

**MACEDONIA, LOST AND FOUND IN THE EMBRACE OF A NEW IDENTITY**

*“Amongst all the territories stripped from San Stefano Bulgaria and returned to bondage, namely North Dobrudja, Morava, Macedonia and Adrianople, the largest geographically, and with the most homogeneous Bulgarian population was Macedonia.*

*I have always been part of the Macedonian Liberation Movement but I am a son of the Bulgarian people, just as the Slavs of Macedonia have been Bulgarians for a thousand years.”*

Ivan Mihailov<sup>1</sup>,  
Leader of the Internal Macedonian  
Revolutionary Organization<sup>2</sup> (IMRO)

*Art. 1. The goal of [Bulgarian Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Committees]<sup>3</sup> is to secure full political autonomy for the Macedonia and Adrianople regions.*

*Art. 2. To achieve this goal they [the committees] shall raise the awareness of self-defense in the Bulgarian population in the regions mentioned in Art. 1., disseminate revolutionary ideas - printed or verbal, and prepare and carry on a general uprising.*

*Art. 3. A member of BMARC can be any Bulgarian, independent of gender [...]<sup>4</sup>*

Bulgaria suffered from national unification problems during the first half of the twentieth century, and today these issues remain unresolved.<sup>5</sup> The policy of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Ivan Mihailov (1896-1990), Bulgarian revolutionary, leader of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization after 1924. After 1945 he lived in exile in Rome under the protection of the Italian government. He was also a lawyer, writer and journalist.

<sup>2</sup> “The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization was the name of a revolutionary political organization in the Macedonia and Thrace regions of the Ottoman Empire, as well as in Bulgaria, and after 1913 in the Macedonian regions of Greece and Yugoslavia. The organization has changed its name on several occasions, from Bulgarian Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Committees to the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization to IMRO.” Cited from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IMRO>. Today IMRO is the biggest democratic political party in Republic of Macedonia and influential political party in Bulgaria.

<sup>3</sup> Hereinafter BMARC

<sup>4</sup> Statute of the Bulgarian Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Committees, 1896, Thessaloniki, Ottoman Empire

Comintern<sup>6</sup> to invent new nations brought a different type of challenge for the Bulgarian nation after the World War II, imposing a new national identity and consciousness on a homogeneous population which by that time considered itself Bulgarian but lived outside the borders of Bulgaria. Most of this population lived in the territory of Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. This policy supported by the Communistic Government of Yugoslavia led to split of the Bulgarian nation into two after 1945 and to the eventual creation of a new distinct Macedonian nation<sup>7</sup> and state in the Balkans.<sup>8</sup>

Because many of the notions used in this paper might be seen as a potential source of confusion and could be used ambiguously, I will provide definitions for them. The definitions are needed because the topic is very sensitive and controversial, and there is no consensus among the scholars and politicians of the usage of these notions.

“Macedonia”<sup>9</sup> is a geographical region in the southwest part of the Balkans and does not refer to any connections with a state, country or nationality whatsoever<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ivan Alexandrov “*Macedonia and Bulgarian National Nihilism*”, (Macedonian Patriotic Organization “TA” Australia Inc. 1993), available at <http://knigite.abv.bg/en/gphillip/ia/>: “Of the five wars that Bulgaria fought after *Liberation* in 1878, four were directly concerned with securing national and social emancipation for the Bulgarian people. This was most apparent during WWII. The arrival of the Tsar Boris III's Army in Vardar Macedonia and the Western provinces brought true national liberation, but subsequently these territories were not incorporated into the new national Bulgaria.”

<sup>6</sup> The Comintern, also known as Communist International is an international Communist organization founded in March 1919, by Vladimir Lenin and the Russian Communist Party.

<sup>7</sup> Bozhidar Dimitrov “*The Ten Lies of Macedonism*”, “St. Clement of Ohrid”, Sofia, Bulgaria; “Blaže Koneski”, Strumica, Republic of Macedonia, 2003

<sup>8</sup> Balkans is geographical region in southeast Europe.

<sup>9</sup> “The definition of Macedonia is a major source of confusion and debate because of the overlapping use of the term to describe geographical, political and historical areas, languages and peoples. Ethnic groups inhabiting the area use different terminology for the same entity, or the same terminology for different entities, which is often confusing to other inhabitants of the region and foreigners alike.” cited from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonia\\_%28terminology%29#\\_note-macedonism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonia_%28terminology%29#_note-macedonism). See the same site also for different definitions of the notion “Macedonia”.

<sup>10</sup> “Macedonia is a geographical notion”, see “*History of Bulgaria*”, vol.3, published by the Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia, 1974

“Macedonian” or “Macedonians” means inhabitant or inhabitants of the geographical region of Macedonia, who might be of any ethnicity, including Bulgarian, Greek, Albanian, Serbian, Turkish etc.

“Bulgarian” or “Bulgarians” means ethnicity, and not citizenship, and does not refer to any connection to a state.

“Bulgarian from Macedonia” means a person from the geographical region of Macedonia who considers himself as part of the Bulgarian nation.

“Republic of Macedonia” or “Macedonian state” means the independent state that was established after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991.

“Greek Macedonia” means the “Province of Macedonia” in Northern Greece.<sup>11</sup>

“Macedonist” means person, who maintains that there is a Macedonian nation, language, culture and history, distinct from the Bulgarian nation, language, culture and history.<sup>12</sup> The term is used in a negative and derogatory sense by Bulgarian and Western scholars and scholars from Republic of Macedonia.<sup>13</sup>

“Nation” refers to ethnicity and not to citizenship. The notion of nation is used in this paper in sense that people who have the same citizenship, live in the same country, but have different ethnicities are not part of one nation. People who share the same ethnicity, but have different citizenship or live in different countries, are part of one nation.

---

<sup>11</sup> The region covers almost all of what is today Northern Greece, including the city of Thessaloniki.

<sup>12</sup> Nikolai Genov, Anna Krüsteva, “*Recent Social Trends in Bulgaria, 1960-1995*” (2001)

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Bousfield, Dan Richardson, Richard Watkins, (2002) *The Rough Guide to Bulgaria 4*, Rough Guides; Loring Danforth, “*The Macedonian Conflict: ethnic nationalism in a transnational world*”(1995);, Ivan Alexandrov, “*Macedonia and Bulgarian National Nihilism*”(Macedonian Patriotic Organization “TA” Australia Inc. 1993), available at <http://knigite.abv.bg/en/gphillip/ia/>.

“Nationality” or “National identity” refers to ethnicity, common language, origin, history and culture, and does not refer to any citizenship or membership in a political community, comprised of one or different ethnic groups. The notion is used in a sense different from the one used in the US and suggests that in a multinational state, there are different nationalities.

“National question”, “national issue” or “national problem” means that significant parts of a nation live outside the borders of its national state, or that this part of a nation lives as a minority in a neighboring country or countries.

“Citizenship” means socio-political connection of a person with a particular state, and does not refer to the ethnicity or nationality of that person.

## **I. ABSTRACT**

There are many nations and ethnic groups in the world that share the same language, ethnicity, origin, history and cultural identity but live divided in two or more countries. Examples of that phenomenon in Europe are Germany<sup>14</sup>, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein; Netherlands and the Flemish part of Belgium; France and the Wallonia part of Belgium; Greece and Cypress; and Romania and Moldova, to name a few. The peoples of these countries know that they belong to the same ethnic group. They do not try to promote a new national or ethnic identity, nor try to change their common culture, history or language. However, the people from these countries are citizens of different states and distinguish their political identity<sup>15</sup>. While the Germans from Austria and Switzerland speak German and share the same ethnicity as the Germans in Germany, they

---

<sup>14</sup> Before the German Reunification in 1990 the German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic of Germany were also examples of this phenomenon.

<sup>15</sup> Political identity means membership in a political community and refers to citizenship.

are also Austrians and Swiss by the fact that they are members of politically distinct communities.

The case of Bulgaria and Republic of Macedonia is different. Although the people of these countries share the same ethnicity, history, culture and language, one could meet members of one family, even brothers, who according the official censuses were of different ethnicities. I am part of a family that represents one of these cases. While my grandfather, who was born in Skopje, the capital of Republic of Macedonia, considers himself a Bulgarian, his brothers and relatives, who live in Skopje, are considered “Macedonian” according the official census of that country. Is it possible that two brothers from same parents could represent two different nations?

While many of the staunchest Bulgarian patriots are people born in Macedonia and their descendants, many citizens of Republic of Macedonia do not consider themselves as Bulgarians. This is despite the fact that they did so for more than eleven centuries.<sup>16</sup>

Today it is very common for people from Republic of Macedonia to stress the word “Macedonian” and use it in every sentence. This is also a common feature of all media in that country, as well as the speeches of politicians. The art, music and folklore are always stamped with the “Macedonian” sign. The food in Macedonia, which is very similar to all Balkan cuisine and even to Middle Eastern cuisine, is always referred to as “old traditional Macedonian” cuisine. I would like to know how old exactly and from which tradition does it originate?

---

<sup>16</sup> The formation of the Bulgarian national self-consciousness was finished in 10<sup>th</sup> century on the territory of the three geographical regions Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia, *History of Bulgaria*, vol.3 and 4, published by the Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia, 1974.

How does one explain this fixation on everything “Macedonian” in the Republic of Macedonia? Is it a question of national pride or a question of unresolved national identity problems both at the state and personal level? Does that “Macedonian identity” complex reveal something about the soul of Macedonia? This fixation on everything Macedonian in the Republic of Macedonia can only be explained by charting the history of the Macedonian region, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This paper considers the problem of national identity among the Slavic population of Republic of Macedonia.

## **II. INTRODUCTION TO THE BALKANS**

The identity of the peoples in the Balkans is determined by the geographical position and the history of the region. The area has always been the gate to Europe from the East, an area where Orthodox and Catholic Christianity met, as well as where Christianity and Islam met and battled.

Today the Balkans is a very diverse region, being home to different cultures and multiethnic states. It is the only part of Europe where the borders are still changing and the neighbors’ hostility resembles the times of the Middle Ages.

Even though the modern Balkan nations were formed during the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, nowadays Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia still suffer from unresolved national questions. All these countries have lived through struggles trying to resolve the social, cultural, political and economical problems of their minorities who live in other countries in the region. The picture today looks like a puzzle of mutually unresolved national issues

and the more new countries<sup>17</sup> emerge on the Balkan political map, the more new national problems arise.<sup>18</sup>

## **1. Bulgaria**

Every Balkan country has unresolved national, territorial and minority issues with its neighbors. Bulgaria is a vivid example of such. Between 1878 and 1944, the country waged five wars<sup>19</sup> for its national liberation and unification. Bulgaria is still surrounded by many Bulgarians that have unpleasant lives in the neighboring Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Greece, Romania and Turkey.

One of the most sensitive issues of the Bulgarian foreign policy is its relations with the Republic of Macedonia. The existence of a large Bulgarian majority in Macedonia, that is not recognized by the Macedonian government, and the official Macedonian policy and media, that is hostile to and openly anti-Bulgarian, damages the relations between the two brother-countries. The anti-Bulgarian positions of some Macedonian politicians harm the national feelings of many people in the Republic of Macedonia who consider themselves Bulgarians.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the ex-Communist government of the Republic of Macedonia not only tries to promote a new Macedonian

---

<sup>17</sup> Slovenia 1991; Croatia 1991; The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 1991; Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992; Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska 1995; Kosovo under UMNİK control, 1999; Montenegro 2006; Serbia 2006.

<sup>18</sup> NATO and UN divided Kosovo from Serbia in 1999 in order to stop the oppression of the Albanian minority by the Serbian majority. Now the Serbian minority in Kosovo is oppressed by the Albanian majority and there is no solution for that problem. Should NATO and UN divide now Kosovo in order to solve the problem?

<sup>19</sup> *History of Bulgaria*, vol.9, published by the Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia, 1974

<sup>20</sup> See "Human Rights for the Bulgarians in Macedonia" Petition sent to the European Parliament by people, living in Republic of Macedonia who consider themselves Bulgarians, available at <http://www.petitiononline.com/bulmac/petition.html>

identity for its Bulgarian population, but this government also attempts to create and supports separatist and illegal organizations in Bulgaria<sup>21</sup>, while at the same time openly claims part of the Bulgarian territory and its inhabitants as its own.

## **2. Greece**

In the Southern part of the Balkans Greece faces similar problems. The country, which claims to descent from the Byzantine Empire, still couldn't accept the fact that most of its lands were conquered by the Turks; that millions of Greeks were forced by the Turks to leave Asia Minor and that the magnificent city of Constantinople, the center of the Orthodox Christianity - is called nowadays Istanbul and is in a country, where the official religion is Islam. The Greek relations with Turkey are still poor due to the Turkish military occupation of Northern Cyprus and the division of the country into Greek and Turkish part.

Greece has also many unresolved minority issues with Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia. After the Second Balkan War in 1913 Greece occupied the region known as Aegean Macedonia<sup>22</sup>, inhabitant predominantly with ethnic Bulgarians. Despite of numerous negotiations and agreements for exchange of population between Bulgaria and Greece<sup>23</sup>, many ethnic Bulgarians continue to live in Greece. They are not allowed to use Bulgarian language and even Bulgarian names, their personal names and the names of their cities and villages are changed with Greek names. The Greek government considers

---

<sup>21</sup> Program of banned and illegal in Bulgaria party OMO "Ilinden"- Pirin (United Macedonian Organization Ilinden Pirin), Party for Economic Development and Integration of the population in the Republic of Bulgaria(February 2000), available at [http://www.makedonika.org/pirin/pirin\\_program.htm](http://www.makedonika.org/pirin/pirin_program.htm)

<sup>22</sup> This region encompasses more than half of the geographical region of Macedonia and is named in Greece "Province of Macedonia".

<sup>23</sup> See the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, November 27, 1919 at Neuilly-sur-Seine, France and the Protocol Politis-Kalfov signed on September 29, 1925 that recognizes the Slav-speakers of Macedonia as Bulgarians.

these people “Slavophones” or “Slavophonic Greeks” and officially denies the existence of a Bulgarian minority in Greece.

The situation became even more complicated when in 1991 the Republic of Macedonia also entered the dispute and started to claim these people as “ethnic Macedonians”.<sup>24</sup> What is the reflection of that paradox in the real life? I have a friend, Bulgarian, whose father that lives in Bulgaria has two brothers, one in Skopje, the Republic of Macedonia and one in Thessaloniki, Greece. Although the three of them consider themselves ethnic Bulgarians, the authorities in both countries consider them respectively Macedonian and Greek. Thus the ethnic situation with my friend’s family is even more diverse or “international” than in my family. This example sounds funny, but this is the reality that was created by the policy of Greece and the Republic of Macedonia.

### **3. Republic of Macedonia**

The young Republic of Macedonia is positioned geographically between Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Albania. The country is in a constant fight for its new ethnic and national identity. The official name of that multiethnic state is F.Y.R.O.M.<sup>25</sup>

The paradox is that while its neighbors have unresolved ethnic and nationality issues with their minorities, F.Y.R.O.M. has unresolved national problems with its majority population.

---

<sup>24</sup> Although connected with the topic of the national identity of the Bulgarian population in Republic of Macedonia, the topic of the Bulgarian minority in Greece is a separate one and I would not focus on it in this paper.

<sup>25</sup> Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The term refers to this state by the main international organizations, including United Nations, European Union, NATO, IMF, WTO, IOC, World Bank, EBRD and OSCE. The term was introduced in 1993 by the United Nations, following a naming dispute with Greece.

According its Constitution<sup>26</sup> and legislation<sup>27</sup> the rights of the minorities in F.Y.R.O.M. are well protected. According to the Macedonian Constitution<sup>28</sup>, any language spoken by at least twenty percent of the population in every self-government unit is an official language.

In contrast to that the majority of the population is not allowed to use its own language, to read its own history, to celebrate its national heroes and traditions and to express freely its national feelings and self-consciousness. The majority do not have even the right to use their own family name suffixes.

### **III. INTRODUCTION THE NEW MACEDONIAN QUESTION<sup>29</sup>**

The consequences of the Yugoslav national policy during the socialist period are significant for the Balkans. This period gave birth to two new nations and languages – the “Bosnian nation” (also known as “Muslim nation”) and language in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the “Macedonian nation” and language in the Republic of Macedonia. Both nations are with questioned ethnic and national identity<sup>30</sup> and unstable statehood<sup>31</sup>.

While the new proclaimed Bosnian nation tried to establish both its identity and statehood through war with other nations within its state, the Macedonian nation and statehood faced both internal and external enemies. Within the country itself the

---

<sup>26</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, 2001, The Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 52/91, 1/92, 31/98 and 91/2001.

<sup>27</sup> The Framework Agreement, 2001 (with Annexes A,B,C), available at <http://www.president.gov.mk/eng/info/dogovor.htm>; Law on Personal Names, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 8/95; Law on the usage of the Macedonian language, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 05/98; Law on Local Self-Government, 2002, The Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 5/2002

<sup>28</sup> Article 7.2 and 7.6 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, 2001, The Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 52/91, 1/92, 31/98 and 91/2001

<sup>29</sup> S. Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien* (München, Oldenbourg-Verlag, 1983); Troebst, “*IMRO + 100 = FYROM? The politics of Macedonian historiography*” in *The New Macedonian Question*, ed. J. Pettifer (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000), pp. 60–78.

<sup>30</sup> Both “nations” and languages are not recognized by their neighbors.

<sup>31</sup> The statehood of both countries was questioned by wars: Bosnia 1992-1995; Macedonia 2002.

significant Albanian minority started a separatist movement resulted in a war with the government forces. The war finished with agreement that recognized the rights of the ethnic Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia and proclaimed the Albanian language as a second official language of the country.

On the international level the young Macedonian state still faces challenges and difficulties with its neighbors Bulgaria and Greece. Bulgaria was the first country to officially recognize the independence of Macedonia, but in the very same document it refuses the existence of Macedonian nation and language. This is the official position of the Bulgarian state and every Bulgarian political party and state institution supports it.

Macedonia has similar problems with Greece. The Greek government do not recognizes the name “Republic of Macedonia”, because of the existence of “Province of Macedonia” in Northern Greece.

The Bulgarian refusal of the existence of distinct Macedonian nation and language and the Greek refusal to recognize the Republic of Macedonia under the name “Republic of Macedonia” have not only historical, but also political background. Being familiar with the ideas of the Macedonism<sup>32</sup>, the Greek and Bulgarian politicians want to prevent the Macedonian government from future claims upon parts of the Bulgarian and Greek territory and population. As a consequence, the unresolved disputes with Bulgaria and Greece still undermine the identity of the Macedonian state and nation and weaken the position of the young state on the international scene. The isolation from the EU and

---

<sup>32</sup> Bozhidar Dimitrov “*The Ten Lies of Macedonism*”, “St. Clement of Ohrid”, Sofia, Bulgaria; “Blaže Koneski”, Strumica, Republic of Macedonia, 2003 :“Following the Macedonism ideas “ethnic Macedonian” nationalists have expressed irredentist claims to what they refer to as “Aegean Macedonia” (Greece), “Pirin Macedonia” (Bulgaria), “Mala Prespa and Golo Brdo” (Albania), and “Gora and Prohor Pchinski” (Serbia) despite the fact that ethnic Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians and Serbs form the majority of the population of each region respectively.”

NATO, and the unpleasant role that the Republic of Macedonia has within the international community shows that the shadows of the past still play a role in the country.

#### **IV. MACEDONIA AND THE HISTORY OF BULGARIA**

In order to understand why Macedonia and its language and population is considered Bulgarian both by citizens of Bulgaria and citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, we need to track the history of Bulgaria and in particular the history of the Macedonian region, also known as South West Bulgaria.<sup>33</sup>

From the formation of the Bulgarian state till now there are no historical evidences and facts that the Slavic population of Macedonia considers itself distinct from the Slavic population in the other parts of Bulgaria.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary all historical facts show that the people from Macedonia have always considered themselves Bulgarians.

It is undisputed historical fact that the Bulgarian nation was formed in three geographical regions of the Balkans, known as Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia and encompasses the territories from the Danube River to the Aegean Sea and from the Albanian mountains to the Black Sea<sup>35</sup>.

One of these regions, Macedonia, was a province of the Byzantine Empire till the appearance of the Slavs in the Balkans<sup>36</sup>. During that time the ethnic composition of the population was predominantly Greeks with significant groups of Thracians and Illyrians.

---

<sup>33</sup> *History of Bulgaria*, vol.3,4 and 5, published by the Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia, 1974

<sup>34</sup> See supra 36

<sup>35</sup> These provinces encompass the territories of the old Roman provinces of Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia

<sup>36</sup> Vasil Zlatarski, *Istorija na bǎlgarskata dǎržava (History of the Bulgarian State)* Vasil Zlatarski, Sofia, 1918.

The Slavs eventually assimilated the preexisting Greek, Illyrian and Thracian-speaking inhabitants.<sup>37</sup>

By the early 7<sup>th</sup> century the Bulgarian state was established in the Balkans by the old Bulgars<sup>38</sup> in alliance with the Slavs and by the 8<sup>th</sup> century the First Bulgarian Empire encompassed vast territories of South Eastern Europe<sup>39</sup> including the whole region of Macedonia. By that time the Slavs fully assimilated the old Bulgars in the whole territory of the Bulgarian Empire and thus the formation of the mediaeval Bulgarian nation was completed.<sup>40</sup> The language and the ethnicity of the people remained Slavic and the name “Bulgarian state” was preserved in order to show who created this state in the Balkans.<sup>41</sup> Eventually the name “Bulgarian” was adopted by all Slavs living in the Bulgarian Empire. With the adoption of the Christianity and the creation of the Slavic alphabet by the 9<sup>th</sup> century the Macedonian lands became the cultural center not only of the mediaeval Bulgarian Empire, but also of the whole Slavic world.

The need for Slavic translation of the Bible pushed the brothers St.Cyril and St.Methodius, who were distinguished Byzantine scholars and diplomats, to develop a Slavic alphabet. Following unsuccessful try to promote the Slavic alphabet among the

---

<sup>37</sup> Vasil Zlatarski, “*Istorija na bǎlgarskata dǎržava (History of the Bulgarian State)*” Vasil Zlatarski, Sofia, 1918.

<sup>38</sup> A nomadic tribe, that came from Central Asia and settled around Danube river and in Macedonia

<sup>39</sup> The First Bulgarian Empire encompassed the territories of present day Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Moldova, Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and parts of Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine. For more details see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Bulgarian\\_Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Bulgarian_Empire)

<sup>40</sup> Vasil Zlatarski, “*Istorija na bǎlgarskata dǎržava (History of the Bulgarian State)*”, Sofia, 1918.

<sup>41</sup> Васил Н. Златарски, “История на българската държава през средните векове”, Том I. История на Първото българско царство. Част II. От славянизацията на държавата до падането на Първото царство (852—1018) (I изд. София 1927; II изд., Наука и изкуство, София 1971, под ред. на Петър Хр. Петров). In english: Vasil Zlatarski “History of the Bulgarian state in the Middle Ages”, vol.I. History of the First Bulgarian Empire, pt.II. From Slavisation of the state till the defeat of the First Bulgarian Empire (852-1018), Sofia 1971, published by Science and Art.

West Slavs in Great Moravia<sup>42</sup>, the disciples of Cyril and Methodius found their real mission in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Tsar Boris I<sup>43</sup> invited them to Bulgaria and provided them the facilities to continue their work on the Slavic alphabet. He sent St. Kliment Ohridski<sup>44</sup> in the city of Ohrid<sup>45</sup> to found and lead the Ohrid Literary School<sup>46</sup>. In the city of Ohrid he created the modern Slavic Alphabet and named it Cyrillic<sup>47</sup> in honor of his teacher St. Cyril.

In the late 10<sup>th</sup> century the city of Ohrid was chosen as a new Bulgarian capital and thus the Macedonian region became not only cultural but also political and military center of the Bulgarian Empire. The Bulgarian spirit in Ohrid is very strong even today and many people from the city say that Ohrid is the most-Bulgarian city in the world.

A strong evidence for the Bulgarian character of Macedonia is the Bitola<sup>48</sup> inscription. In 1018 AD Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Vladislav commemorated the works on the Bitola fortress in a stone inscription<sup>49</sup>, when he wrote:

[...] this fortress, built and made by Ivan, Tsar of Bulgaria ... the fortress was built as a haven and for the salvation of the lives of the Bulgarians ... This Tsar was Bulgarian by birth,[...] son of Aaron, who was brother of

---

<sup>42</sup> Great Moravia was a West Slavic empire existing in Central Europe between 833 and the early 10th century. It encompassed the territory of present-day Slovakia, Czech Republic and small parts of Hungary, Poland, Austria, Serbia and Ukraine.

<sup>43</sup> Tsar Boris I of Bulgaria(852–889). Under his rule Bulgaria adopted the Christianity as official religion.

<sup>44</sup> Kliment Ohridski or St. Clement of Ohrid (840–916), was a medieval Bulgarian scholar and writer, disciple of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, who was born in southwestern Bulgaria, in the region of Macedonia.

<sup>45</sup> Ohrid is a city in Macedonia, now in Republic of Macedonia. The city was the third capital of the First Bulgarian Empire. Today many local people consider themselves Bulgarians.

<sup>46</sup> The Ohrid Literary School was one of the two major medieval Bulgarian cultural centres, along with the Preslav Literary School

<sup>47</sup> The Cyrillic alphabet is the official alphabet in the following Slavic countries: Bulgaria, Macedonia, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Monte Negro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is also official in Mongolia and some Asian countries, part of the former Soviet Union like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, etc. With the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union on January 1, 2007, Cyrillic also became the third official alphabet of the EU.

<sup>48</sup> City in Macedonia, today in Republic of Macedonia

<sup>49</sup> The Bitola inscription is a stone inscription of Tsar Ivan Vladislav of Bulgaria from 1018. Today it is kept at the Bitola Historical Museum, Republic of Macedonia.

Samuil, Tsar of Bulgaria, the two who routed the Greek army of Emperor Basil at Stipone where gold was taken...[...]

The inscription is very important because the historians from the Republic of Macedonia claim that Tsar Samuil and Tsar Ivan Vladislav are Tsars of the “Medieval Macedonian State” and not of the Medieval Bulgarian State. The inscription clearly shows how these two rulers have identified themselves.

In 1018 the Byzantine emperor, who conquered the region of Macedonia named himself Basil II “the Bulgarian-slayer”<sup>50</sup>, and the lands of Macedonia were incorporated into the Byzantine Empire under the name “District of Bulgaria”. This is another evidence of the Bulgarian character of Macedonia. The Second Bulgarian Empire again included the Macedonian region. Few centuries later the region of Macedonia fell under the Ottoman Turks, who conquered the Balkans. During these periods there was no evidence that the population of Macedonia do not consider themselves Bulgarian.

After the 11<sup>th</sup> Russo-Turkish war from 1877-1878, the liberation of Bulgaria was achieved after more than 450 years of Ottoman rule. The Treaty of San Stefano<sup>51</sup> signed on March 3, 1878<sup>52</sup> proclaimed the end of the war and provided for the creation of the modern Bulgarian state and unification of the whole Bulgarian nation in one state. According to the treaty the three regions, inhabited by Bulgarians were incorporated in one state. Those three regions were Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia and encompass the territories from the Danube River to the Aegean Sea and from the Albanian mountains to

---

<sup>50</sup> The Byzantine emperor Basil II the Bulgar-Slayer (976-1025)

<sup>51</sup> The Preliminary Treaty of San Stefano between Russia and the Ottoman Empire signed at the end of the Russo-Turkish War, 1877–78; signed on March 3, 1878 at San Stefano

<sup>52</sup> Today March the 3<sup>rd</sup> is the National Day of Bulgaria.

the Black Sea<sup>53</sup>. These were the ethnic borders of the Bulgarian nation by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The euphoria among the Bulgarians from Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia was so strong that they named the Russian Emperor Alexander II “Tsar Liberator” and started to call the Russian people “brothers-liberators”.<sup>54</sup>

The Great Powers in Europe<sup>55</sup> were unhappy with this extension of Russian influence on the Balkans. This prompted them to obtain a revision of the San Stefano Treaty through the Treaty of Berlin, 1878.<sup>56</sup> According to the new treaty the Bulgarian State was established in the lands of Moesia (Northern Bulgaria) and Thrace and Macedonia were left again in the Ottoman Empire.

The Bulgarian attempts to liberate Macedonia and Thrace from the Turks and to unify them with the Bulgarian state resulted in many riots and revolts. The Balkan wars of 1912-13 were culmination of this struggle. As a result of them and World War I, the territory of Macedonia was divided between Greece and Serbia, and just a small part remained in Bulgaria. The Turkish yoke was replaced with Serbian and Greek.

After its military victories both over the Serbs and the Greeks, Bulgaria ruled the Macedonian lands during World War I and World War II. In both wars the Bulgarian

---

<sup>53</sup> These provinces encompass the territories of the old Roman provinces of Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia

<sup>54</sup> The monument of the Russian Emperor Alexander II is placed next to the Bulgarian Parliament in Sofia. The inscription on the monument reads: “To you, Tsar Liberator, from Grateful Bulgaria!” and list of the donors, many of which are from Macedonia. For the role of the monuments in the national memory see also Sanford Levinson, “*They Whisper: Reflections on Flags, Monuments, and State Holidays, and the Construction of Social Meaning in a Multicultural Society*,” Chicago-Kent Law Review (1995), Scott A. Sandage, “*A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963*,” Journal of American History (1993) and Louis Menand, “*The Reluctant Memorialist: Maya Lin*” (2002)

<sup>55</sup> UK, Austria-Hungary, France and Germany

<sup>56</sup> The Treaty of Berlin was the final Act of the Congress of Berlin (June 13-July 13, 1878), by which the UK, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the Ottoman Empire revised the Treaty of San Stefano signed on March 3 of the same year.

soldiers were greeted by the population as liberators.<sup>57</sup> Interesting fact is that in the World War I, the Old Bulgarian capital Ohrid was liberated by General Kliment Boyadjev, who was born in Ohrid and who carried the name of St. Kliment Ohridski, the Bulgarian scholar who invented the Cyrillic alphabet in 9<sup>th</sup> century in the very same city.

#### **IV. HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY AS TOOLS TO CREATE A NEW NATION**

##### **1. The role of the history in a nation building process**

History proves that Macedonia and its population played central role in the formation of the Bulgarian nation and that the people from Macedonia identified themselves as Bulgarians from 9<sup>th</sup> century AD till 1944.<sup>58</sup> The biggest cultural achievement of the Bulgarians, the creation of the Slavic alphabet by the Bulgarian scholar Kliment Ohridski, took place in the Macedonian city of Ohrid. Later the same city became capital of the Bulgarian Empire and thus political, cultural and military center of the Bulgarian state. Many Bulgarian Tsars and national heroes originated from the region of Macedonia. The first modern history of Bulgaria, named “Slavic Bulgarian History”<sup>59</sup> was written in 1762 by Paisius of Hilendar, a Bulgarian scholar and clergyman born in Macedonia. Paradoxically, Georgi Dimitrov, the first communist dictator of Bulgaria was born in Macedonia too. All these people identified themselves as Bulgarians.

---

<sup>57</sup> Ivan Alexandrov “*Macedonia and Bulgarian National Nihilism*”, (Macedonian Patriotic Organization “TA” Australia Inc. 1993), available at <http://knigite.abv.bg/en/gphillip/ia/>.

<sup>58</sup> See supra 54

<sup>59</sup> *Istoriya Slavyanobolgarskaya, 1762 (Slavic-Bulgarian History)* is considered the first work of Bulgarian historiography. Paisius' motivation to write this piece of literature was to ensure that a "nation with a glorious past has the right to a splendid future".

Therefore to claim a separate and distinct Macedonian national identity means to question the very essence of the Bulgarian nation itself. All this was ignored by the Yugoslav government after WWII, when they started to use new tools in their efforts to change the national identity of Macedonia. This new tools were education and historiography.

## **2. The Role of the Education in a Nation Building Process**

History is used often by politicians to legitimize political systems or programs. As an essential part of the nation building process, the education is a process of creating a common understanding about the state and history.<sup>60</sup> Thus the education is the strongest tool to promote a new history. This is so, because what is taught as history in schools will influence or even determine the national consciousness of the children as they grow up. Thus every country views education as a tool for a nation building process.<sup>61</sup>

In the Republic of Macedonia though, the main goal of the education is not to provide objective historical knowledge, but rather to establish new national values to the new generations of Macedonian citizens and to create an image of the people as being part of a unified national body, namely a single and distinct Macedonian nation.<sup>62</sup> As a consequence the ideas of Macedonian national identity are accepted by the officials, media and the general populations of the country.

---

<sup>60</sup> Zhidas Daskalovski "Language and Identity: The Ohrid Framework Agreement and Liberal Notions of Citizenship and Nationality in Macedonia", Journal for Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, Issue 1/2002

<sup>61</sup> Will Kymlicka, Magda Opalski, "Western political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe "from "Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported?", Oxford Scholarship Online Monographs 2002

<sup>62</sup> Ulf Brunnbauer, "Pro-Serbians" vs. "Pro-Bulgarians": Revisionism in Post-Socialist Macedonian Historiography", Institute of East European Studies, Free University of Berlin

### **3. Choice of history**

The Communistic Macedonian nation-builders after 1944 were afraid of possible pro-Bulgarian sentiments among a population who until WWII had identified itself as Bulgarian for more than thousand years.<sup>63</sup> The Yugoslavian communists knew that having a significant Bulgarian population within Yugoslavia would cause tensions and problems with Bulgaria and might be a reason for uprisings or separatist movements as it was the case during the past.<sup>64</sup> Therefore in order to prevent negative reactions among the population the Yugoslavian communist decided to erase the historical memory of the population and to replace it with a new one. The question was who would be able to do that? In a totalitarian state there is only one answer: the institutionalized power of the state.

### **4. The role of the historiography in a nation building process**

The official Macedonian national historiography was institutionalized in 1948, when the Institute for National History in Skopje was established. This institute was charged by law to write the “history of the Macedonian people” and thereby to contribute to the consolidation of the imagined community of the Macedonians. The institute has been devoting to this cause all its efforts ever since<sup>65</sup>.

One of the biggest challenges faced by the Macedonian historians was to create differences between the history of the population of the Republic of Macedonia and the surrounding nations, especially the Bulgarians. This was a big challenge because the

---

<sup>63</sup> Ulf Brunnbauer, “*Pro-Serbiens*” vs. “*Pro-Bulgarians*”: *Revisionism in Post-Socialist Macedonian Historiography*”, Institute of East European Studies, Free University of Berlin

<sup>64</sup> Between WWI and WWII members of IMRO fought often with the Yugoslavian army and assassinated numerous Yugoslavian senior state officials, among them the Yugoslavian King Alexander I, shot by Vlado Chernozemski in Marseille, France, October 9, 1934.

<sup>65</sup> Supra 50

Macedonian authorities tried to create a new Macedonian identity when an old and strong Bulgarian identity had already existed for centuries.

Another big obstacle before the Macedonian historians was the history itself, and the fact that the other nations, excluding the nations of Yugoslavia, considered the people of Macedonia to be Bulgarians.

Thus the only possible way to make the Macedonians seem different from the Bulgarians and to strengthen Macedonian claims for national and ethnic distinctiveness was to dissociate Macedonian from Bulgarian history and to de-emphasize, or deny any relation between these two peoples.<sup>66</sup> As a younger historiography the Macedonian one faces strong opposition on part of the older Bulgarian and Greek historiography, both of which considered Macedonia the cradle of medieval Bulgarian culture.

The never ending historical disputes between Macedonia and Bulgaria in the late fifties made the Macedonian historians also “invent” medieval history and even go further in their historical discoveries of ancient times.<sup>67</sup> For instance during the Yugoslav period, Macedonian national history not only expands to the arrival of the Slavs and the formation of a “Macedonian medieval state” in the 10th century, but also reached the ancient times and traced the “Macedonian nation’s origins” back to the ancient Macedonians of Philip II and Alexander the Great,<sup>68</sup> without taking into consideration the fact that both of them are born in the ancient Philipopolis, which today is the city of Plovdiv in Bulgaria. The Macedonian historians went so far in their efforts, that even

---

<sup>66</sup> Supra 50

<sup>67</sup> Bozhidar Dimitrov “*The Ten Lies of Macedonism*”, “St. Clement of Ohrid”, Sofia, Bulgaria; “Blaže Koneski”, Strumica, Republic of Macedonia, 2003

<sup>68</sup> Supra 50

today in history books, when citing sources or old chronicles that mention the word “Bulgarian” they use a footnote that says “to be read as Macedonian”.

In 1998 when the anti-communist opposition came to power in the Republic of Macedonia some Macedonian historians changed their views and recognized the Bulgarian origin and ethnicity of the population of Macedonia. However the main trend in the Macedonian historiography remains to distinguish the history of Macedonia from the history of Bulgaria.

## **V. A LOOK AT THE PRESENT, NEW IDENTITY AND NEW RELATIONS WITH BULGARIA AND GREECE**

### **1. New identity of the Republic of Macedonia**

The reaction of the Bulgarian state to the Macedonian national identity before 1991 was just to consider it a fabrication by the Yugoslav communists. As the director of the National History Museum of Bulgaria noted, today the national and cultural identity of the Republic of Macedonia is a fictional creation of the communist policies, propaganda and tyranny of Yugoslavia. The fiction not only exists, but it tries to expand further its territories and promote the ideas of the Macedonism<sup>69</sup>. The position of many people who were considered part of the Macedonian nation, because they were born in Macedonia is the same. One of them, Ivan Mihailov, the leader of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization<sup>70</sup>, commented the ideas of the “Macedonian nation” in the following way: “For us, a "Macedonian nation" means Yugoslavism and Yugoslavism means imperialism, which aims at snatching Thessaloniki and a part of

---

<sup>69</sup> Bozhidar Dimitrov “*The Ten Lies of Macedonism*”, "St. Clement of Ohrid", Sofia, Bulgaria; "Blaže Koneski", Strumica, Republic of Macedonia, 2003

<sup>70</sup> See supra 2

Bulgaria. In two words a "Macedonian nation" can mean the addition of one million new Serbs to the Serbian people.”

The reality is that Macedonian history is very short. It started in 1945, when distinct Macedonian ethnicity, language, consciousness and history were promoted in the territory of Socialistic Federative Republic of Macedonia as part of Yugoslavia. Thus *de jure* in 1945, the Macedonian nation became the newest and youngest nation in Europe. This action was supported by legislative measures, including laws, regulations and orders of the government. The whole political doctrine of the Yugoslav Communist Party declared and provided for the existence of separate Macedonian nation and language. This creation of a new Macedonian nation was supported by various means, including very active foreign policy and even illegal propaganda in the neighboring Greece and Bulgaria. Hundreds of thousands of Bulgarians left Yugoslavia and found shelter in Bulgaria, and tens of thousands were sent to jail for being “Bulgarian nationalists”. The struggle of the people with a Bulgarian national consciousness in socialistic Yugoslavia is evidenced by a sad story shown on Bulgarian TV. A former prisoner from a socialistic Macedonia told the audience that when he went to jail, the old prisoners asked him: “Are you a criminal or a Bulgarian?”

In the socialistic years and today Bulgaria is perceived as the major threat to the national identity of the “Macedonians”. The big question is whether law could be used to determine the ethnicity, language and consciousness of a nation, without taking into account the ethnicity and the self-identity of the people. Today *de jure* in the Republic of Macedonia there are no Bulgarians, *de facto* they are 1.3 million. Even though many people consider themselves Bulgarians, they are afraid to express it openly. The majority

of the population, and especially many young people, viewed themselves as Macedonians in the 1990's. Thus the majority of the Macedonian citizens embraced their new Macedonian identity, and nobody could ignore this fact. However after 1998, when IMRO came to power and created the first non-socialistic government of the Republic of Macedonia, some of these young people started to view themselves as Bulgarians and to celebrate their heritage. Now even some Macedonian politicians admit the Bulgarian origin of the country but say that they are "Bulgarians by origin, but Macedonians by identity and nationality"<sup>71</sup>. This statement sounds embarrassing, but these people are confused about their identity, and find it difficult to embrace their Bulgarian roots so easily after denying them for so long.

In fact these questions of national identity are burdensome for the people from the Republic of Macedonia. Some of them have resolved this problem by considering themselves 100% Macedonians. Others consider themselves Bulgarians and within this group there are even some Bulgarian nationalists. Both groups accuse each other of being "national traitors".

## **2. Reflection of the new Macedonian identity on the present relations with Greece**

The Communist totalitarian regime might have been a good excuse for the poor relations of Federative Socialistic Republic of Macedonia<sup>72</sup> with its neighbors in the past, but what is the explanation for this today, when the country is independent, free and aspires to be democratic and liberal? Instead of establishing stable relations with Greece,

---

<sup>71</sup> Luibcho Georgievski, leader of IMRO and Prime Minister of Macedonia 1998-2002

<sup>72</sup> Before 1991 Socialistic Federative Republic of Macedonia was one of the six republics of Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and therefore its foreign relations with the neighbors were determined by the Yugoslavian government in Belgrade.

the disputes between the two countries continue to be sharp and intolerant. Again the main reason for these poor relations is the misuse of history and historical symbols in the name of the new identity of the Republic of Macedonia.

As it does with the Bulgarian history, the Macedonian state uses the same arsenal of historical arguments against Greece. The Macedonian scholars appropriated the ancient Macedonians for their own national history. The purpose of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts is to separate ancient Macedonian and Greek (Hellenic) history, inventing evidence to distinguish the ancient Macedonians from the ancient Greeks. It is clear that Greece is offended by the Republic of Macedonia's use of Hellenic name, symbols and national heroes<sup>73</sup>.

These acts have resulted in a number of serious diplomatic and even economical conflicts between the Republic of Macedonia and Greece. Greek objection to the new state's name delayed the international recognition of the Republic of Macedonia. Furthermore because of the "name dispute", the Macedonian state uses the provisional name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Greece imposed also a trade embargo on Republic of Macedonia.

The newest quarrel with Greece arose in 2007 over the name of the new international airport in the Macedonian capital Skopje. Naming the airport "Alexander the Great", the Macedonian government again provoked Greece, which commented that

---

<sup>73</sup> Republic of Macedonia uses the Hellenic name "Macedonia", its national flag is the Star of Vergina, which was used by Alexander the Great and last but not least the country claims Alexander the Great to be part of its national pantheon, when it is known he was not Slavic, but Greek

there will be no Greek support for the forthcoming negotiations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU.<sup>74</sup>

The Macedonian politicians are focused so much on the history, because in their view the history determines the origin, and the origin determines the ethnicity and the identity of a nation and a country. In the case of the Republic of Macedonia, imagine that the Macedonian politicians, historians and the Macedonian society as a whole admit that Macedonia is a Greek name and the state symbols are Greek. Then there would be a new challenge for the young Macedonian state. Bearing in mind the treatment that the Bulgarian<sup>75</sup> minority has in Greece, the Greek state might show its aspirations to the population of Macedonia by calling it “Slavopfonic Greeks”, as it did in Greece.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, as Balkan history shows, when a Balkan state has aspiration to population in a neighboring country, it has also aspirations to the territory of that country.<sup>77</sup> May be from Macedonian perspective the Macedonian policy towards Greece, including the history and the state symbols, seeks to prevent Greek aspirations to the population and the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Following that logic we may find reasonable explanation for the obstacles in the relations between these two countries.

---

<sup>74</sup> “*R Macedonia Initiates Negotiations with the EU*”, News Bulletin No1, January 2000, Macedonian Scientific Institute, available at <http://knigite.abv.bg/mpr/bulletin/1/msi1for.htm>

<sup>75</sup> Republic of Macedonia calls this minority “Macedonian”

<sup>76</sup> See p.8 of this paper

<sup>77</sup> All Balkan states had wars in order to include territories of their neighbors, inhabitant with population which they considered as part of their nation. *See* the Balkan Wars, World War I and the Yugoslavian wars in 1990.

### **3. Reflection of the new Macedonian identity on the present relations with Bulgaria**

The present relations between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia are very complex, sensitive and complicated. They are very difficult on personal and political level. Therefore I would try to explore them on both levels.

On personal level it is important to note that the people from both countries speak the same language, have the same names, act in the same manner, eat and drink the same food and drinks, sing the same folklore songs and last, but not least, have family members and relatives on both sides of the Bulgarian-Macedonian border. Bulgaria also provides a special privileged regime for students from the Republic of Macedonia in Bulgarian universities, and this attracts many young people from Macedonia to study in Bulgaria

The Bulgarians are taught in school that the people from the Republic of Macedonia are Bulgarians. In my case, as is in the case of many Bulgarian families, I can understand that without learning history, because I can see that my grandfather and his brother are brothers and therefore they have the same ethnicity. It is undisputed that we are the same people.

But why then there are borders and where are they? It is sad to admit that the borders between our countries are not only political and geographical, but also mental. They exist in people's heads. The people from the Republic of Macedonia are taught for many years<sup>78</sup>, not only that they are completely different from the Bulgarians, but that the Bulgarians are sworn enemies to them. In their history books, the Bulgarians are

---

<sup>78</sup> The region was part of Yugoslavia between 1913 and 1991, with the exception of WWI and WWII, when it was part of Bulgaria.

described in a derogatory sense as Asians, Turks, Tatars, Non-Slavs<sup>79</sup>, fascists, conquerors etc. Thus people from Macedonia are surprised when they visit Bulgaria and see that everybody is friendly with them. Some of them, especially those who do not have relatives in Bulgaria, are also shocked that we speak the same language.

The fact that today many people from Macedonia identify themselves differently from the Bulgarians could be explained by the phenomenon that they do not imagine themselves anymore as part of one community with the Bulgarians.<sup>80</sup> The imagined communities' concept, proposed by Benedict Anderson, explains a nation as an imagined community by the people who view themselves as part of that nation. In our case the paradox is that today many people from Macedonia do not view themselves anymore as part of the Bulgarian nation, despite of the fact that their grandparents and parents perceive themselves in that way. The reasons for that are various and complex, but the fact that we did not live together in one country for the last one hundred years plays significant role.

On the contrary the people who live in Bulgaria, and especially those who came from Macedonia, like my grandfather, imagine the Macedonian population as part of the Bulgarian nation. And here is the paradox: if a Bulgarian from the Black Sea region says that the people from Macedonia are Bulgarians, he might be viewed as a nationalist, because he does not have any connections to Macedonia and cannot talk on behalf of the people there. But in reality, people who are born in Macedonia, and their descendants,<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Alexander Donski, "*Ethnological differences between Macedonians and Bulgarians*" (2000) Skopje.

<sup>80</sup> See, Benedict Anderson, "*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*" (1991)

<sup>81</sup> According statistics of the Bulgarian political party Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, descendant of the old IMRO, these people consist above 30% of the 1,8 million population of the Bulgarian capital Sofia and more than 2 million for the whole territory of Bulgaria.

claim that they are Bulgarians, and therefore, the people from Macedonia are Bulgarians. I do not think that these people are nationalists merely because they express their self-identity.

On a political level the relations between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia are as complicated as the relations on a personal level.

Again the Bulgarian side is much more, friendly and supportive. In addition to the fact that Bulgaria was the first country in the world that recognized the Macedonian independence from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria has always supported the Republic of Macedonia<sup>82</sup> in every political move of the young state. For example, when the Macedonian statehood was threatened by the Albanian separatists, Bulgaria donated over 300 tanks and artillery mounts to the Macedonian army<sup>83</sup>.

The so called "language dispute", between the two countries also caused a negative effect in the bilateral relations. The core of the dispute is whether there is a distinct Macedonian language or not. The Bulgarian position is that the language spoken in the Republic of Macedonia is a local form or dialect of the Bulgarian language.<sup>84</sup> The dispute lasted until 1999, when the two governments agreed that when they sign bilateral documents, instead of using "Bulgarian" and/or "Macedonian" language they will use the expression "the official language according the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, and the official language according the Constitution of the Republic of

---

<sup>82</sup> See "*Perspectives on the Development of the Relations between Bulgaria and Macedonia*", Institute for Regional and International Studies, available at [http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002440/01/perspectives\\_on\\_the\\_development.pdf](http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002440/01/perspectives_on_the_development.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> See BULGARIA-MACEDONIA-DOCUMENTS available at <http://www.b-info.com/tools/miva/newsview.mv?url=places/Bulgaria/news/99-02/feb24a.bta>

<sup>84</sup> This is also expressed in numerous statements and publications by the Bulgarian Academy of Science

Bulgaria".<sup>85</sup> As one can understand from this "solution" the language dispute is not resolved.

Despite all efforts of the Bulgarian government, the official policy of the Republic of Macedonia continues to be negative and unfair towards Bulgaria and people with a Bulgarian national conscience. While some Bulgarians, that are Macedonian citizens, try to preserve their identity, the Macedonian authorities maintain territorial claims against Bulgaria and even talk about "Macedonian minority" in Bulgaria.<sup>86</sup> The anti-Bulgarian behavior of the Macedonian authorities resulted in a negative reaction from Bulgaria.<sup>87</sup> Although the Bulgarian president said that "Macedonia is the most romantic part of the Bulgarian history and lives in the heart of every Bulgarian"<sup>88</sup>, the Bulgarian politicians are no longer closing their eyes to the Macedonian provocations.

In 2007 the foreign minister of Bulgaria<sup>89</sup> addressed, in an open statement, the negative treatment of people espousing a Bulgarian national consciousness in the Republic of Macedonia as an obstacle for the good relations between both countries. Thus the public support that Bulgaria gives the Republic of Macedonia for its EU and NATO membership might be revised, and the minister stated that "we would not tolerate anymore anti-Bulgarian propaganda and falsification of our history".

---

<sup>85</sup> See Article 13, Agreement on mutual promotion and protection of Investments between the Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Macedonia, signed on February, 29<sup>th</sup> in Sofia, promulgated in the State Gazette of Republic of Bulgaria 47/12.05.1999.

<sup>86</sup> Numerous Macedonian encyclopedias, declarations, documents, funded by the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Macedonia

<sup>87</sup> See e.g. "Macedonia in the Bulgarian and International Press" and "Relations Between R Bulgaria And R Macedonia", News Bulletin No1, January 2000, Macedonian Scientific Institute, available at <http://knigite.abv.bg/mpr/bulletin/1/msi1for.htm>

<sup>88</sup> Peter Stoyanov, President of Bulgaria 1997-2002

<sup>89</sup> Ivaylo Kalfin, Vice premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria

## VI. THE FUTURE

While today the official authorities in the Republic of Macedonia continue their anti-Bulgarian policy with the last anti-Bulgarian tensions just in the beginning of 2007, the EU accepted Bulgaria as a member and reached the Macedonian borders. The Bulgarian accession to EU gave a new hope and raised the expectations of the people from both sides of the border. Now, we the people of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia should ask ourselves should we always bring our Balkan quarrels to the big European family.

Do you consider yourself Bulgarian or Macedonian? This is the most common question that people from both countries ask each other when they meet. More than 60,000 citizens or out of 1.3 million Slavic population of the Republic of Macedonia already answered this question. They obtained a Bulgarian citizenship and welcomed Europe as free people with new national identity cards.<sup>90</sup> It is interesting to know that among them are the former Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia Luibcho Georgievski<sup>91</sup> and the former Minister of Police Dosta Dimovska. In their applications for Bulgarian citizenship all these people declared in a handwritten statement: “Bulgarian by origin”.

---

<sup>90</sup> They are even more citizens of Republic of Macedonia that are waiting for Bulgarian citizenship. Because of their large number, the European Commission already expressed its concerns before the Bulgarian government.

<sup>91</sup> Supra 56