made of the reaction of the Greek communists which had reached the point of open armed clashes between ELAS and SNOF units. Similarly, the Bulgarian communists did not feel very happy with the terms imposed on them. Following a meeting of the CC of the CP of Bulgaria, Vlado Poptomov explained the position of the Bulgarian communists in a regional conference in Gorna Djumaja. He ac-

1. Lazar Mojsov wrote: "Although from the Yugoslav side the question of incorporation of Pirin to the PR of Macedonia was not raised as an action slogan, this question required its fundamental solution, i.e., proof was sought that the leadership of the CP of Bulgaria had truly gotten rid of its Great Bulgarian chauvinism." — Mojsov, "About the South-Slav Federation" *op. cit.*

cepted that in Yugoslav and Bulgarian Macedonia conditions were mature for unification,[1] but that still difficulties existed. The Macedonians of Pirin, he said, felt themselves free under the Fatherland Front, and no question for unification was raised by them. Instead, there were many who wondered why Pirin Macedonia should be united to Vardar (Yugoslav) Macedonia and not vice versa.[2]

The Yugoslavs lost no time over such Bulgarian weak protests and double talk and set themselves the task to bring to realization an even more grandiose plan than merely annexing Bulgarian, and, at the most, Greek Macedonla. Their plan was to establish a South-Slav federation in which they would be the undisputed masters. And they knew that now was the time to do it.[3]

All through the months of November and December 1944, negotiations were conducted on the basis of a Yugoslav proposal for the establishment of a federation whereby Yugoslavia would have been represented by six units — six republics — while Bulgaria by only one. It is beyond the scope of the present study to examine in detail the negotiations for federation. It suffices only to mention that despite strenuous negotiations which lasted for two months and a trip by Kardelj to Sofia where he had talks with Kimon Georgiev, Traiko Kostov and Vasili Chervenkov, the Bulgarians remained firm that they be represented as equal partners in the proposed federation. The question was brought before Stalin in Moscow in January 1945 where the two delegations presented their cases. According to Yugoslav sources, Stalin, although inclined initially toward the Bulgarian view, changed sides and favored the Yugoslavs after it was explained to him that the federative republics were autonomous units.[4] Nevertheless, he advised the Yugoslavs to go slow for the time being with the federation plan because he feared the Allied objections since Bulgaria was considered a defeated Axis ally. Instead, he proposed the conclusion of a treaty of political, military and economic cooperation and alliance. However, British stern representations to Moscow, supported by the Americans, prevented the conclusion of even that treaty.[5]

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1. He said that EAM should be assisted in Greece so that the situation there might develop also favorably for the unification of Macedonia.

2. From a secret report by Liupso Arsov and Vera Acheva to the CC of CP of Yugoslavia, dated November 9, 1944.

3. Kardelj wrote to Tito from Sofia on December 23 that "now is the time, and I doubt that it will ever repeat itself". *Borba*, Belgrade, December 29, 1949.

4. Mojsov, "About the South-Slav Federation", *op. cit.*

5. *Ibid.*

The question of Macedonia played a significant role in the federation negotiations. The initial Yugoslav draft, discussed by Kardelj in his visit to Sofia in late December 1944, called for a unified Macedonian state which would be represented as equal in a South-Slav federation. The Bulgarians knew that it was well beyond their means to turn down this proposal without being openly accused of chauvinism. Instead, they tried to gain time, and they moved to a second line of defense. They would accept a unified Macedonian state in a South-Slav federation but on condition that it will be formed simultaneously with the coming to force of the federation. Kardelj, as well as the other Yugoslav leaders, knew well that the federation plan, especially as outlined by Belgrade, could hardly be achieved overnight. They put all kinds of pressure on the Bulgarians, even going as far as to accuse them af anti-Leninist attitudes for trying to lower a clear question of a people's self-determination to the level of political bargaining. At the end, Bulgarian intransigence forced the Yugoslavs to retreat. Their only gain was that Bulgarian communists had officially accepted the thesis that the people of the Pirin district, as well as those of Vardar Macedonia, were not Bulgarians but "Macedonians", a people of a new ethnic stock. In the draft treaty, agreed upon by the two delegations, the Bulgarians assumed the obligation toward Yugoslavia "to regulate all questions concerning that part of Macedonia which reverted to Bulgaria under the terms of the Peace Treaty of 1913". The Yugoslavs undertook similar obligations toward the Bulgarians for the regions they had annexed from the Bulgarians at the end of the First World War. However, even this agreement failed to be ratified on account of British and American protests.

The Yugoslavs, thus, failed to win Bulgarian Macedonia at a moment when Bulgaria was at the nadir of her political power. They had, nevertheless, made sufficient strides toward that direction which, it was hoped, would bear fruits in the years to come. Only Stalin's unexpected feud with the Yugoslav CC in 1948 caused the cancelation of the ambitious plans.

By the end of 1946, the Bulgarians had made even more serious concessions to the Yugoslavs. More and more officials in Sofia would speak in less guarded terms about Macedonia's future independence in the fold of Federal Yugoslavia; and more and more the Yugoslavs would press for more freedom to propagate Macedonian nationalism among the inhabitants of Pirin. Surprisingly, their efforts were met with success.

At its 10th Plenum in August 1946, the CC of CP of Bulgaria finally decided "to work systematically for the cultural *rapprochement* of the Macedonian population of Pirin Macedonia with the PR of Macedo-

nia, to propagate the PR of Macedonia and its achievements...to advance the study of the Macedonian language and history among the inhabitants of Pirin and to attach a Macedonian character to the newspaper *Pirinsko Delo*". The Resolution went even further to suggest that "special attention must be given to a series of measures concerning the cultural autonomy and development of national consciousness of the Macedonian population...in order to facilitate its union with the main portion of the Macedonian people in the PR of Macedonia".[1]

The Resolution was not communicated to the rank and file of the Party at that time. Apparently the leaders were still afraid of the nationalism of their followers and hoped for a more opportune moment to make it public. However, acts revealed more than words could tell.

In October of that year, Gotse Deltchev's relics were removed from Sofia and were presented in an official ceremony to the PR of Macedonia. Thus, the most representative and illustrious figure of the Slav struggle to win Macedonia around the turn of the century, lost its Bulgarian character, by official decree, and was invested posthumously with a Macedonian identity. A little later, the same road from Sofia to Skopje was followed by the 3500 volumes of the ethnological collection of the former Scientific Macedonian Institute of Sofia.[2] Early in February 1947, a census was taken in Pirin Macedonia. The inhabitants could choose between the Macedonian and the Bulgarian nationality. Most chose the former.[3] Many factors were instrumental in influencing the Bulgarians of Pirin to declare themselves Macedonians. New bookstores had been opened and books in the Macedonian dialect propagated Macedonian nationalism freely. Cultural groups from the PR of Macedonia and teachers cultivated the spirit of independence, which it was mistaken for complete independence from *any* central authority, which the local inhabitants always mistrusted and hated when they did not openly oppose. In addition, the communist regime in Sofia was increasingly assisting this proselytism. Despite severe opposition from many quarters, the Bulgarian Government assured the Pirin inhabitants that they would have nothing to loose from a closer association with the PR of Macedonia.

This "closer association" was defined, in the official agreements signed by Tito and Dimitrov at Bled on August 2, 1947, as "cultural autonomy".[4] The Bulgarian Government was thereby recognizing to the inhab-

1. D. Vlahov, *Macedonija op. cit.*, p. 319 (trans).
2. *Politika*, August 15, 1947.
3. *GFM* A/20495/Γ1/1947.
4. *Yugoslav Comminism, op. cit.*, p. 153.

itants of Pirin separate ethnic rights. To the Yugoslavs the agreement meant that the region would develop from a national, political and economic aspect in a way that would facilitate its incorporation to the PR of Macedonia.[1]

The Yugoslavs were careful to limit their immediate aims to the level of "cultural autonomy" in anticipation of the conclusion of a South Slav federation,[2] which was in the making. This was confirmed a little later when Tito returned Dimitrov's visit and signed with him at Evksinograd on November 27 an agreement of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance. Following the signing of this agreement, Tito declared before a large crowd in Sofia that the treaty the two leaders had just signed brought the two countries so closely together that a federation would only be a formality.[3]

What followed is well known. Stalin fearing a resurgence of independent action among the Balkan communists, strongly criticized the two protagonists. Failing to subdue Tito, he expelled him from the family of communist states. The Bulgarians, on their side, had more to rejoice than to regret from this turn of events. Their Pirin district assumed, almost overnight, its pure Bulgarian character. Not fully satisfied with having averted a dangerous threat to their territorial integrity, they reverted to the old game of claiming the neighbor's possessions, by trying to reawaken the traditional Bulgarian sympathies of the inhabitants across the border in the Vardar region. Once again Yugoslav - Bulgarian rivalry over Macedonia made its appearance in Balkan politics. Only this time there were not bourgeois chauvinists but internationalist communists who were disturbing the peace of the Peninsula over nationalistic claims.

For Greek Macedonia : Guerrilla war

While in the direction of the Bulgarians, the Yugoslavs had been empoying the weapons of diplomacy, in Greece the failure of the communists to take over the country compelled them to change their tactics. The most suitable weapon for the occasion appeared at the time an open rebellion by the Greek communists with ample Yugoslav (and Bulgarian and Albanian) support.

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1. *Proceedings of the First Congress of the Communist Party of the PR of Macedonia held 19 - 24 December 1948* (*GFM* A/19630/Γ2/1949).

2. Edvard Kardelj, *Yugoslavia's Foreign Policy*, Address delivered in the Federal Assembly on December 29, 1948. (Belgrade, 1949), p. 55.

3. *Borba*, November, 26, 1947.

Up to the Varkiza Agreement of February 1945 — which terminated the communists' first armed attempt to overthrow the Government — the Greek communists had under their control the entire area of Macedonia, including Thessaloniki. During the critical months of December and January, the Yugoslavs were advising their Greek comrades to withstand British pressure promising them military support. Confidential reports had reached the Greek authorities early in January providing evidence that the Yugoslavs, through Tzimas, the EAM liaison man, had offered to come to the assistance of the Greek communists with troops.[1] Outrageous as this information might have seemed at the time, there is now corraborative evidence pointing to its accuracy. Following the Tito - Cominform break, the Bulgarian communists — undoubtedly aiming at reaping propaganda benefits — revealed that just after the withdrawal of the Germans, the Yugoslavs were laying out plans for armed intervention on the side of the Greek communists, thus preparing the ground for the annexation of Greek Macedonia.[2] In addition, there is indisputable evidence that during those critical months, pro - Yugoslav "Slav - Macedonians" in Greek border regions were encouraged by the Yugoslavs to increase their secessionist propaganda.[3]

The capitulation of the KKE at Varkiza halted temporarily Yugoslav designs. A new plan was promptly put into action. The thousands of refugees from Greece who had escapet originally to Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, were concentrated in camps inside Yugoslavia for proper orientation and training, so that they might be ready to raise a new, better organized rebellion in Greece.[4] At the same time they tried to indoctrinate the "Slav - Macedonian" refugees with their views for a "united Macedonia", so that when they would be dispatched to Greece to conduct their own independent campaign for the annexation of Greek Macedonia to Yugoslavia.[5]

In the 12th Plenum of the CC of the KKE which was held in June

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1. Report dated January 9, 1945. *GFM* A/913/Mac./1945.
2. *Otetsestven Front*, Sofia, January 15, 1952.
3. *GFM* A/913/Mac./1945.
4. Findings of the United Nations Security Council's Investigation Commission. Text of the Report in: *The Conspiracy against Greece* (Athens: Under-Secretariat for Press and Information, June, 1947), p. 161.
5. Following the Tito - Cominform split, the leadership of the Greek Communist Party officially revealed that in the Yugoslav training camps, particularly the Bulkes camp, the Yugoslavs tried to manipulate the indoctrination courses for the purpose of proselytizing agents to their "Greater Serbian chauvinistic claims over Greek Macedonia". *Neos Kosmos* [theoretical journal of the KKE], June 1951, p.7.

25 - 27, 1945, the communists decided to launch an all - out rebellion.[1] In this they had the support and urging of the Yugoslavs. Apparently their concession for the Yugoslav support was to recognize the "Slav - Macedonians" as a seperate ethnic minority, akin to the inhabitants of the PR of Macedonia, and to grand to them complete equality of political, social and cultural rights. It appears that the Greek communists had not, at this time, submitted to Yugoslav aspirations for the unification of all three parts of Macedonia.[2] It is even doubtful that the Yugoslavs went as far as to place such a formal request with the Greek communists, probably out of fear that they might jeopardize the rebellion at such an inopportune moment.

All through the period of preparation, the Yugoslav communists carried a propaganda warfare against the Greek Government in an attempt to intimidate her and to weaken her position abroad, by accusing her of persecuting her Slav - speaking minority. As of the summer of 1945, when the decision to raise a communist uprising in Greece was definitely taken, Yugoslav statements claiming Greek Macedonia were multiplied. On "Iliden", August 2, 1945, General Vukmanović declared before a large crowd at Skopje his Government's policy on the unification issue which was promptly reported in that city's press as follows :[3]

> Comrades, you know very well that there is a part of the Macedonian people which is still enslaved. We should openly state this case. We are not the only ones to do this, but tens of thousands of Macedonian men and women who suffer and mourn today under the yoke of the Greek monarcho-fascist bands.

The most categorical statement on this point was made on October 11 by President Tito himself, again in a speech at Skopje. His remarks, recorded in the Skopje newspapers, were particularly enlightening :[4]

> We will never renounce the right of the Macedonian people to be united. This is our principle and we do not abandon our principles for any temporary sympathies. We are not indifferent to the fate of our brothers in Aegean Macedonia and our thoughts are with them. We will steadfastly defend the principle that all Macedonians must be united in their own country.

1. *Ibid*, p. 6.

2. In the heated exchange of accusations between Greek and Yugoslav communists which followed KKE's siding with the Cominform, Vukmanović sharply criticized KKE's policy in 1945 - 1946 which amounted to creating obstacles in the application of self-determination to the "Slav-Macedonians", a policy which he labeled as totally "opportunistic".

3. *Bulletin*, Skopje, August 10, 1945.

4. Text in *GFM* A/24581/Γ/1945.

Particularly menacing were Yugoslav statements during the guerrilla war. On August 26, 1946, *Borba*, the official newspaper of the Yugoslav Communist Party, published an article under the title "Aegean Macedonia" which read as follows:

> Greek imperialists have no right to keep the Macedonians any longer under their yoke; they can no longer allege that Belgrade and Sofia also oppress some portions of Macedonia and that a free Macedonian people with state organization does not exist...
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ...This question is part of the struggle for peace and democracy and for the self-determination of the peoples. That is why our country cannot remain indifferent to the extermination of our populations in Greece and to their right and request to opt and unite themselves with their brethren in Yugoslavia.

Most of the Yugoslav propaganda warfare was discharged *via* Skopje, although prominent Yugoslav leaders and communications media in Belgrade equally shared the burden.

Never had Greco-Yugoslav relations deteriorated to such a low ebb.

The story of the guerrilla war in Greece is well known. The United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans found Yugoslavia repeatedly guilty of rendering assistance to the guerrillas.[1] The Tito-Cominform split and the siding of the leadership of the KKE with Moscow, frustrated Yugoslav hopes and expectations over Greek Macedonia.

For Yugoslav Macedonia: A Bulgarian Counter-offensive.

As it frequently happens in Balkan politics, the situation reversed itself once again and Yugoslavia found herself under threat of loosing even her own part of Macedonia. Realizing that Macedonia was the "soft underbelly" of the Yugoslav state structure, the Soviet Union allowed the revengeful Bulgarians to foment anew a separatist movement within the PR of Macedonia.

Although secrecy is one of the foundations of a communist regime, sufficient information has reached Western capitals indicating that the Yugoslav leaders were faced with grave problems in their effort to create a new nation out of the inhabitants of the PR of Macedonia; particularly since they had to struggle against Bulgarian propaganda. As early as January 1945, Vukmanović, addressing a meeting of the Macedonian

1. U. N. General Assembly, *Official Records*, 2nd Session, First Committee, 72nd Meeting, p. 115. (Similar in nature were the 1948 and 1949 Reports).

Anti-Fascist Organization in Skopje, had revealed that opposition to the new regime in Macedonia was active and he singled out the dangers of "internal antagonism" and of "regionalist" tendencies.[1]

More details became known later by a report published by Mito Mitsaikov, State Secretary of Internal Affairs (Security) of the PR of Macedonia. Referring to the period of 1945 - 1947, Mitsaikov stated that O.Z.N.A. (Security) had to combat in Macedonia the organs of many foreign interests which were preparing a counter-revolutionary coup. Only during 1945 - 1947, 600 members of armed bands were arrested and hundreds were finally made to return to their homes expressing regret. During the same period, 1000 "spies" of the Bulgarian, German and Italian occupation authorities were arrested. What is even more revealing of the prevailing situation in Yugoslav Macedonia and of the opposition of the inhabitants to the regime, is Mitsaikov's statement that up to 1948 "134 fascist, terrorist, organizations and groups had been discovered in the PR of Macedonia".[2] There could be no doubt that the majority of these organizations were composed of Bulgarian sympathisers drafted among the local inhabitants.

The expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform showed the true dimensions of the dissensions and opposition of the population. Despite stern Yugoslav security measures, Bulgarian propaganda and agitation was making remarkable inroads. All through 1949, a stream of confidential reports was reaching the Greek capital on numerous arrests in the PR of Macedonia which were aiming at squashing at its birth any pretension for an open uprising.[3] Even military units, in which soldiers from the Skopje and Monastir districts were serving, were transferred from the PR of Macedonia and their place was taken by units composed of Bosnians, Serbs, Croats e.t.c.[4] It was much later that the regime acknowledged that the situation in the PR of Macedonia at that time was very serious. In a speech at Titov Veles, V. Georgov, member of the Executive Concil of the PR of Macedonia, revealed that the "campaign conducted at that time [1948 - 1953] on the part of the [Cominform] states, stimulated a number of known racists, opportuists, national-chauvinists, defeatists and criminals to commit traitorous acts".[5]

The situation could have developed into a fairly grave one were Bul-

1 Report on Yugoslav press articles, February 2, 1945. *GFM* A/1869/Mac./1945.
2. *Nova Makedonija*, Skopje, May 14, 1949.
3. *GFM* A/21819/2/1949; *GFM* A/28468/Γ2/1949; *GFM* A/36582/Γ2/1949.
4. *GFM* A/25616/Γ2/1949.
5. *Nova Makedonija*, November 2, 1958.

garia determined — with the support of the Soviet Union — to foment an open guerrilla uprising of the kind Yugoslavia was supporting in Greece at that time. Fortunately for the Yugoslavs, Stalin's death brought to an end these attacks.

* * *

In the span of five years, the Yugoslav communists saw that the solution they had applied to their Macedonian problem and the impact it had on their international relations, came close to investing them with the hegemony of the Balkans, only to bounce back and threaten with destruction their entire federal state. In the years of calm which followed the restoration of normal relations with the Soviet Union, they paid particular attention toward building firmly a "Macedonian" national consciousness among the inhabitants of the PR of Macedonia. A large number of books, pamphlets and periodicals dealing with some aspect of the "Macedonian nation" made their appearance during the last decade. A literary slavic dialect, through hard and painstaking labor by expert linguists, began to take its first timid steps. A University, an Institute for the "National History of the Macedonian People", and tens of other institutes and schools, geared toward the common objective, were built and staffed with numerous scientific personnel, an effort which could hardly be matched in this part of the world. History was completely rewritten to fit the demands of the new state and the new "nation".

It is beyond the scope of this study to try to examine the efforts and appraise the successes of Belgrade and Skopje to implant a national consciousness to the autochthonous inhabitants of the PR of Macedonia. There could be no doubt that the amelioration of the acute national antagonisms which prevailed in Yugoslavia — including Macedonia — during the inter-war and war periods, will be to the benefit of peace in the Balkans. However, when internal politics force the Yugoslav leaders to project abroad rotally unrealistic demands which, among other things, tend to undermine, without justified reason, the internal peace and security of neighboring countries, then one wonders whether the prospects for a genuine *rapprochement* of the Balkan states can follow a constructive course.

Athens EVANGELOS KOFOS