

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION: THE POLITICS OF MUTATION

Twenty years ago, I was concluding my book, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, with the phrase: "The Macedonian Question can and should be considered a subject for the student of history rather than an issue for the policymaker"¹. Since that time, much water has run under the bridges of the Vardar/Axios river. The problem has not withered away. It has kept politicians, as well as historians, fairly well preoccupied, and in all probability, it is likely to do so for years to come.

It is generally accepted that the emergence of this problem on the political scene during the last decades of the 19th century, came about as a result of the hoped for withdrawal, or eviction of the Ottomans from their European possessions. The rush to fill the vacuum, brought to the foreground the question of succession in Macedonia and Thrace, two regions of mixed ethnic composition.

Early scenarios called for the incorporation of the entire region of Macedonia to one of the Balkan states; Greece, first, then Bulgaria. Later, however, when conflicting Balkan nationalisms converged on the region, it became evident that one-sided solutions were unrealistic. Partition began to appear as a more feasible option, although realism hardly characterized the initiatives of Balkan nationalists at the time. Numerous schemes and demarcation lines were discussed and drawn on maps for almost a century. Unable to reach consensus, the aspiring suitors of Macedonia, as well as certain European Powers, canvassed the idea of autonomy. In the minds of the suitors, however, autonomy was not an end in itself, but a roundabout approach to annexation². Much later, after the First World War, the proposal for the establishment of an autonomous Macedonian state, within a Balkan federation, gained some

1. Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Thessaloniki, 1964), p. 226.

2. *Makedonia, 4000 Chronia Ellinikis Istorias kai Politismou* (Ekdotiki Athinon 1982), Chapter "Agones gia tin Apeleftherosi tis Makedonias, 1830-1912", pp. 444-484. L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, N.Y. 1963), pp. 517-524.

popularity with certain socialist groups and was adopted as a policy platform by the Comintern, and the Balkan communist parties. At about the same time, certain extreme nationalists of the inter-war Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) advocated the erection of a totally independent Macedonia, in the form of a "Switzerland in the Balkans"³.

Such conflicting schemes and aspirations, unleashed national as well as social movements, sparked liberation as well as imperialist wars, and resulted in holy but sometimes in unholy alliances. The tenacity of the struggles for Macedonia may well be explained on the grounds of geopolitics, nationalism, ethnological complexities and conflicting historical interpretations. Those were struggles of liberation by peoples striving for the overthrow of a five century-old, socially oppressive and nationally alien regime. At the same time, they were manifestations of clashing strategic interests of the emerging Balkan states, which sought to promote maximalist objectives not only in the Macedonian region, but throughout the Balkan peninsula. Disputes over the interpretation of the ancient and medieval history of Macedonia further accentuated the debate over ethnological issues.

The Greeks, for instance, considered, *sine qua non*, the holding at least of the southern part of Macedonia, including the littoral of Thrace, in order to keep the road open to Constantinople. On their part, the Bulgarians, as well as the Serbs, aspired at gaining hold of most of Macedonia, in order to secure an outlet to the Aegean sea. Furthermore, the European Powers, with conflicting interests in the Balkans, found in Macedonia fertile ground for intrigue, thus, rendering the fortune of that Ottoman province, a matter of European concern.

Of the three contenders—and heirs—of Macedonia, Serbia (later Yugoslavia) had the weakest historical and ethnological titles to claim Macedonia. Yet, as a result of the peace settlements of the Balkan wars and the First World War, she obtained control of approximately 39 per cent of Macedonia, compared to 51 per cent for Greece and 10 per cent for Bulgaria. As expected, Bulgaria hardly consoled herself with this arrangement, and awaited a more opportune moment to state once again her claims on Macedonia. During the Second World War she sensed that the opportunity had finally come, and she sided with Germany. But her gains in Macedonia (Yugoslav as well Greek) proved ephemeral.

With the termination of the war, the initiative in dictating the course of

3. Ivan Mihailov, *Macedonia: A Switzerland of the Balkans* (St Louis, 1950).

Macedonian developments passed from the Bulgarians to the Yugoslavs. Under Tito, it was Yugoslavia's turn to strike for a one-sided solution to the Macedonian problem. Certainly, a major obstacle in this direction, were the pro-Bulgarian sympathies and orientation of a large segment of the population in the Yugoslav and the Bulgarian parts of Macedonia. In Greek Macedonia, the ethnological problem—acute at the time of its liberation from Ottoman rule because of the admixture of Greeks, Slavs, Moslems and Jews—had been considerably resolved during the interwar and war years as a result of population exchanges, transfers and evictions. In Yugoslav Macedonia, a similar solution was out of the question. The expulsion of the Bulgarians would weaken dangerously the Slav majority vis-à-vis the rapidly growing Moslem Albanian population, living rather compactly in the western districts. Instead, a novel approach was chosen: a surgical-type operation for the mutation of the indigenous Slavonic inhabitants and their transformation into ethnic "Macedonians".

To transform nationally an entire population was hardly an overnight undertaking. It required imagination, talent, tenacity, and above all unquestionable authority over the region and the masses. Happily for the policymakers, these were available in abundance among the young partisans who took over the reigns of post-war federal Yugoslavia. As a starting point, they set up the framework of a state—the People's (later Socialist) Republic of Macedonia (S.R.M.)—albeit of a federative status. This was a prerequisite, in order to attain parity for the new nation with the other nations of federal Yugoslavia, and to discourage secessionist inclinations or annexationist aspirations⁴.

Next in line was the transformation of the local spoken language—usually described as a Western Bulgarian dialect⁵—into a "Macedonian" literary language. This process aimed at drawing an edge and loosening the linguistic ties of the Slav-Macedonians with the Bulgarians. In a way, it resembled a similar approach introduced, in an admittedly rude way, by the inter-war Yugoslav governments, which aimed not only at alienating the population of Yugoslav Macedonia from the Bulgarians, but also at opening the road to its "serbianization"⁶.

4. Evangelos Kofos, "The Making of the People's Republic of Macedonia", *Balkan Studies*, III (Thessaloniki 1962), pp. 375-396. Also, Evangelos Kofos, *I Makedonia stin Yugoslaviki Istoriografia* (Thessaloniki, 1974), pp. 5-13.

5. Nicholas Andriotis, *The Federative Republic of Skopje and its Language*, 2nd ed. (Athens, 1966), pp. 12-18, citing various authorities on slavic languages, most of whom stress the similarities of Bulgarian and the Slav-Macedonian spoken idiom.

6. Elizabeth Barker, *Macedonia; Its Place in Balkan Power Politics* (Royal Institute

The third objective was a bit embarrassing: a newly formed communist regime was called upon to sanction the establishment of a new Church. The "Autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church" was established by state decree over the objections of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate, which was the head of all the orthodox dioceses in Yugoslavia. The ecclesiastical coup broke all the canons of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and as a consequence, the "Macedonian" Church, was never recognized not only by the Serbian Patriarchate but also by all the other Orthodox Churches, including the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow. Nevertheless, on the credit/debit sheet figured more prominently, the fact that an independent Slav-Macedonian Church functioned and its services could be enlisted in exporting the mutation experiment among the Macedonian diaspora, where the religious feelings were particularly strong⁷.

The fourth objective was a most vital one. It aimed at a complete reinterpretation and recasting of the historical past of Macedonia. By a proper manipulation of historical facts and personages, it was expected, that the material foundations of the new nation would be cemented, giving credence to the argument, that the new nation did not emerge arbitrarily in 1944, but that it had a past of its own, well over 13 centuries, back to the time of the descend of the Slavic tribes on Macedonia⁸.

Finally, in order to sustain the new nation in its uphill drive, it was endowed with a messianic mission, a kind of a "great idea", similar to those that shook the Balkan nations in their 19th century emancipation struggles. The Slav-Macedonians' mission envisaged the future unification of the three Macedonian regions and the establishment of a Macedonian state within the

of International Affairs, London, 1950), pp. 22-23. Stephen Palmer and Robert King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question* (Archon, Hamden, Conn, 1971), p. 12.

7. Ch. Papastathis, "L'autocéphalie de l'Eglise de la Macédoine Yugoslave", *Balkan Studies* VII, 1968, pp. 151-154. Ath. Angelopoulos, *To Aftokefalon tis "Makedonikis" Orthodoxou Ekklisias epi ti Vasei ton Apofaseon tis Ektaktou Synodou tis Ierarchias tis Servikis Orthodoxou Ekklisias* (Thessaloniki, 1968). Also, Palmer and King, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-173.

8. Dragan Taškovski, *Radjanjeto na Makedonskata Nacija*, Skopje, 1967 and Kon *Etnogenezeta na Makedonskiot Narod* (Skopje, 1974). For a Bulgarian critical appraisal: Dimitar Kosev, "Revisionističeski Falsifikacii na Balgarska Istorija v Skopskite Istorici", *Istoričeski Pregled* (Sofia, 1959), pp. 15-44. For a Greek appraisal: Kofos, *I Makedonia...*, *op. cit.*, and by the same author, paper on "O Makedonikos Agonas sti Yugoslaviki Istoriografia", in the *Annals of a Symposium on the Macedonian Struggle*, held in Thessaloniki, in Nov. 1984. A penetrating analysis in Stefan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien, 1967-1982* (München, 1983), pp. 41-92 and 151-182.

Yugoslav federation⁹. In the years since the inception of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia that vision became the unifying and guiding force of Slav-Macedonian neo-nationalism. It was based primarily on the firm solidarity with the other Yugoslav peoples—in order to forestall any thought of future cessation—and it was veered to a collision course with the Bulgarians—in order to prevent a recurrence of bulgarophilism among the Slavs of the S.R. of Macedonia¹⁰.

The whole process was carried out with extreme care, maintaining the necessary balances. Bulgarian influences were eradicated but without stirring social upheavals or psychological traumas. The aim was to transform peacefully and, if possibly, voluntarily, all former “Bulgarians” into “Macedonians”, to induct them into the family of Yugoslav nations, to keep the options open for a “final” solution of the Macedonian question, and, at the same time, to avoid armed conflicts with neighbouring Bulgaria¹¹.

While the mutation process went on in the interior of Yugoslavia, policy-makers sought to obtain international recognition for an experiment which appeared unique for Europe. During the first post-war years—particularly during the Soviet-Yugoslav crisis—the recognition of the S.R. of Macedonia as an equal partner of the Yugoslav federation received top priority. The next step was the recognition of the Slav-Macedonian nation in its totality, including segments of it living as minorities in neighbouring countries or in the diaspora. When, during the mid-’50s, relations with the Soviet Union returned back to normal and Yugoslavia gravitated toward non-alignment, the territorial integrity of federal Yugoslavia was acknowledged by the West, as well as by the Soviet bloc, and along with it, the status of the S.R. of Macedonia as an integral part of the Yugoslav federation was confirmed. This led to a *de facto*

9. In a speech at Skopje on October 11, 1945, Tito declared: “We have never refused the right of the Macedonian people to be united. We will never renounce this right. This is our principle”; Kofos, *Nationalism...*, *op. cit.*, p. 152. Text was republished in a 1986 collection of documents of Yugoslav diplomatic archives and reprinted in *Borba* (6.11.1986). This principle has been echoed in various Yugoslav publications, as for example in the state publication, *Vision de la Macédoine* (Belgrade, 1973), p. 147, which refers to Greek and Bulgarian Macedonia, as “non encore libérées”.

10. The Bulgarians have repeatedly complained about the anti-Bulgarian elements of the mutation policy applied in the S.R. Macedonia. See the publication of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, *Makedonskiot Vâpros* (Sofia, 1968) and the pamphlet of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *For all-round development of Bulgaro-Yugoslav relations* (Sofia, 1978).

11. Details in Palmer and King, *op. cit.*, chapter “Macedonian nationalism under Yugoslav Communism”, pp. 133-183.

recognition of the "Macedonian" nation and language, as provided in the Yugoslav constitution. *De jure* acceptance of the "Macedonian" nation, in the wider historical and geographical context claimed by Yugoslavs, was hardly automatic¹².

It was well understood that merely political endorsement of the mutation experiment by itself was not enough. Political expediences could well prove to be reversible. The concurrence of the international scientific community was an essential prerequisite. The novel theories, however, for the ethnogenesis of the Macedonian people, coming out of the laboratories of historical and linguistic institutes in the S.R. of Macedonia, could probably serve adequately the needs of the natives, but they were hardly convincing to impartial foreign scholars¹³.

Gradually, policymakers in Skopje began to shift their attention to far away countries, such as Canada, U.S.A. and Australia, where large numbers of immigrants from Macedonia had settled prior and after the Second World War. They had emigrated from all three parts of Macedonia. Among them were Greek-speakers, Slav-speakers and even some Vlach-speakers. In the pre-World War II years, they had settled mostly in the United States, where they formed either Greek-Macedonian or Bulgarian-Macedonian associations and joined, respectively, the wider Greek and Bulgarian communities. No "Macedonian" communities—in the ethnic sense of the word—were recorded at the time. In the post-World War II period, new waves of immigrants, both from Greek Macedonia and the S.R. of Macedonia began to land in North America and Australia. Among those originating from Greek Macedonia were a few thousands of Slav-speakers. In terms of national affiliation they were split into Greeks and Slav-Macedonians. In the latter category were persons involved, in one way or other, in the Greek armed civil strife of the 1940s and had found it expedient to seek refuge abroad. In subsequent years, economic and/or political reasons led along the same road fortune-seekers from the S.R. of Macedonia. There were no more immigrants from Bulgarian Macedonia. Most of the newcomers chose to dissolve into the melting pot of the countries of their adoption. Others found the new "Macedonian" national identity a rather convenient and legitimate umbrella. For the old Bulga-

12. See for example the works by Palmer and King, and Troebst already quoted.

13. An excellent analysis of this phenomenon in Troebst, *op. cit.*, chapter VI "International historiographic views", pp. 195-206. The author observes that while the views of Skopje are partly accepted by Western European slavists, historians are cautious towards the interpretation of history as presented by nationalist-minded Skopje historians.

rian-Macedonian communities the new arrivals had little liking. Although personal and financial reasons did lure a few, association with the Bulgarian name, particularly during the Cold War period, was hardly an attractive reference¹⁴.

It was precisely at this point—around the mid-'60s,—that the “Macedonization” process began to make its appearance felt, particularly in Canada and Australia, where the newcomers began to outnumber the pre-war Bulgarian-Macedonian immigrants. To expedite and strengthen this process, authorities in the S.R. of Macedonia set out the necessary machinery for exporting to Macedonian immigrant communities the well-tried mutation experiment. A well-provided central agency for immigrants, under the name “Matitsa”, was established in Skopje to coordinate all relevant activities. Priests and teachers were sent out from Skopje to administer churches and school classes conducted in the Slav Macedonian language. In cities with large Macedonian population, the Yugoslav consuls were usually nominees of the local government in Skopje. Certainly, this patronizing by official emissaries from Yugoslavia, was not without its risks. A large percentage of Slav-Macedonians, particularly among those originating from Greek Macedonia, reacted negatively to a streamlined and even enforced mutation policy. Living in multicultural societies they chose their own way, forming their own independent organizations and even churches. They considered inadequate the goal for a united Macedonian state within the Yugoslav federation. From the comfort of their adopted new countries, they could afford to dwell in illusionary grandiose

14. There is a rich reservoir of literature, mainly journals and periodicals, published by various immigrant groups, or aimed at immigrants from Macedonia. One, however, should approach this material with caution given its unconcealed partiality. For the views of Bulgarian-Macedonians of North America: *Makedonska Tribuna* (an Indianapolis, Ind., newspaper). For the Bulgarian views: the journal *Rodoljubje*, formerly *Slaviani* (Sofia). Among the numerous pro-Skopje publications: the newspaper *Makedonija* (Toronto) and the journal *Iskra* (Adelaide, Australia). Also the monthly journal *Makedonija* (Skopje). Among supporters of an independent and united Macedonia are the magazines, *Makedonska Nacija* Gotenberg, Sweden and *Glas na Makedoncite* (Kogarah, NSW, Australia). For Greek-Macedonian views: the monthly journal *Makedoniki Zoi* (Thessaloniki), and various newspapers published by Greek-Macedonian groups and organizations abroad, such as *Makedoniki Icho*, and *Patrides* (Toronto), and the *Makedonikos Logos* (Melbourne). Also various publications about the Greeks in the United States of America, Canada and Australia have valuable data for immigrants from Macedonia. Slav-Macedonians in Canada have also sponsored certain publications, such as *Brief History of the Canadian Macedonian Immigrants and their Background* (Toronto, 1980). See also the highly controversial article about “Macedonians” in the *Harvard Encyclopaedia of American Ethnic Groups*, Cambridge Mass. 1980.

schemes for a future united and independent Macedonia; independent even from Yugoslavia¹⁵. The mutation experiment abroad began to show signs of malfunction. The possibility of a bumerang at the foundations of the S.R. of Macedonia could not be taken lightly.

In more recent years, efforts have once again shifted internally. This time attention was focused on the Moslem inhabitants of the S.R. of Macedonia who have appropriately been named "Moslem Macedonians". These Moslems have traditionally associated themselves with either the Albanian or the Turkish ethnic communities. Over the decades, thousands of them emigrated to Turkey, affirming in a rather poignant way, their national orientation. Nevertheless, notwithstanding insurmountable difficulties, mutation policy experts in Skopje—coping ironically the bulgarization process of Moslems in Bulgaria—sought to re-establish national links between the Moslems and the Slavs of the S.R. Macedonia. They argued that today's Moslems were Slav-Macedonians converted forcibly to Islam during the first centuries of Ottoman rule. If these Moslems could be enticed to rediscover their forgotten roots, the numbers of "Macedonians" in the S.R. of Macedonia would be augmented. Certainly this new phase of the mutation policy has nothing to do with the fear of a revival of Bulgarian nationalism among the population of the republic. Rather, it was conceived for the purpose of curtailing the menacing numerical growth of the Moslem Albanians vis-à-vis the slavic element of the population. Whether the conversion to Macedonianism of the Moslems would meet with a similar success as the conversion of pre-war Bulgarians, is still very much a matter of speculation. It appears, however, that the worldwide rise of Islam, which has also affected Moslem communities in Yugoslavia, would be a tougher challenger to the mutation process than post-war discredited Bulgarian nationalism¹⁶.

Turning, now, to the examination of Bulgaria's reaction to the mutation process in the S.R. of Macedonia, and to Yugoslav attempts at exporting the experiment across the Yugoslav-Bulgarian border, one is struck by the fact that the Bulgarians still bend under the weight of the cross of Dimitrov's Macedonian policy. Much as the Bulgarians wish to forget it, the Yugoslavs loose no opportunity to remind them and the world, that Bulgaria's venerable leader had succeeded in compelling his Party and Government to endorse Tito's

15. Articles in *Makedonska Nacia* and *Glas na Makedoncite*, *op. cit.*, and the Melbourne newspaper *Makedonija*.

16. *Impact International* (28.11.1986) wrote that "the aim obviously is to wean away Macedonian Muslims from their Albanian co-religionists".

solution to the Macedonian question. By that endorsement, Dimitrov had agreed not only to the transformation of the Bulgarian Macedonians into ethnic "Macedonians", but he had also consented to the unification of Bulgarian Macedonia with the S.R. of Macedonia. Today, the Bulgarians, in their effort to keep their distances from that policy without unduly marring the image of the founder of new Bulgaria, argue, that the Bulgarian policy on Macedonia in 1944-1948 had been dictated by unfortunate circumstances, as Bulgaria had just come out of the war a weak, defeated country. As such, she was ruthlessly pressed by a strong Yugoslavia, pursuing at a time a hegemonistic policy in the Balkans. Nevertheless—argue the Bulgarians—even that policy had left somehow the door open for the establishment in the future of a unified Macedonian state within a South Slavic federation. Within that context and under more equitable conditions, the new state could turn gradually into a second Bulgarian state, given the Bulgarian orientation of the majority of its inhabitants¹⁷.

Later in the 1950s the Bulgarian policy on the Macedonian question followed rather faithfully the ups and downs of Soviet-Yugoslav relations. From the mid-1960s, however, Bulgaria pursued, with remarkable firmness, a policy which tacitly accepted the mutation experiment within the S.R. of Macedonia; rejected outright pressures for the introduction of the same experiment in Bulgarian Macedonia—and by inference in Greek Macedonia—and opposed any claims for the re-interpretation of Macedonian history in a way to justify the existence of historical roots for the "Macedonian" nation, prior to 1940¹⁸.

Under Todor Zhivkov, the Bulgarians opted for a policy of strict adherence to the status quo in Macedonia. In the past two decades, they turned with increased enthusiasm in developing internally a strong patriotic mentality among the Bulgarian people. Although certain manifestations of this process may bring to the Yugoslavs unpleasant reminiscences of pre-war nationalist exaltations¹⁹, the shift may well be interpreted as a diversion from traditional

17. Cola Dragojceva, "Na Klasovi i internationalisticeski pozicii", *Septemvri* (Sofia, 1979), pp. 5-80. A French version: Tsola Dragoitcheva, *La Macédoine-facteur de bon voisinage et de coopération et non de discordie; Souvenirs et réflexions* (Sofia Presse, 1979), pp. 1-108.

18. Best example illustrating this point was the publication of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, *Macedonia, Documents and Material*, Sofia, 1978.

19. The commemoration of historical events, particularly of the Treaty of San Stefano, gave rise to much patriotic rhetoric and, as a result, to harsh polemics from Skopje. Bulgarian marxist historians defend the San Stefano and First World War Bulgarian policies, labeling them "progressive nationalism". Troebst, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 and 183.

Macedonian aspirations. Patriotic pride in ancient roots and the historical and cultural achievements of the Bulgarian people are the novel substitutes. Roots are now being searched in the glory of the ancient Thracians. According to current Bulgarian ethnogenetic dogma, the long-forgotten Thracians are considered to be one of the three constituent elements of the Bulgarian people; the other two being the Slavic and Fino-Tataric tribes, which settled the "Bulgarian lands" between the 6th and the 8th centuries A.D. For the Bulgarian historians, these "Bulgarian lands" are the regions of Moesia (north of the Balkan mountains) Thrace and Macedonia. It is interesting to note that the historical or cultural presence of the Bulgarians in the wider Macedonian region over the centuries, is a popular subject not only in Bulgarian scientific treatises, but also in popular writings, radio, film productions and school textbooks. In recent years, pre-war Bulgarian historiography has been enlisted to provide additional data or arguments to fit the current line²⁰. Historical references to the regions or the peoples of Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia, however, are limited to the period prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. On the side, the process of the integration of all ethnic groups, or minorities, in the Bulgarian nationality has been accelerated.

To conclude, the Bulgarians, having abandoned territorial aspirations on either the Macedonian or the Thracian regions of their neighbours, have turned internally to build their defenses on two fronts: The first against the contamination of their Pirin district of Macedonia from the mutation experiment of neighbouring S.R. of Macedonia; the second, against the possibility of a future emergence of Turkish nationalism among the sizeable Moslem minority²¹. So long as the internal structures in Bulgaria remain motionless, the emergence of Kossovo-type phenomena are hardly likely on either the two fronts.

Greek attitudes vis-à-vis the Yugoslav mutation experiment resemble, somehow those of Bulgaria, with certain marked differences. It is well known that since the conclusion of the First World War treaties, Greece has ceased to lay claims on regions or on ethnic minorities in either Yugoslavia or Bulgaria. Following the interwar exchanges of populations with Turkey and Bulgaria, and the mass exodus of the remaining Slavs at the end of the bitter internal strifes of 1943-1949, Greece has ceased to be a protagonist in the Macedonian

20. The Bulgarian views on the ancient Thracians: *Istorijska na Balgarija*, I (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia 1979), pp. 110-273. References to the rehabilitation of pre-war bourgeois Bulgarian historians in Troebst, *op. cit.*, p. 159, 161, 179-180.

21. Amnesty International, *Bulgaria: Imprisonment of Ethnic Turks*, London, April 1986.

theatre, and has contended herself to playing second fiddle. Still, Greek attitudes toward Macedonian developments are so emotional that Greeks tend either to magnify well out of proportion events or situations connected with Macedonia, or keep a discreet silence. There are reasons for this; historical, political and social.

On the historical side, wars, revolutions, foreign occupations have succeeded each other on the soil of Greek Macedonia for well over a century. A feeling of constant insecurity from the north, has conditioned Greek foreign policy options for well over the first half of the 20th century. In two world wars, parts of Greek Macedonia were overrun by the Bulgarian army, while a civil war was fought under the spectre of a possible loss of Macedonia and its annexation to a unified Macedonian state, either within federal Yugoslav, or in a Balkan communist federation. As historical memories die hard in the Balkans, it is no wonder why large segments of the Greek public, particularly in the north, still appear oversensitive to developments concerning Macedonia.

A second, political reason, affecting the attitudes of the Greek communists is a kind of "guilt complex" toward the Macedonian question. The pre-war endorsement by the Greek Communist Party of Comintern's policy for a united Macedonian state within a Balkan communist federation, and the adoption of a similar line again in 1949, have caused wounds within the Greek communist movement, and alienated the Party from large segments of the Greek public. Those platforms have long been abandoned and sharply criticized²². Nevertheless, it appears that they still haunt the Party and compel it to manoeuvre on a course of aloofness in Macedonian matters. This attitude seems to have the support of Party members. Moreover, it has appeased certain traditional critics on the other side of the political spectrum²³. But this same line has come under sharp attack by Yugoslav Macedonian nationalists who would like to compromise the leadership of the KKE with the publication of documents, memoirs and treatises focusing on the Greek Party's former positions on the Macedonian question²⁴.

22. Kofos, *Nationalism...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-198.

23. See: Michalis Papaconstantinou, *I Makedonia meta ton Makedoniko Agona*, Athens, 1985, pp. 17-19, 23-24, where a leading politician of the New Democracy Party departs from traditional criticism of the KKE for "treason" on the Macedonian Question.

24. Among a number of publications: *Archiv na Makedonia, KPG i Makedonskoto Nacionalno Prashanje, 1918-1974*, Skopje, 1982. Also *Egejska Makedonija vo Antifashističnata Vojna, 1941-1943 godina* (Skopje, 1985).

A third reason should be sought in the Greeks' sensitivity with their conception of their historical continuity and their links with the Greeks of classical times and the medieval Byzantines. Tempering with this image is bound to stimulate almost biological reflexes. Such was, for instance, their reaction when, in the early decades of the 19th century, the German historian Jacob Philip Fallmerayer bluntly declared that the Greek race had disappeared from Europe and that "not a single drop of authentic and pure Greek blood ran in the veins of the Christian population of Greece"²⁵. Putting aematological theories aside, the Greeks reply that they have survived three multi-ethnic, multi-lingual empires (Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman), that culturally, if not physically, they succeeded in fusing into a Helleno-byzantine and Orthodox Christian cultural community of Greek- as well as alien-speaking groups which shared a common destiny and, finally, a common national identity. This thesis came under sharp challenge by emerging Balkan nationalisms in the 19th century. Nevertheless, wars and population migrations for well over a century, and well into the 1950's, have sufficiently cleared the picture. On the one hand, non-integrated, alien-speaking population groups which found themselves automatically outside the newly drawn Greek state frontiers, merged with kin nationalities in Turkey, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania. On the other hand, other Christian non-Greek linguistic groups—Albanian, Slavonic, Vlach and Turkish (mainly newcomers Orthodox Christians from Asia Minor)—integrated smoothly into the Greek-speaking Orthodox Christian society which took its present form only after the Second World War and the Civil War of the 1940's. Any challenge to this dual concept (i.e. the historical continuity of the Greek nation and the actual national homogeneity of the Greek state) is bound to raise sharp reactions by almost all segments of Greek society.

Undoubtedly a fourth element which shapes Greek attitudes toward the Macedonian question is the high degree of misinformation and even ignorance of the Greeks about an issue that frequently stirs up emotions. A significant segment of the educated Greek public, including politicians, professionals, clergy and even scholars, have no accurate knowledge of developments in neighbouring countries during the past forty years. Limited intercourse with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia—at least until the early 1960's and again during the military dictatorship, 1967-1974—as well as lack of knowledge of Balkan slav languages are some of the reasons for this situation. Equally accountable,

25. Recent Greek translation and comments by Constantine Romanos: Jacob Philip Fallmerayer, *Peri tis Katagogis ton Ellinon*, Athens, 1984.

however, is the constant flow of misinformation reaching the Greek public in the form of official statements and "scholarly" publications²⁶. The policy of "silence" adopted by successive post-war Greek governments, apparently in the interest of maintaining good neighbourly relations, particularly with Yugoslavia, has similarly disorientated the Greek public. As a result, certain Yugoslav initiatives, aimed at disputing basic tenets of Greek Macedonian policy, have elicited cryptic statements of the type "there is no Macedonian question", or panic cries about a "permanent Slavic conspiracy against [Greek] Macedonia"²⁷. Both are hardly enlightening to a bewildered public.

With some detachment from press headlines, one can argue, without a great margin for error, that for Greece, the age-old Macedonian question has ceased to be an open question. National homogeneity in the region is very much a fact, not only on account of the recurring mass exoduses of the Slavic population in the course of fifty years, but also because of large-scale emigration and urbanization. Current economic, social and political conditions in Greece—and in Greek Macedonia in particular—including the state of human rights, compare favourable with those in the S.R. of Macedonia. Remarkably, Greek political parties, which differed so sharply in the past on this issue, show an unprecedented degree of concurrence, vis-à-vis the Macedonian question. Greece's initiatives for Balkan cooperation and the record of friendly relations with Bulgaria for well over twenty years—the longest period in modern times for the two traditionally quarreling neighbours—have eliminated territorial

26. During a flare-up of public statements and press polemics, exchanged between Yugoslavs and Greeks, in 1985-1986, certain Greek authors and journalists, writing on the subject, revealed considerable lack of insight on current affairs and policy-making in Yugoslavia, which have a direct bearing on the Macedonian controversy.

27. Frequent Greek statements that "there is no Macedonian question" indicate that there is no more basis—historical, legal, ethnological—to dispute the *status quo* in Greek Macedonia. Naturally, exaggerated claims by Skopje writers, do raise an issue that has a bearing on the climate of traditionally good Greek-Yugoslav relations. On the other hand, the projection of phobias of times past to present circumstances are out of tune with reality. A former Greek Minister of Northern Greece, Nicolaos Martis, in his book, *The Falsification of Macedonian History* (Athens 1984), p. 113-114, comments: "I cannot pass in silence the complete ignorance of our people; and in particular of the intellectual, political and other leaders of our country, regarding what is happening against our historical and cultural heritage... The responsible politicians and intellectuals, who had the possibility to know what is happening across the border, faced the situation phlegmatically and I would say with a certain modicum of arrogance. For the intellectuals, all these are but gross concoctions, unable to influence the most naive of humans. Why must they occupy themselves with a worthless fabrication?"

or minority claims in their mutual relations. In this direction (on the elimination of territorial claims), Yugoslavia's non-aligned policy, as well as the Helsinki agreements, reaffirming the status quo of European frontiers, have equally contributed.

Having controlled their own problem, the Greeks are hardly disinterested onlookers of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian dispute, or of the Yugoslav mutation experiment. Their position on these issues, however, is rather obscure, even from a close range. Laconic official statements from time to time throw only dim light on Greek perceptions of the labyrinth of Macedonian complexities. Equally baffling are various treatises coming from the pen of journalists or historians. In the absence of an authoritative source, one could only attempt to sketch what may appear as the consensus of Greek views on the present Macedonian problem²⁸.

At the outset, it appears that the Greeks reject outright the existence of a "Macedonian nation", a "Macedonian language" and even a "Macedonian republic". A more careful study of Greek views, however, would reveal that the Greeks do not dispute the existence of a nation, a language or a republic after 1944, but they rather refute the legitimacy of the appropriation of the Macedonian name for defining a Slavic population in the Balkans. For the Greeks—as for the Bulgarians—the name "Macedonian" is merely a geographical term that applies equally to any native of the wider Macedonian region, irrespective of his or her national identity. Unlike the Bulgarians, for the Greeks the name by itself is a cherished historical feature, an inseparable element of Greek cultural heritage for well over two and a half millennia. Understandably, it is highly unlikely to expect them to consent to the arbitrary appropriation of the Macedonian name by a Slavic people across their frontiers.

The controversy over the name is not limited to the literary, historical, cultural and even sentimental value attached to it by the Greeks. There are political undertones, as well. Certainly, the choice of the Macedonian name by the post-war Yugoslav regime was not coincidental. It was employed to act as a catalyst in the mutation process. By a masterful interplay of the geographical and national concepts of the term, these two concepts fused into one. In the ensuing confusion, the newly-established "Macedonian" nation could rightfully stake a claim to everything *Macedonian*; i.e. everything of, or pertai-

28. An enlightening short booklet by the Center for Macedonians Abroad, Society for Macedonian Studies, *Macedonia and the Macedonian Question; A Brief Survey* (Thessaloniki, 1983), pp. 1-45, presents, in a concise way, Greek views on various aspects of the Macedonian controversy.

ning to the region of Macedonia and its inhabitants. Manipulation of historical events, became easier and the history and cultural heritage of all the nationalities which passed through or still live in the wider region of Macedonia were automatically declared "Macedonian", of the Yugoslav type. Thus, Greeks, Bulgarians, Vlachs, Turks, Albanians, Jews were divested of elements of their heritage, and their presence in Macedonia—past or present—was disputed²⁹.

Faced with such extreme theories, some Greeks take the view that the only true Macedonians are the Greek inhabitants of Macedonia, who are the only people entitled to bear the name. Others adopt a more conciliatory approach. They suggest that a way out of the vortex of the Macedonian name controversy could be found if all the Macedonians—i.e. all the inhabitants of Macedonia—are clearly identified as either Slav- or Yugoslav-Macedonians, Greek-Macedonians or Bulgarian-Macedonians. Thus, the name will retain its old geographical context, the ethnicity of each group of Macedonia will be more accurately identified, and misunderstandings—coincidental or intentional—will be eliminated. Once this issue is solved, conflicting views might converge. With the Yugoslavs pursuing a policy of non-interference, under any pretext, in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries, and disclaiming territorial pretensions, the Greeks might find it easier to understand the mutation experiment pursued in the S.R. of Macedonia for the past forty years. On the other hand, if extremist views for transplanting the experiment across the borders or for tempering with the history and cultural heritage of neighbouring peoples reflect official Yugoslav policy, the chances are that the problem, will not be easily resolved.

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In summing up, the Macedonian question in our times appears to have retained the elements of a political dispute, mainly in Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations. Nevertheless, mutual recriminations for territorial claims on the respective Macedonian provinces of the two countries are not based on an imminent or even visible danger. They rather persist because of mutual suspicions entrenched in bitter experiences of non too distant conflicts, and the awareness of Big Power rivalries which imperil carefully-built balances in the Balkans. In all probability disputes over the ethnic origins and the national identity of the Slavs of Macedonia will continue.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43, and Kofos, *I Makedonia...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-18. For Yugoslav views on the question of the Macedonian name see: D. Taškovski, *Radjanjeto...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 31-32 (page references to a Greek mimeographed translation by the Institute for Balkan Studies).

In the course of the past forty years, Yugoslav Macedonia has witnessed—and to some extent is still witnessing—internal pressures typical of all neo-nationalistic movements, such as those of the recently emancipated peoples of Africa. In the diaspora, the “macedonianization” process did make some progress among small groups of Slav emigrants from Macedonia. Although the S.R. of Macedonia spares no efforts to keep this process under its own control and guidance, certain manifestations among Slav-Macedonian organizations, mainly in Canada and Australia, indicate that the course outlined in Skopje is not followed piously. A third road to macedonianhood calls not for federative status within Yugoslavia but for a united Macedonian state, independent even of Belgrade guardianship. The adherents of this “third road”, are experimenting with their own mutation process, claiming their roots not only to the Slavic tribes of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D., but even to the “non-Greek” Macedonians of antiquity, to kings Philip and Alexander the Great, Aristotle *et al*³⁰.

Looking into the future and excluding unforeseen international complications, one is tempted to argue that the future shape of the Macedonian question will mainly depend on the ability of the Yugoslav leaders—including those in Skopje—to mellow gradually the messianic effervescence and desiderata of the neo-nationalist activists within the S.R. of Macedonia: and to restrain their desire to attempt to transplant the mutation experiment across the border into Bulgarian Macedonia. Developments, however, will proceed at a pace corresponding to the degree of the genuine acceptance of the mutation experiment within the S.R. Macedonia, not only by the other Yugoslav peoples, but mainly by Bulgaria.

30. Numerous articles in *Glas na Makedoncite*, *op. cit.*, and various pamphlets of self-styled organizations like “National Macedonian Revolutionary Organization”, or “National Liberation Front of Macedonia” tracing the roots of the “Macedonian nation” far beyond kings Alexander and Philip to “124 years after the cataclysm”, and spreading the boundaries of Macedonia all the way to Thrace and parts of Anatolia, with Constantinople—not Thessaloniki—the capital of the future Macedonian State.