

# ***Review Essays***

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## **International Status of Minorities: the Case of the Balkans**

With the UN as their basis and sealed by the changes in eastern Europe and the agreements reached by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE; later renamed the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe: OSCE) and the Council of Europe, the foundations have been laid for numerous mechanisms to defend minority issues and questions. At present we are living through a period of transition in which half of Europe is examining the prospects for unification at all levels and the other half is trying to recover the ground lost during the Cold War. In fact, minority issues have advanced so far that one might say that the next few decades are likely to be filled with minority images and figurations of all kinds. We must not, however, overlook the fact that, to a certain extent, the euphoria felt in recent years over the developments in Europe has in practice turned into protectionism towards minorities and every kind of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural individuality.

Since 1990 and the changes in eastern Europe, publishers all over the world have had a field day with regard to minority issues and the revival of nationalism. As a region in which such issues are supremely important both historically and politically, the Balkans are constantly under the microscope of a scientific and journalistic scrutiny of all the parameters that make up their geopolitical image.

Interest increases even more when it is Balkan scholars, political analysts, and journalists who are trying to deal with minority issues. One of the main criticisms levelled against non-Balkan publications is that foreigners who write about the Balkan peninsula are *de facto* unable to make an in-depth approach to the region's issues. But the major drawback to the publications of Balkan origin is that many of them are written in the local languages: so foreign scholars and anyone else interested in the Balkans are more or less denied access to them.

This is the case with the book written by Vladimir Ortakovski, Professor of International Law: *Medjunarodnata položhba na malcinstvata* (International Status of Minorities), published by Mislja in Skopje in 1996, 472 pp.

To begin with, the literature produced in FYROM naturally needs supplementing with information about minority issues at a legal and international level. The facts relating to these issues are constantly and rapidly changing at a world level. The fledgling republic, a product of the changes that have taken place in the 1990s, needs to be informed about the status of minorities in the framework both of international organisations and of individual nations. Furthermore, its interior structure requires information about minority issues if it is not to be caught up in the tug-of-war between the positive and negative consequences of the favourable international climate towards minorities on the one hand and the potential threat posed by minority rights within the country on the other.

Ortakovski deals with minority issues at an international level. The tone of the whole book is coloured by certain basic considerations, which need to be pointed out for a better understanding of the debate about minority issues. Specifically, although the book supposedly focuses on Europe and the international organisations, the writer in fact concentrates on the Balkan peninsula and its manifold contradictions. Neither this nor the use of the local language really assists international "recognition" of the new republic's distinctive characteristics, nor allows the international literature to make any sort of approach to them. It seems, then, that the book is more for domestic consumption, necessarily restricted to the narrow confines of its own specific country and anyone else who understands the local language<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, it follows the same well-worn path as its predecessors both before and since FYROM gained its independence in 1991.

That the book is intended for domestic consumption is confirmed not only by the use of the local language but also by a scrutiny of its contents. Europe, the United Nations, and the other organisations are

1. At the end of May 1997, Radio Skopje's Greek-language bulletin broadcast a long talk by Ortakovski on the subject of the minorities in Greece, emphasising the oppression of the "Macedonian minority".

the excuse. The real subject lies elsewhere, and very close to FYROM moreover: the neighbouring countries and the national and ethnic groups on either side of the borders, which are shaping the Balkan jigsaw puzzle at the end of the twentieth century.

Both the author himself and the critique by one of the book's editors, Professor P. Mangovski, printed on the flyleaf, confirm this splendidly. It is curious that the most important issues, indeed the very essence of the book, are found literally in the final pages. On the one hand, in the very last paragraph, after 431 pages, Ortakovski vividly recounts his fears for the future of his country. He speaks of its fragmentation and advises the minorities to do all they can to safeguard the territorial integrity and the independence of the country in which they live, for otherwise there is a danger that local and international problems will arise, with grave repercussions, even perhaps armed confrontation (p. 432). On the other hand, in his critique Mangovski particularly mentions the fact that the book describes for the first time<sup>2</sup> in FYROM the situation both of the "Macedonian minority" in the neighbouring Balkan countries and of the other ethnic groups in FYROM itself.

So it now becomes quite obvious whom the book's messages are targeting. And the fundamental reason why the book has been written is also apparent. The texts produced by the UN, the CSCE/OSCE, and the Council of Europe, and the various measures implemented by the countries of Europe for the minorities living in their territory serve merely as a springboard for presenting the situation in the Balkans. And the book draws a distinction between good and bad neighbours, good and bad minorities, good and bad constitutions and laws. If we add in the selective presentation of figures from various statistics in the course of time, then we are led directly to form the stereotypical images that so often accompany minority issues, particularly in the Balkans.

Typically, Ortakovski makes no mention of the major west European countries, Britain, France, and Germany. The book essentially covers what we see on the front: a geographical map of the minority problems of the inter-war period 1919-39 in central and eastern Europe,

2. A glance at the bibliography (p. 444) shows that this is not in fact the first time that the question of minorities in international law has been presented in FYROM: see Trajche Ilievski, *Malcinstvata i Medjunarodnoto Pravo* (Minorities and International Law), Skopje 1993.

taken from *The Anchor Atlas of World History*, vol. II, Anchor Books Doubleday, 1978. The only west European countries mentioned are Belgium, Italy, Spain, and to a certain extent the Scandinavian countries.

The final feature that typifies the whole tenor of the book is the absence of any notion of "original sin" as regards FYROM and the other new nations in the region. The fact that they have come into being precisely in the era of minority rights automatically absolves them of practising any kind of oppressive policy against minority groups. Indeed, FYROM in particular, as a fledgling independent state, is included as of right among those countries in which minority issues are handled according to the most up-to-date international standards (pp. 325ff.).

There is an extensive bibliography: 431 titles relating to general and more specific minority questions. Some 90% of the titles are in English, the rest are more or less equally divided between books, monographs, and articles in Serbian and Slavo-Macedonian. The author's explanation for this conspicuous use of English-language literature is that it constitutes material he collected during his post-doctoral studies at the University of Chicago in 1995 (he specifically mentions (p. 25) the Regenstien Library and the Library of the University of Chicago Law School)<sup>3</sup>.

Nonetheless, the bibliography presents considerable inadequacies and to a certain extent is dangerously one-sided. Some very fine analyses of minority issues at both a general and a specific level have been written in both German<sup>4</sup> and French<sup>5</sup>. And even supposing that Orta-

3. The University of Chicago is a well-known patron of the field of so-called "Macedonian studies". Indeed, in a letter to the *East European Constitutional Review* (vol. 4, No. 1, Winter 1995, p. 88), a reputable international periodical published by Chicago University, Victor Friedman, Professor of Slavic and Balkan Linguistics at the same university, refers to it as a "tradition". He specifically mentions the case of Blazhe Koneski, who was awarded an honorary doctorate by Chicago University.

4. Some examples: Georg Brunner and Hans Lemberg (eds.), *Volksgruppen in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Südosteuropa-Studien, vol. 1, Baden-Baden 1994; Jochen A. Frowein, Rainer Hofman, and Stefan Oeter, *Das Minderheitenrecht europäischer Staaten*, Part 2, vol. 109, Springer Verlag, Berlin 1994; Gerhard Seewann (ed.), *Minderheiten als Konfliktpotential in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, Südost Institut und Oldenbourg Verlag, Untersuchungen zur Gegenwartskunde Südosteuropas, vol. 31, Munich 1995.

5. Some examples: Henri Giordan (ed.), *Les Minorités en Europe: Droits linguistiques et droits de l'homme*, Kimé, Paris 1992; Panayotis Grigoriou (ed.), *Questions de minorités en Europe*, Presses interuniversitaires européennes, Brussels 1994; André-Louis Sanguin (ed.),

kovski is not familiar with French and German, he has left out some very important works in English<sup>6</sup>. As far as his area of special interest, the Balkans, is concerned, there are no titles of works by other Balkan scholars, nor indeed any in English<sup>7</sup>.

Although mention is made of books published in 1995 (most of them in Skopje and Belgrade), there are no books or articles of western provenance from that period. Typically, one of Hugh Poulton's works published in 1989 is listed (p. 450), yet more exhaustive publications by the same author are omitted<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, out of all the vast literature on international law produced all over the world, the only bibliographical reference is to L. Frckovski, V. Tupurkovski, and V. Ortakovski, *Medjunarodnoto Javno Pravo* (Public International Law), Skopje 1995, as a basic public-law textbook (p. 339 n. 33).

Furthermore, there is nothing from the reputable east European periodical *Transition* (though articles are included from its predecessor *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*). From the *Helsinki Watch Reports* series, reference is made only to the cases of the Hungarians in Romania and the Turks in Bulgaria (p. 440, Nos. 101 and 102 respectively).

Given all these general features of Ortakovski's book, this critique will attempt to look at what he has to say about the Balkans. It must be said, however, that long lists of numerical data coupled with a simplistic

*Les Minorités ethniques en Europe*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1993.

6. Alexis Heraclides, *The Self-determination of Minorities in International Politics*, Cass, London 1991; Minority Rights Group, *World Directory of Minorities*, Longman Group, London 1990; James Pettifer, Hugh Poulton, and MRG-Greece, *The Southern Balkans*, London 1994; Alford P. Andrews and Rüdiger Bennighaus (eds.), *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, Reichert, Wiesbaden 1989; Paul Smith, Kalliopi Koufa, and Arnold Suppan (eds.), *Ethnic Groups in International Relations*, New York University, New York 1990.

7. Bulgarian Academy of Science and Institute for Balkan Studies, *National Problems in the Balkans: History and Contemporary Developments*, Sofia 1992; Lyubov Grigorova-Mincheva, *Comparative Balkan Parliamentarism*, International Center for Minority Studies and International Relations, Sofia 1995; Irena Coneva-Ilieva, *Malcinstvata na Balkanite: Mezdunarodnopravna zastita*, Kronos, Sofia 1994; Basil Kondis and Eleftheria Manda, *The Greek Minority in Albania: A Documentary Record (1921-1993)*, Institute for Balkan Studies, No. 258, Thessaloniki 1994; Elemer Illyes, *National Minorities: Change in Transylvania*, Columbia University Press, New York 1982.

8. Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict*, Minority Rights Group Publications, London 1991; Hugh Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?*, Hurst & Company, London 1995.

(and frequently telegraphic) literary style make a detailed analysis of the whole book more or less impossible.

In other countries, such as the former Yugoslavia and, within it, the Republic of Macedonia, minority rights were offered greater protection than was actually required by the international canons. Indeed, it is not strange that two UN seminars on minorities were held in Ljubljana in 1965 and Ohrid in 1974. (p. 16)

In the history and in the collective understanding of Macedonia, there has never been any ethnic conflict, and this has always made it easier for the Macedonian people and the other ethnic groups to live together. (p. 325)

These two extracts are from the Preface (pp. 15-18) and the chapter on FYROM (pp. 325-42) respectively. Such observations, which are reiterated throughout the book, represent Ortakovski's blunt efforts to prepare his readers to a certain extent for what the rest of the book has in store for them. And it goes without saying that what is in store is not going to be anything unkind nor any harsh criticism of minority policies in FYROM. Ortakovski makes this quite clear in a number of ways: his studies, his origin, his selective bibliography, and his style of writing all clearly suggest that it is other people who are playing the role of the "bad guys" as far as minority issues are concerned. That role is reserved in particular for FYROM's neighbours, notably Greece and Bulgaria, and to a certain extent Albania.

In the chapter on FYROM, comparative statistics play a special part. They are displayed constantly with the manifest intention of showing the unsuspecting reader the fledgling nation's achievements with regard to minority issues both as part of the Yugoslav Federation and, above all, since independence.

It is the Albanians who are the biggest headache for this country, and, of course, for Ortakovski. Following his standard strategy, he displays tables showing how the Albanian birthrate went up between 1961 and 1994. However, he neglects to mention the total Albanian population in the 1961 and 1991 censuses, though he does give that particular statistic from other censuses he cites (1971, 1981, 1994). The list of censuses is incomplete anyway. To a certain extent, he accepts the var-

ious statistical games, particularly as regards the censuses of 1953, 1961, and 1971, with regard to the fluctuating numbers of Turks in relation to Albanians. The Islamic religion and the language declared then as mother tongue considerably assist the objective, which is to reduce the apparent Albanian presence (pp. 325-6). He also employs the strategy, which he condemns in other countries (see particularly the chapters on Greece and Bulgaria), of putting quotation marks around anything to do with Albanian demands —such as, for instance, the question of an Albanian university in Tetovo, or “para-university” as he terms it (p. 336).

Ortakovski also talks about the Gypsies and Vlachs living in FYROM; but nowhere does he mention the presence of Greeks or Bulgarians. Both the legislative framework, with its constitution and laws, and the figures he gives relating to the presence of the minorities in everyday affairs in FYROM give the impression that the country is a paradise for the minorities that live in it. They are represented by flourishing figures in politics, the mass media, the army, the police force, education, and the law. According to Ortakovski’s way of thinking, their numerical presence in relation to the dominant “Macedonian” population in these sectors offers tangible proof of the level of protection afforded to minority rights in his country.

The footnotes relating to FYROM in this chapter reflect the same line of reasoning. There are ten of them: eight are of Slavo-Macedonian origin and the other two, which refer to the works of Poulton and Palmer, are used to support historical data.

Special mention is made of the protection given to the individual and collective rights of the various minority groups in FYROM, principally by specific articles in the 1991 constitution. Systematic reference is made to the role of such international bodies as the UN, the CSCE, and the Council of Europe. There is an obvious attempt being made to present FYROM as operating within the framework of international law by implementing precisely those provisions that derive from its international obligations, and as being in complete agreement with the latest perceptions about the protection of minorities and respect for human rights.

The preamble to FYROM’s constitution states, *inter alia*, that:

Macedonia is a national state which is sustained by the

Macedonian people and provides for full equality for its citizens and stable co-existence with the Macedonian people for the Albanians, the Turks, the Vlachs, the Gypsies, and the other ethnic groups that live in the Republic of Macedonia, which is committed ... to providing peace and a common refuge for the Macedonian people together with the ethnic groups that live in the Republic of Macedonia.

Ortakovski does not find it strange that, although, according to the official census data, the Serbs constitute the fourth largest minority, they are not mentioned by name in the preamble to the constitution. By contrast, although the Vlachs are not mentioned by name in the censuses, they are listed as a distinct ethnic group in the preamble. The same applies to the proportional representation on the committee for minority relations as provided for in Article 78 (p. 328).

The constitution of FYROM contains a special clause in Article 49 § 1 regarding the

Republic's concern for the status and the rights of all those members of the Macedonian people in neighbouring countries, assisting them in their cultural development and strengthening its ties with them.

On 6 January 1992, Parliament passed the following amendment to this clause and added it to the constitution:

In the exercise of this interest, the Republic will not intervene in the sovereign rights of other nations nor in their internal affairs.

All these references, which Ortakovski does not mention at all, are a fundamental lever with which to make territorial claims against neighbouring countries. The unilateral, arbitrary reference in the constitution to the existence of "Macedonians" in neighbouring countries (something that has never been acknowledged by international treaties) does in fact amount to intervention in the internal affairs of the neighbouring countries on the pretext of defending the rights of the so-called "Macedonian"



minority, and the amendment is therefore meaningless and worthless.

The book contains many references to Greece. There are four long chapters in which special mention is made of Greece and its policy towards minorities, particularly the "Macedonian minority". The first is titled "Minorities in Greece: The Period before the Signing of the Agreement on Minorities" (pp. 118-29); the second concerns the conventions relating to the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey and Greece and Bulgaria (pp. 156-65); the third covers pages 285-94 and essentially concerns the situation in Greece from the Second World War to the present day. Ortakovski reserves a special place for Greece in his final summing up of the question of minorities in general: on pages 414-19 he reiterates yet again the main points relating to what, in his opinion, is Greek policy towards minorities, with particular emphasis on the "Macedonian minority" in the twentieth century.

In the first two chapters, and briefly in the fourth, Ortakovski reports that Greece pursued a policy of "ethnic cleansing" of the "Macedonians" after the First World War, and altered the ethnic composition of Macedonia by settling Greek refugees from Asia Minor there. Every reference by the Greek delegation at the Paris Peace Conference to "Slavonic-speakers in Macedonia" is interpreted as recognition of the "Macedonian minority" (pp. 124-7). Ortakovski makes out that, under pressure from the League of Nations, Greece recognised the existence of a "Macedonian minority", citing as proof the *ABECEDAR* affair (p. 129).

On 27 November 1919, Greece and Bulgaria signed a special agreement for an exchange of populations. The Bulgarian parliament ratified the Treaty of Neuilly on 9 August 1920, but Bulgaria did not proceed to grant special rights to the Greeks in Bulgaria, as the Treaty required. Greece also carried out an exchange of populations with Turkey on the basis of the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923). More than 300,000 Moslems from the Greek part of Macedonia emigrated to Turkey and 700,000 Greeks from Asia Minor settled in Greek Macedonia. According to the League of Nations, in 1926 the ethnic composition of Greek Macedonia was as follows<sup>9</sup>:

9. League of Nations, *Greek Refugee Settlement*, Geneva 1926, appendix in E. Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964, p. 47.

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Greeks:	1,341,000
Moslems:	2,000
Slavonic-speakers:	77,000
Various nationalities:	91,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,511,000</b>

At the Paris Peace Conference, the Greek delegation sought and achieved the exchange of populations with Bulgaria. Those Slavonic-speakers in Greek Macedonia who felt themselves to have Bulgarian consciousness were given the opportunity to emigrate to Bulgaria. Those who wished to stay in Greece were regarded as having Greek consciousness, since they had remained loyal to the Oecumenical Patriarchate and taken part in the Macedonian Struggle. The Greeks in Bulgaria were also allowed to emigrate to Greece. It is significant that there is no mention in the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920) of any Bulgarian or "Macedonian" minority in Greece. Ortakovski in fact discusses Sèvres at length, quoting all the articles that concern other minority groups, such as Jews, Moslems, and Vlachs; but he does not comment on the absence of any reference to a "Macedonian" or Bulgarian minority (pp. 120-2).

So it is no accident that, in the section of the book that concerns the Treaty of Neuilly (pp. 157-61), Ortakovski suddenly starts talking about the emigration of "Macedonians" on p. 160, arbitrarily lumping the numerical data together without making any distinction nor even mentioning those who embraced the Exarchate and went to Bulgaria, while the Patriarchists stayed in Greece. Of course, in between these two groups there were a considerable number of individuals with a latent pro-Bulgarian consciousness, who, according to the circumstances, adapted to the prevailing situation, without their presence posing any sort of problem for Greece. With reference to the Greek-Turkish population exchange agreement of 30 January 1923, Ortakovski concludes that 240,000 Macedonians became a minority in their own land because of the Greeks who arrived from Asia Minor. Again, the numbers are exaggerated. Certainly, if the Greek census of 1928 recorded 82,000 Slavonic-speakers (Exarchists who had not emigrated to Bulgaria), bearing in mind the numbers of *bilingual* inhabitants and *Patriarchists* who, being regarded as Greeks, were not included in that particular census, there

may in fact have been some 160,000 or so<sup>10</sup>. This does not mean that they may all necessarily be grouped in the general category of "Macedonians", as Ortakovski would wish<sup>11</sup>.

The *ABECEDAR* affair took place in a specific historical context. On 6 August 1924, the Greek parliament ratified the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres regarding the protection of minorities. On 29 September 1924, under the aegis of the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, Eric Drummond, the Greek Foreign Minister, Nikolaos Politis, and his Bulgarian counterpart, Christo Kalvov, signed a protocol in Geneva covering demands by the Bulgarian minority in Greece and the Greek minority in Bulgaria. The emigration process was still under way, and VMRO was provoking incidents on the Greek-Bulgarian border (a typical example being the Terlis affair in July 1924)<sup>12</sup> and persecuting the Greeks in Bulgaria (particularly in the summer of 1924). The protocol signed by Greece and Bulgaria chiefly provided for two representatives of the League of Nations<sup>13</sup> to sit on the Mixed Greek and Bulgarian Emigration Committee in an advisory capacity regarding the measures to be implemented by the Greek and Bulgarian governments. As far as Bulgaria was concerned, the significance of the protocol lay chiefly in the fact that it was the first official diplomatic document since the First World War to mention the existence of Bulgarians in the broader area of Macedonia. However, two factors made the protocol impossible to implement.

The first was the stance adopted by Yugoslavia. Belgrade objected to the fact that the Slavonic-speakers in Greek Macedonia were des-

10. Iakovos Michaelidis, "The War of Statistics: Traditional Recipes for the Preparation of the Macedonian Salad", *East European Quarterly* (1998) (in the press).

11. The sources used in support of the numerical data, in accordance with Ortakovski's standard strategy, are exclusively of FYROM origin (p. 173, nn. 9, 10). In another example, with reference to the banishment of 1,600 "Macedonians" to Thasos and Kefalonia in the period 1936-40 (pp. 125, 416), Ortakovski bases his information exclusively on the *Istorijska Makedonskiot Narod* (History of the Macedonian Nation), vol. III, Skopje 1969. He fails to mention, however, that these people, who were Communists, were freed in 1941, following representations by the Bulgarian embassy, and most of them became agents of Bulgarian expansionism.

12. Ortakovski refers to this incident twice as an example of how the "Macedonian minority" was persecuted on Greek territory (pp. 124-5, 415).

13. Corfe and De Roover.

ignated as Bulgarians. Since this development undermined the policy of Serbianisation in the Serbian part of Macedonia, where no Bulgarian presence was recognised, Belgrade demanded that the Slavonic-speakers in Greek Macedonia be described as Serbs and at the same time rescinded the Greek-Serbian Treaty of Alliance of 1913. Owing to Belgrade's attitude, the Greek government was unable to ratify the protocol.

The second stumbling block was connected with the completion of the emigration process. The Slavonic-speakers with Bulgarian national consciousness who wanted to emigrate to Bulgaria had to submit their applications by 31 December 1924. As already mentioned, as far as Greece was concerned, those who stayed behind were simply a linguistic minority (*minorité de langue slave*) and not an ethnic minority.

In order to avoid diplomatic sanctions for not ratifying the protocol, and so that Greece might meet its commitments arising out of the Treaty of Sèvres, on 29 May 1925 the Greek government told the League of Nations that it would meet the Slavonic-speakers' demands in the educational and religious spheres<sup>14</sup>.

The educational measures that Greece proposed to implement included the compiling of a primer in the local Slavonic dialect using the Latin alphabet. Greece also proposed that the Slavonic-speakers be taught the Greek language, and the League of Nations agreed<sup>15</sup>.

The term "Macedonian minority" is not to be found anywhere in the relevant diplomatic documents. However, since Bulgaria did not implement similar measures for the Greeks, as provided in the Treaty of Neuilly for the minorities in Bulgaria, Greece could not implement the measures unilaterally. Furthermore, during the Greek-Serbian negotiations over the unresolved question of the Free Trade Zone in Thessaloniki in April and May 1925 (and later), Belgrade started pressuring

14. See "Réponse du gouvernement hellénique aux trois questions formulées par le Conseil de la Société des nations, au sujet de la protection des minorités ethniques, de religion et de langue en Grèce", appendix to: A. Tounda-Fergadi, *Ελληνο-βουλγαρικές μειονότητες: Πρωτόκολλο Πολίτη-Καλφώφ, 1924-1925*, Institute for Balkan Studies, No. 201, Thessaloniki 1986, p. 216.

15. "Il est bien entendu que l'enseignement créé au profit des populations grecques de langue slave comportera aussi un enseignement de la langue grecque": see "Réponse du gouvernement hellénique à certaines questions qui lui ont été adressées par le Conseil en mars 1925: Procès verbal de la sixième séance (publique) tenue à Genève le mercredi 10 juin 1925", appendix to: Tounda-Fergadi, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

the Greek side to recognise the Slavonic-speakers in Greek Macedonia as a Serbian minority, so that Greece could indirectly help Serbia to carry out its policy of Serbianisation in the Serbian part of Macedonia. The question of the Slavonic-speakers in Greek Macedonia inevitably became embroiled in the Bulgaro-Yugoslav quarrel over the Macedonian Question, posing a direct threat to the situation in the Balkans. After mid-1925, the Politis-Kalvov protocol and the Slavonic-speakers in Greek Macedonia ceased to concern the League of Nations. And it should also be noted that the Slavonic-speakers in Greek Macedonia never complained of oppression by the Greek authorities either to the Greek government or to the League of Nations representatives on the Mixed Greek and Bulgarian Emigration Committee.

The third chapter about Greece (pp. 285-94) starts with a reference to Greece's "anti-Macedonian" campaign, which apparently reached a peak after the Second World War, when the Greek authorities persecuted the "Macedonians", who had joined forces with the democratic people of Greece during the occupation and the Civil War and were fighting for their national rehabilitation.

During the Second World War and the Greek Civil War (1946-9), one segment of the Slavonic-speaking population did indeed undergo a crisis of consciousness, chiefly owing to the influence of external factors. During the Bulgarian occupation, quite a number of Slavonic-speakers in Greek Macedonia, either out of self-interest or under pressure, became instruments of the Bulgarian conquerors and organised themselves into security forces known as *Ohrana*. The Slavo-Macedonian National Liberation Front (SNOF) was established in Greek Macedonia in 1943 on the initiative of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Having accepted the Internationale's 1934 resolution regarding the existence of a "Macedonian nation", the Yugoslav Communist Party was now promoting "Macedonism" as a counterbalance to "Bulgarism", and indeed, since 1943, had been pursuing the unification of all three parts of Macedonia in the framework of the Yugoslav Federation. The Greek CP acquiesced in the setting up of SNOF because it thought that those Slavonic-speakers who had been seduced by the Bulgarian Fascist propaganda might thus be drawn into the resistance.

In 1944, when Nazism had begun to collapse in Europe, and Bulgaria, having allied itself with the Axis powers, looked as though it would

once again be on the losing side, many *Ohrana* supporters walked out of the Bulgarian army and joined SNOF *en masse*, presenting themselves now as “Macedonian” Communist resistance fighters. SNOF’s direct dependence on Yugoslavia, coupled with its propagandist support for the union of Greek Macedonia with Yugoslavia provoked considerable alarm in the Greek resistance movement, with the result that ELAS (National Popular Liberation Army) units<sup>16</sup> clashed with armed sections of SNOF in October 1944 and drove them back into Yugoslavia. In April 1945, taking advantage of the unstable political situation in Greece in the wake of the December events, the Yugoslavs set up the National Liberation Front (NOF), as the successor to SNOF, and incorporated it into the Greek Communist movement when the Civil War broke out.

Following the defeat of the Greek Communists in August 1949, some of the Slavonic-speaking adherents of NOF fled and settled in Yugoslav Macedonia. The rest followed the leaders of the Greek CP and settled in the countries of eastern Europe. Consequently, the fate of the Slavonic-speakers who joined the Greek Communist movement during the Civil War was the same as that of the Greek Communists. It was quite natural and only to be expected that the Greek government’s attitude towards those who settled in the Socialist Federal Republic of “Macedonia”, became naturalised “Macedonians”, and embarked on a systematic anti-Greek campaign should range from wary to downright hostile. But what Ortakovski fails to mention anywhere in this book is the fact that, during the occupation and the Civil War, many Slavonic-speakers not only remained firmly committed to Greece, but also took up arms and fought against the NOF supporters.

The second part of this chapter continues with fragmentary accounts of Greek policy towards the “Macedonian ethnic minority” from the end of the Civil War until the events surrounding the process of the recognition of FYROM by the United Nations.

Ortakovski gives data here relating to the numerical strength of the “Macedonian minority”, noting:

Some sources in Macedonia estimate that there are between

16. Ortakovski’s assertion, based on information taken from Poulton, that 40% of the ELAS sections were made up of “Macedonians” (p. 286), is far from the truth. The historical data mention about 5,000 Slavo-Macedonians.

250,000 and 300,000 Macedonians living in Aegean Macedonia today, while according to others there are approximately 200,000 members of the Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece. Most of them are in the areas of Kastoria and Florina, as also in Kozani, Edessa, Veria, Kilkis, Serres, and elsewhere.

The only source he cites in support of these assertions is T. Popovski's classic *Makedonskoto nacionalno malcinstvo vo Bulgarija, Grcija i Albanija* (The Macedonian Ethnic Minority in Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania), Skopje 1981.

Again, any reference to measures taken against members of the "Macedonian ethnic minority" in Greece in the 1950s is exclusively backed by sources published in Skopje (see footnotes 30, 31, 32 on p. 339). For literature in support of other minority groups in Greece, Ortakovski turns to the Minority Rights Group Reports (Hugh Poulton's for the Macedonians and Moslems and Grattan Puxon's for the Gypsies). Its very title indicates that this organisation is, at the very least, favourably disposed towards minorities, regardless of their country or relative strength.

Ortakovski's book is the latest in a long line of publications about the Macedonian Question, chiefly in the English language, that to a certain extent regurgitate the arguments and the numerical data of a policy that is favourable to the theses of Slavo-Macedonian historiography. The writers (Poulton, Danforth, Whitman, Malcolm) all cite each other's books and refer to the "classic" publications produced in Skopje (Andonovski, Mojsov, Popovski, Kiselinski)<sup>17</sup>. And then monographs and articles produced in Skopje since 1991 complete the circle by using the aforementioned English-language publications to support their argumentation.

Tellingly, as regards the activities of the "Macedonian minority" in Greece since FYROM became independent in 1991, Ortakovski mentions only the moves made by Sidiropoulos (or Sidirovski, as he calls him, p. 288). Nothing is said, for instance, about elections, political

17. For the game of reiterated arguments in the Macedonian Question, see the enlightening article by Vlassis Vlassidis and Veniamin Karakostanoglou, "Recycling Propaganda: Remarks on Recent Reports on Greece's 'Slav-Macedonian Minority'", *Balkan Studies*, 36,1 (1995), Thessaloniki, pp. 151-70.

parties, or newspapers connected with the “Macedonians” in Greece. In contrast to the case of the “Macedonians” in Bulgaria, who are not allowed to engage in political activity (pp. 279-80), he does not appear to be interested in the fact that in the European elections of 1994 the self-styled “local Macedonians” in Greece put up their own party, which they called *Rainbow* (Vinozhito)<sup>18</sup>. It was the successor of the *Macedonian Movement for Balkan Welfare*<sup>19</sup> and garnered 7,263 votes at the national level. The various personal, ethnic, and ideological endeavours, representations, and commitments (see Tsarknias, Sidiropoulos, Voskopoulos, Passoïs) towards FYROM and their relations with Greece are the dominant aspect of the microcosm of the “local Macedonian” activists.

Ortakovski believes that Greece, as a member of the EU, should respect the international agreements concerning minorities and should be taking more practical steps, rather than bickering over its northern neighbour’s name. Historical facts are set aside in this case and the so-called confrontation between the two countries assumes a political aspect. Greece is essentially obliged to accept the situation created in the last few years and behave like a European nation. FYROM, however, as a weak and defenceless nation, has to use all possible means to underline its status on the international scene, and the argumentation he employs grants it complete immunity.

The chapter on Yugoslavia goes up to the events of 1991 (pp. 311-24). From the start, the reader is given to understand that postwar Yugoslavia, the country whose historical course was so closely bound up with Tito, was essentially a model as far as the protection of minority rights is concerned. Ortakovski gives a glowing account of the constitution of 1974; and what is more:

As on paper, so too in practice the international standards regarding the protection of ethnic minorities were respected in Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s. The various ethnic

18. In the last national elections, on 22 September 1996, *Rainbow* and the Communist *OAKKE* jointly garnered 3,485 votes.

19. This organisation had put up a single candidate, an active member of the “local Macedonians”, Anastassios Boulis or Tasko Boulev, in the national elections of 1993. He received 367 votes in the prefecture of Florina.



groups enjoyed more rights than was the case on an international scale, particularly the Albanian and Hungarian minorities, and this helped the country to hold together. (p. 316)

The rest of the chapter is devoted to the Kosovo problem. True to form, Ortakovski directly condemns "Albanian chauvinism" on this issue, while duly justifying the Serbian position, backed up by the necessary footnotes of Serbian origin (pp. 318-19, nn. 86, 88, 89).

Although Ortakovski lays particular weight and emphasis on Balkan minority issues, the case of Turkey is exceptional in that he devotes only two pages to the minority problems of this, the largest of all the Balkan countries (pp. 153-4). He refers briefly to the League of Nations data for 1927 and the figures for a few minority groups, backed by a single bibliographical reference (C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities*, London 1934, p. 448). He seems to think that the issues relating to the Aaland Islands between Sweden and Finland or to the Baltic countries need more bibliographical references to cover them properly than do Turkey's minority issues.

After repeated references to texts and figures for the various countries (particularly the Balkan countries) and the status enjoyed by the minorities on their soil, the book closes with further repetitions, clichés, and examples already cited in earlier chapters. Once again, the Balkans are central in many respects (Chapter 13, pp. 397-433: "A Final Review").

To begin with, whereas the titles of the subsections of Chapter 13 mention the various countries' and the international organisations' policies towards minorities, it is only in the case of the Balkan countries that Ortakovski uses as the title to subsection 3 "*Measures against the minorities in the Balkan countries*" (my italics), specifically naming "Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania" in subsection 3.1 and "Greece" in subsection 3.2 (pp. 408-19).

And while he is focusing his attention once again on the Balkan countries, it only remains for him to associate them with the fate of the members of the "Macedonian nation" living within their borders. The point is to underscore yet again the anti-Macedonian policy, mainly in Bulgaria and Greece, but also in Albania. With this in mind, culling certain data from the chapter, Ortakovski talks of:

- i. (in the case of Bulgaria) “statistical genocide” of the “Macedonian minority” in the period 1946/1956-1965 (p. 409);
- ii. (in the cases of Albania and Bulgaria) “systematic and compulsory resettlement” of the “Macedonian minority” after 1948, as also the changing of the names of people and places (pp. 411-12);
- iii. (in the cases of Bulgaria and Albania) their educational policy towards the “Macedonian minority” (p. 413).

Not content with doing his best to show how the “Macedonian minority” is being persecuted in these specific Balkan countries, at the end of the book Ortakovski tries to paint Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania even blacker. Nor is he loath to resort to ploys that are far removed from scholarship. With regard to the Greeks in Albania, for instance, in this final chapter of his book he more or less forgets the existence of the biggest minority in Albania (pp. 411-12)<sup>20</sup>. Yet again, the “Macedonian minority” is his primary concern. And with regard to religious persecution, he mentions only the Turks in Bulgaria and the Orthodox in general in Albania (p. 412).

Ortakovski is well aware that the international climate is in favour of minority issues. The international organisations, the international fora, the non-governmental organisations, with their agreements, their decisions, their declarations, and their appeals, now fully support an independent voice for all the minorities all over the world. And if one considers the heightened international sensitivity towards small nations, the author of this particular book must be feeling quite confident about his country’s future.

However, in the case of a newly fledged republic like FYROM, it is not enough to rely upon the political situation and the selective use of historical events to cast the blame always on the “others” (in this case the neighbours). If we reverse the argument that the neighbouring countries should accept the situation that has existed for at least the past fifty years, then, likewise, the other side must accept the situation in the nation-states, which, regardless of historical events, has made them literally homogenous. Otherwise, the peril is immediately apparent. And

20. Typically, out of all the international literature on the Greek minority in Albania, all Ortakovski can find is a solitary article published in the *New York Times* on 21 December 1984.

since, according to the official statistics, the dominant ethnic element of the "Macedonians" accounts for no more than 64% of the total population of FYROM, it does not enjoy the same degree of resistance as is the case in Bulgaria and Greece, for instance, where the dominant ethnic element accounts for between 88% and 98% respectively. Therefore, precisely owing to the statistical data, which are forecast to become even more negative in the near future, the young republic is compelled to resort to the methods it condemns in others. But there is thus a risk on the one hand that it will not meet the international standards for protection of minorities, and on the other that its national hypostasis will be damaged by its supporting at all costs (without being able to maintain it sufficiently) a fictitious image of the minorities living within its borders.