MACEDONIAN SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE – SOFIA

Ass. Prof. Stoyan Germanov, PhD

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

HISTORY AND ACTUALITY



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Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Germanov, Dr. is a descendent of Ohrid refugees. He finished high school in the town of Petrich and graduated from "St. Kliment Ohridski" Sofia University with a history degree. His scientific interest is aimed at the Bulgarian national liberation movement after the Berlin Congress, the policy of the Great Powers about the Macedonian Question, etc. He has specialized in London, Moscow and St. Peterburg. He has written more than 60 studios, articles and 2 monographs. Also, he has participated in national and international scientific events – XXI symposium of military history, Quebec (1995); XVII World's Congress of Historians, Montreal (1995); the Congress of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, Warsaw (1998); VI World's Congress for search of Central and South Europe, Tampere, Finland (2000), Scientific symposium for the ethnical changes in Macedonia, Skopie (1994), etc. Since 1991 he has been a research associate and scientific secretary of the restored Macedonian Scientific Institute – Sofia.

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION. HISTORY AND ACTUALITY

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Reviewer: Prof. Trendafil Mitev, DSc
Translated into english by: Galina Kopcheva
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For over a century the Macedonian Question has been of interest to scientists, politicians and statesmen crossing the frontiers of the Balkans and becoming an issue for the policy and diplomacy of a series of countries. It has been the object of political and scientific disputes, diplomatic schemes, utopian projects, political designs and territorial claims. Nowadays some aspects of the Macedonian Question have reached scientific or political decisions, others are still controversial due to the exceptive politicization and the stereotypical thinking from the near past.

Over the last two decades the historical science has made it possible for new analyses and prognoses to take place. New documents began to be used in science, a new generation of research-workers appeared in Bulgaria and abroad, who made a great contribution to the Macedonian Question by throwing light upon it from a contemporary point of view.

In the present survey an attempt is made to follow up the objective prerequisites for the rise of the Macedonian Question and its development till the Balkan Wars, also, the period between the two wars has been taken into account. Special attention is paid to the events during and after the Second World War. The national-territorial, state-political and people's strivings are analyzed in every stage; the standpoints for new nations are outlined under the influence of the Communist movement and its doctrines; the ideas for a Balkan and South-Slavic federation as a possible solution for the Macedonian Question are presented as well as the understandings for the Macedonian Question after the changes from the 1990s and the beginning of the XXI century.

ESSENCE OF THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION AND FIRST IDEAS FOR ITS SOLUTION

The Macedonian Question originated as a part of the insoluble Bulgarian national question. The European scientific and political thought as early as before the Liberation recognized the ethnical boundaries of the Bulgarian people. This fact was also confirmed at the Constantinople Conference of the Great Powers (1876), as well as by the self-determining of the Bulgarian population during political and spiritual fights. But the Congress of Berlin (1878) hindered the wishes and aspira-

tions of the Bulgarian nation for national unification by opening a wound which has been bleeding till nowadays. In that way, the unsuccessful attempt for uniting the Bulgarian nation in 1878, the interference of the Great Powers and the territorial aspirations of the neighboring Balkan countries were the main reasons for the rise of the Macedonian Question. Bulgaria was compelled for decades on to take care of issues that our neighbors had solved much quickly at minimum losses, instead of concentrating on the state's cultural and economical life.

One of the most important aspects of the Macedonian Question, among all, concerns the ethnical character of the Slavic population in Macedonia which was a majority. Even before the era of the disputes, the studies of such scrupulous, unbiased scientists and travelers as V. Grigorovich, Ami Boué, Leon Lamouche, Georges Desbons, Gustav Weigand, Lubor Niederle, Pavel Milukov, Nikodim Kondakov, Nikolai Derjavin, Henry Brailsford and many others had proven convincingly that the Slavic population in Macedonia was Bulgarian according to history, manner of life and culture and the Bulgarians were dominant element. This was not to the benefit of the Belgrade and Athens ruling circles. During the disputes, seemingly harmless at first, a wish for the realization of the long term strategies of Serbia and Greece became apparent. Help was needed and the scientific thought of both countries was summoned. A competition began - whose interests were bigger, who had historical rights, etc. The Russian diplomacy in the person of the consuls in Bitola, Skopie and Thessaloniki joined in help of the Serbian thesis despite having another opinion beforehand.

However, when realizing that the policy for direct Serbianisation of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia had no perspective from a political and scientific point of view, a part of the Serbian intelligentsia oriented to Macedonianism. In its origin Macedonianism was the offspring of the Great-Serbian propaganda and aspirations. It aimed at disuniting the Bulgarians and denationalizing a part of the people. Its goal was to destroy the Macedonian Bulgarians' feelings of belonging the to the Bulgarian nation, to make them forget their Bulgarian spirit and root. But till the Balkan Wars the Macedonianism had very little influence and support in Macedonia itself. Few Bulgarians were like Kr. Misirkov who yielded to Serbian suggestions and sacrificed their Bulgarian national feeling.

Being dependent on the particular situation and position of the Powers, the solution of the Macedonian Question during the first stage, namely till the wars,

was searched in several directions. Direct joining to Bulgaria was one of the first suggestions for solving the Macedonian Question. But it was postponed due to the hardship which might have been created by the Great Powers and the neighboring Balkan countries. The other option for the solving of the Macedonian Question was autonomy. That view was appropriated by the Revolutionary movement in Macedonia after it had become clear that the unification with Bulgaria would be more difficult due to the territorial aspirations of Serbia and Greece and later of other countries.

Autonomy with priority of the Bulgarian element, for being the most numerous one, was accepted not only by the Revolutionary organization, but also by the Bulgarian government. However, under no circumstances Serbia and Greece would support the autonomy. Their inmost wish was to divide Macedonia and till that moment to define spheres of influence. In that way, during this stage two tendencies were outlined - one under the leadership of the Internal Macedonian and Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (IMARO) for preparation of a mass armed uprising and the other – the pursuit of Serbia, Greece, Romania with the cooperation of the Turkish authorities to establish specific spheres of influence. This mutual fight going on through the whole period and especially during the Reform action (1903-1908) reflected worst the Bulgarian element and considerably reduced it, far before the tragic events in 1913 when actually the Serbians, Greeks and Turks unified against the Bulgarians.

FROM THE BALKAN WARS TO THE VERSAILLES SYSTEM

After the Balkan Wars, especially after the First World War, the Macedonian Question entered a new stage of development. It had turned out that neither the Balkan countries, nor the Great Powers had the intention of finding a solution, in the least a fair one, according to the proclaimed principles of self-determination of the nations by the American president Wilson. A number of peace treaties, known as the Versailles system, confirmed the division of Macedonia between Serbia and Greece and only one tenth of Pirin Macedonia was incorporated into the liberated lands of Bulgaria. During the peace negotiations the Bulgarian govern-

ment, which did not have enough potential to suggest decisions, made unsuccessful attempts to ensure the right for self-determination and a referendum to decide which Balkan country would like to join the population of Macedonia. After the unsuccessful end of that variant, Bulgaria offered the area of Macedonia to receive autonomy within its geographical boundaries or in other words an independent country under the control of the allied states-victors or one of them to be established. This was also the claim of the refugee organizations in Bulgaria and also of the refugee organizations (before all of IMARO). In this spirit appeals, declarations and other documents were sent to international organizations and Great powers. The leaders of the Revolutionary movement had always been aware of the Bulgarian consciousness of the Slavic population in Macedonia. The forming of a separate political entity aimed at preserving the Macedonian Bulgarians. That was why the autonomy was supported by both public opinion and official Bulgarian authorities. But this variant was rejected by Serbia and Greece, as well as, by the two Great Powers - England and France.

After the First World War Serbia perceived Vardar Macedonia as a real Serbian land called also “Southern Serbia”. Enormous in scale for the area a police and military apparatus was placed there – a 40-thousand army and 10 800 political forces out of all 17 000 in the whole kingdom. Simultaneously with the imposed terror, processes of intense colonization began. The new authorities distributed land giving priority to the volunteers in the Serbian army, rebels from the contra-bands, state officials, policemen, soldiers, etc. The results from the so-called agrarian reform were significant. Colonists owned 52.44 % of the land, local peasants – 39.55 %. In order to keep Vardar Macedonia under control the authorities created terrorist groups of “irresponsible factors” who were a real terror for the population. The injustice inflicted on the Bulgarians found a huge response abroad.

Irrespective of the fact that the Serbian government signed the treaties for protecting the minorities in 1919, in progress was a continuous and well considered campaign for denationalizing the Bulgarian population. The Serbian authorities began destruction of the spiritual institutions - churches, schools, pursuing and banishing teachers, priests, etc. Serbian authorities closed down 641 Bulgarian schools with 1013 male and female teachers and 37 00 students, 761 Bulgarian churches with 6 bishops and 893 priests. The family name endings from “ov” and “ev” were changed to “ich”. Various measures were taken for imposing the Serbian

language. Using all powers and means at hand Serbian ruling class was trying to change the national consciousness of the Bulgarian population. The occupation regime suffocated the resistance through judicial processes against members of IMARO, youth, students', female and other organizations. They counted on fast Serbianization because of the language and religious closeness to the Serbians.

In the denationalization and assimilatory politics Serbia found support from France and England. A Memorandum of Foreign Office said that if IMARO was eliminated the Macedonian Slav would remain a Serbian in heart the same way he used to be Bulgarian 10 years ago. Convicting this activity deprived of any humanism the French publicist and socially active figure G. Desbons said: "The delegates of the peace in Neuilly-sur-Seine voluntarily turned their back to the historical and geographical truth, they easily and hastily trampled on and buried history, geography, ethnography, economical necessities, common sense, ethics, honestly".

The direct Serbianization made insignificant advance. Being in impasse, the Macedonian Bulgarians undertook disturbing activities, especially the intelligentsia. The idea for state-political existence of Macedonia providing free existence and equality of all peoples and peace in the Balkans, took superiority over the idea of joining to Bulgaria. Then, the anti- Bulgarian Macedonianism was still a reserve version of the Serbian policy and it appeared and enforced on the forthcoming decades.

At first the Greek ruling classes did not deny the existence of Bulgarian national minority in Aegean Macedonia. Despite that the Greek government set the goal of reducing to minimum the Bulgarian element. In search of this purpose, as early as March 1920, in Northern Greece census was made and "the Bulgarophones" had to be put down with family names ending in "os", "is", "es", etc. The Greek authorities closed down 3404 schools, 20 of them were Secondary schools and 6 High Schools with 750 teachers, 19 000 students, 378 churches with 300 priests. Bulgarian language was banned, the whole toponymy was changed. The spiritual oppression was accompanied by violence, confiscation of property, etc.

The existence of compact Bulgarian population in Aegean Macedonia impelled Greece to sign the Treaty of Sèvres on 10th August 1920 which obliged it to give minority rights to the Bulgarians. However, the authorities did everything they could not to execute the obligations. After that the Kalfov-Politis Protocol (29th September 1924) was signed "For the Protection of Minorities in Bulgaria and

Greece". According to the Protocol the two countries had the right to speak and act on behalf of their minorities in another state. In the bilateral document was explicitly said that it was about the "protection of the Bulgarian minority in Greece". However, this confession rose the anger of the Serbian authorities as it **de facto** made pointless the Serbian affirmations that the Slavic population in Vardar Macedonia was Serbian. The strong reaction of Belgrade discovered a possibility for the Greek parliament not to ratify the Protocol. In this way the Greek authorities continued the game of deluding the League of Nations concerning the minority rights of the Bulgarians.

In the meantime the various contracts and conventions continued "voluntarily" to exchange the populations of the two countries but the Bulgarian side was the losing one in this process since almost all Bulgarians gradually and completely left Eastern Aegean Macedonia. The "voluntary" exile of Bulgarians took serious scales during the years after the defeat of Greece in Asia Minor. In most cases the immigrants were forced to leave their properties to the mercy of fate. According to incomplete statistical data by 1928 86 572 Bulgarians were exiled, in Western Aegean Macedonia about 200-250 000 remained in the areas of Voden, Lerin, Kostur. The last exile waves were during the Second World War and during the Civil War in Greece.

All in all, the Bulgarians in this part of Macedonia were proclaimed for "Hellenes Slavophones" or "Hellenes speaking Bulgarian".

Devoided of its cultural uniqueness, pursuited by the state and slaughtered, a great part of the Bulgarian population preferred to seek shelter in the liberated lands of Bulgaria and another part took the long road to America. The thousands of refugees in Bulgaria did not endure the bad situation of its compatriots in Aegean and Vardar Macedonia. The refugees from both parts of Macedonia restored the Macedonian brotherhoods which through memorandums, appeals and declarations before the international organizations defended… the rights of the Macedonian Bulgarians. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) restored its activity. These organizations supported the spirit and organized and held up the justifiable fight of the Bulgarian population.

THE COMINTERN AND THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

The Macedonian Question entered a new phase when became part of the tactics and strategy of the communist movement. The National Question was regarded as directly depending on the tasks assigned to the communist movement. For the years 1919-1922 the main task was to expand the revolutionary fire outside the borders of Soviet Russia. According to the doctrinal communist theory the National Question was secondary, subordinate to the class one and to the victory of the Socialist revolution. Only in this way the National Question in the Balkans could be solved where a "second" wave of the world's revolutionary process was expected.

The Macedonian Question was not put forward for some time and it was considered as a part of the Bulgarian National Question, not as a Balkan matter. Therefore, most documents mentioned compact masses of Bulgarian population in Macedonia, Thrace and Dobrudja. However, the following years displayed that the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) was heavily influenced by the intrigues of the Comintern concerning the ideas for a Balkan federation, and in the new conditions – of a federation of the Balkan Soviet workers' and peasants' republics. Accepting that doctrinal eyesight about the National Question, the BCP created preconditions for enthusiasms, mistakes and compromises in the interim period, during the Second World War and especially when it became the ruling party of Bulgaria.

For a long time the BCP had both the dominant position and was in an awkward situation in the Balkan Communist Federation (BCF). In the federation different parties were members, separated by the Versailles system of victors (Yugoslavia, Greece and Romania) and defeated Bulgaria. In this situation it acquired the slogan for self-determination the Slavic population in Macedonia irrespective of the fact that the latter had been expressing its Bulgarian national belonging till then. Namely, that setting predetermined the solutions of the BCP from 1923. The document said that the Balkan Communist parties voted for self-determination of the peoples, including separating from the countries they had been joined to. The communist strategists emphasized extremely hard on the separation as a dogma everywhere irrespective of the concrete historical circumstances. Because of that it was agreed on the preaching of artificial separation due to political and geo-

strategic reasons. Example for that were the decisions of the BCP's Vitosha conference where it was said that the population of the Petrich area was given the right to separate from Bulgaria or be ruled autonomously. They spoke about Macedonian masses which had to fight and win the autonomy of Macedonia, but they did not disclose the ethnical character of the population in the Petrich area. Through these political declarations and further through practical actions the BCP laid the foundations of the nihilist policies for alienating the Macedonian Bulgarians from Bulgaria, despite the fact that the proposed state and political separation was based on political, not ethnical grounds.

Over the next years the hesitations between the historical truth and the conjuncture settings of the Comintern continued to go deeper in the BCP. This was especially characteristic of its left-sectarian stage. The second illegal conference which took place from 8th December 1927 till 15th January 1928 once again confirmed the position stated earlier that the solution for the Macedonian Question should be sought in the socialistic revolution and the creation of a Balkan socialistic federation. Here, as in previous decisions, obscurities and contradictions could be noticed. On one hand in the 1920s, although not very emphatically, the BCP indicated the Bulgarian national belonging of the Slavic population in Macedonia. On the other hand, however, it criticized harshly the Bulgarian ruling classes for having aggressive aspirations to Macedonia. Moreover, there were two rather different assessments for the situation in Vardar and Aegean Macedonia. It was specified that the Bulgarians in Vardar Macedonia were subject to cruel national oppression and denationalization. Another true fact pointed out was that in Aegean Macedonia the Bulgarian population was compelled to leave its motherlands and Greek refugees were settled in their place, which categorically changed the ethnography of the area. Along with this they also claimed that the Thracians and the Dobrudjans should be given the right of self-determination and the strivings of the bourgeoisie in Pirin Macedonia were assimilatory, etc.

After the VI Congress of the Comintern the positions of the BCP about the National Question changed and the sectarian dogmatic and nihilist assessments ultimately gained the upper hand. The standpoints of the Comintern continued to be accepted dogmatically and literally by the young figures of the BCP without taking into account the historical truth about the shaping of the nations in the Balkans and more specifically the processes of the establishment of the Bulgarian na-

tion. At the Second plenary session of the Central Committee (CC) of the BCP in 1929, once again they talked about national liberation of the "enslaved Bulgarian Macedonian and Thracian areas". On that account BCP had to fight for self-determination of the Macedonians and Thracians including their separation from Bulgaria. In this way the national nihilism entered the rows of the BCP, transferred without criticizing in its propaganda and generally in its political activity the Comintern formula for the right of self-determination, up to succession.

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After the First World War the Yugoslavian Communist Party (YCP) supported the slogan for a Balkan Federative Socialistic Republic where Macedonia would be an autonomous and equal in rights entity. But too early the Yugoslavian communists began to step back from their standpoints about the Macedonian Question. The Second and Third conferences documents evaded the usage of the term "Macedonian Bulgarians". Part of the figures of the YCP were inclined to accept the theories of the Serbian ethnographer Jovan Tsviich for the national indefiniteness of the Slavic population in Macedonian, allegedly being some large shapeless mass of people. That retreat was demonstrated also at the next party forums where it was asserted about different nationalities in Macedonia that none of them was a majority, although at that time the Bulgarians were 80% of the population in Vardar Macedonia.

The further actions of the YCP during the 1920s showed duplicity, indefiniteness and discrepancy. On one hand, there was a striving to distinguish from the non-scientific theories of Tsviich and Belich. On the other hand, the contradictory assessment in the party itself for the ethnical character of the Slavic population in Macedonia continued, though there were some confessions that the Macedonians felt more Bulgarians than Serbians. The same circles came up with another theory – the Macedonians had a separate national individuality.

During the next years in a series of documents of the Comintern and the Balkan communist parties the ethnonym "Bulgarians", "Macedonian Bulgarians" gradually was replaced with "Macedonian population". This terminology concerned more Pirin and Vardar Macedonia. After the demographic changes and settling the Greek refugees from Asia Minor and other regions, the Greek Communist

Party (GCP) denied supporting the slogan for the autonomy of Macedonia within the boundaries of a Balkan federation. In spite of some hesitations the GCP reckoned the remainders of the Slavic population in Greece for Bulgarians which should be given minority rights. According to the Greek communists the establishment of autonomous Macedonia was not possible because territories of Greece would be detached where Greeks were a majority. Despite that, the Greek peasants and workers were not prepared to accept the autonomy. However, the GCP would be fighting against the Hellenization of the national minorities.

At the same time the YCP increasingly strengthened its positions about the Macedonian Question in the Comintern and imposed its understanding for a solution. The ruling circles of the YCP continued to sustain their twofold position concerning the ethnical character of the Slavic population in Macedonia. They accepted the presence of Bulgarians in Aegean and Pirin Macedonia but not in Vardar Macedonia. In some party documents it was indicated the existence of 630 000 Macedonians along the Vardar river. The idea of solving the Macedonian Question within a Yugoslavian federation was also launched.

Consequently, towards the mid- and the end of the 1920s in the Comintern, as well as in the Balkan Communist Parties the idea for the ethical character of the Slavic population in Macedonia was not clarified. On different levels discussions were held which did not leave the boundaries of the common directives of the Communist movement. The statements varied from the truth, historically acknowledged by the European science and the self-determination of the population, that the Macedonian Slavs in their history, way of living and culture, etc. were Bulgarians, up to the idea of a new national individuality – "Macedonians". Besides these statements there were more – the Slavic population in Macedonia had not formed its national consciousness and could be proclaimed with equal success for Serbian, Bulgarian or Greek one; the ethnonym "Macedonian", "Macedonian citizen" was accepted as a collective common name for the inhabitants of the geographical region Macedonia irrespective of their nationality; a new nationality could not be created from the mechanical total of the existing nationalities in Macedonia. That all proved that the Balkan communist parties and the Comintern, as a whole, were faced with searching and finding criteria for drawing together the positions and the political solution of the disputed questions. In the meantime, the situation in the Balkans and in Europe, as a whole, considerably changed. The spirits in Europe

had different dimensions. Till the mid-1930s the attitude of the Comintern to the National Question in the Balkans was defined by the main direction – a fight against the Versailles system and Yugoslavia, as a product of this system. After Hitler came to power and the changes that followed this assumed a different character. In the foreground was put the strengthening of Yugoslavia as a barrier against the Hitler's expansion towards Southeast Europe. However, in order to protect Yugoslavia it was necessary to calm down the national passions in the multinational state. The position on the Macedonian Question also changed. The slogan for autonomous Macedonia was put forward within the borders of Yugoslavia, which was cherished by the Communists and part of the ruling classes in Belgrade. All that led to the decisions of the Comintern from 1934 for "the Macedonian nation and Macedonian language". These decisions put a stamp over the deeds of several generations of communists, public figures and scientists. The Macedonian Question and its solution began to be considered as inter-Yugoslavian.

The BCP in a disciplined way left the slogan for a Balkan federation. In the party circles and among the intelligentsia there were serious objections that it was not possible for the Macedonian Bulgarians in such a short period of time to change their national belonging. Especially strong bewilderment provoked the situation in Pirin Macedonia where the majority of the population was refugees from Aegean Macedonia. Irrespective of that in the area of Pirin the IMRO (united) acted as a section of the BCP, the results from introducing Macedonian national consciousness were insignificant and its activity was ceased in 1936.

The decisions of the Comintern from 1934 were also accepted by the YCP. Furthermore, its positions coincided with the ruling parties of Yugoslavia. At the beginning of the 1930s Belgrade was convinced that it was not possible to achieve serious results in imposing on the Bulgarians in Vardar Macedonia Serbian consciousness with forceful methods. The more liberal circles tried to launch the Macedonisation of the Bulgarian element with the motto: "Better Macedonians than Bulgarians" with the aim of binding the population of Bulgarian origin to Yugoslavia for good, at the price of some concessions. In this way Macedonianism coming from the ruling circles in Belgrade blended with the Macedonianism preached by the Comintern, BCP and YCP. But also here the processes were not synonymous. Part of the intelligentsia in Vardar Macedonia and the communist party members silently adopted another motto: "Better Macedonians than Serbians", as a protec-

tive reaction against the terror and denationalization policy. However, this process concerned a small part of the intelligentsia while the biggest part of the population was far away from this idea. It preserved its Bulgarian national consciousness and led a fight for independent Macedonia or adjoining to Bulgaria.

The YCP followed the policy of the Comintern from the 1930s as a common directive for solving the national problems within the boundaries of royal Yugoslavia. In this way the party of the Yugoslavian communists adopted the internal federalism, in other words Yugoslavian federation with Vardar Macedonia. The adopted policy was conducted especially persistently and consecutively after the leader of the party became Josip Broz Tito. The meeting of June 1939 and the Fifth YCP conference of October 1940 finally formed the National Question program. The document stated that "the Macedonians are a separate nation on the Balkans, "nor Serbians, neither Bulgarians". Since then the YCP claimed to decide the Macedonian Question as an internal Yugoslavian Question although they admitted its Balkan and European meaning.

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION DURING THE WAR PERIOD

On the eve of the Second World War and during it the Macedonian matter was part of the common problems which rose during the crisis in the Versailles system and the revision tendencies. At first, Bulgaria drew closer to Yugoslavia and Greece in order to come out of the isolation and the imposed restrictions. Macedonia was not one of the priorities. The ruling classes considered peacefully in a neutral way to achieve the marked goals. Then, in the international relations tendencies sprang up that the peace treaties would be revised. When signing the Pact of "Eternal Friendship" with Yugoslavia in 1937 the Bulgarian government seemingly recanted the Bulgarians in Vardar Macedonia which diminished the hopes for liberation from Bulgaria.

Since the 1930s Yugoslavia had been pursuing a policy of integral Yugoslavian National and State unitarism. This policy led to a serious crisis in the internal national relations and the internal unity on the eve of the war. "The Yugoslavian version" for solving the National Question using the state unitarism suffered a

defeat in April 1941. During the resistance in the YCP the idea for a federative system of the state made its way whereas the idea for autonomy of Macedonia and a Balkan federation was diverted.

In 1941 the bigger part of Vardar Macedonia was integrated with Bulgaria. The BCP raised the slogan for independent Macedonia. The Macedonian question would be decided depending on the situation and cooperation with the USSR after the war. At the end of April the District committee of the communist party in Skopie was attached to the CC of BCP. The slogan "one people, one state, one party" became very popular. At the end of May 1941 in the party organizations of Vardar Macedonia the letter of Todor Pavlov was discussed which posed the following questions: Is it possible to raise the slogan for returning Macedonia to Yugoslavia; Should Macedonia be detached from Bulgaria; Are the Macedonians a separate nation or are they Macedonian Bulgarians, etc. Contradictions and bitter disputes arose between BCP and YKP. The Regional Committee of the YCP in Vardar Macedonia, led by Metodi Shatorov, established close organizational connections with the BCP. The CC of YCP blamed M.Shatorov for nationalism and counter-revolutionary activity, it suspended him from the party and sentenced him to death. The Yugoslavian party leadership required the interference of the Comintern and BCP. After some disputes and hesitations the Executive Committee of the Comintern, and after Georgi Dimitrov stated his opinion, it decided out of practical expedience that "the Skopie party organization should return to YCP". Thus, once again the Macedonian Question was prejudged to the advantage of Yugoslavia and YCP. Yet, this did not decide the issue for the future stay of Vardar Macedonia in Yugoslavia. Among the figures of the communist party in Skopie a movement emerged which insisted on the Macedonian question to be solved outside the borders of new Yugoslavia. Despite these two trends the two sessions of the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) on 27th November 1942 and 29th November 1943 which Macedonian delegates did not attend, determined the post-war Yugoslavia to retain the borders of old Yugoslavia including Vardar Macedonia. In the leading bodies of the People's Council, except for representatives of Vardar Macedonia were included people from the other two parts of Macedonia. The slogan for united Macedonia "under the roof of Tito's Yugoslavia" was launched. The Yugoslavian communists strived for achieving a

treaty with the BCP and the Greek Communist Party for post-war unification of the three units in a state entity in new Yugoslavia.

Besides, the Yugoslavian communist leadership showed ambitions to become a leading factor in the regenerated idea for a Balkan federation. This was expressed in the different ideas for Balkan headquarters of the resistance, in the variants for a Balkan or Yugoslav federation where the position of Bulgaria would be as one of the partners of Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, the Yugoslavian side responded sharply to the declaration of the Fatherland Front from December 1943 for "integral, independent and free Macedonia". Nevertheless, in this variant the Yugoslavians foresaw closeness with Bulgaria due to the historical connections with the Bulgarian people. This fact was also admitted by the USA State Department in a special document for the alternative solutions of the Macedonian Question. There it was stated that in case a plebiscite was hold, the majority of the Slav residents would sympathize to an independent statute or influx to Bulgaria. But this would meet the opposition of the Greek and Yugoslavian governments. Therefore, the USA government would neither support the joining of Macedonia to Bulgaria, nor the autonomous statute of the region. The English government held up to the same standpoint at the negotiations in Cairo in 1944.

NEW IDEAS, NEW MISTAKES AND COMPROMISES

One of the most discussed topics in 1944 of all diverse political versions for solving the Macedonian Question was the federative idea. As early as the end of the same year an attempt was made to solve the question by creating a Yugoslavian federation between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Premise for the revival of the federative idea was the political and ideological basis used for building up relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia under the leadership of the communist parties. It became clear, as early as then, that the two communist parties had different standpoints.

The new Bulgarian government of the Fatherland Front was still isolated and did not have any diplomatic relations with its neighbours. Although it declared war on Germany in the international relationships Bulgaria had not been recog-

nized as one of the states in the anti-Hitler coalition. Thereby, the relations with Yugoslavia were the only chance for the Bulgarian government to carry out its external policy declared in the government program from 12th September 1944. In a nutshell, Bulgaria had the weak position. Moreover, the Bulgarian communist party had already accepted the Yugoslavian statement for the establishment of the People's Republic of Macedonia and "Macedonian nation", though, having some stipulations and shades. Consequently, as early as the first days and months of 1944 the BCP put itself in an unfavorable position due to the proclaimed Comintern internationalism, the lack of understanding the historical and political essence of the Macedonian Question as well as the unclear idea for a Yugoslavian federation. This was a serious prerequisite for the establishment of the Yugoslavian Macedonianism.

When tracing out the historical documentation after 1944 concerning the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian relationships a well-considered and ambitious Yugoslavian policy can be noticed which the Bulgarian state and political leadership could not successfully withstand. During the initial discussions for fulfilling the idea of a Yugoslavian federation several main points were prominent, namely: the political pressure of Yugoslavia, the hesitations of the Bulgarian leadership and the vehement resistance to the forcefully implanted Macedonianism among the population in the area of Pirin. These activities underwent two stages.

The first stage began immediately after 9th September 1944 and continued up to 1946/1947. It developed under the condition of the unsettled international situation of Bulgaria and without official treaties between the two countries. The idea of a federation and the Macedonisation were at the propaganda level. Irrespective of that, the first demand of the Yugoslavian representatives was immediate and unreserved joining of Pirin Macedonia (Gorna Djumaya area) to the People's Republic of Macedonia within the boundaries of Yugoslavia. As early as 15th September Svetozar Vuckmanovich Tempo and the accompanying representatives of the YCP and the Macedonian Communist Party (MCP) posed to the regional leadership in Gorna Djumaya the issue of joining the region to Yugoslavia. Their main argument was that Bulgaria was a defeated country and it had to pay large obligations to the victor states. By joining to Yugoslavia the population of this region would avoid these post-war difficulties. The regional leadership faced the dilemma

to accept the nearly dictatorial demands or to wait. Still, these requests were temporarily declined.

Tempo and Mihailo Apostolski/Mihail Apostolov, Lazar Kolishevsky/Lazar Kolishev and Bane Andreev accompanying him did not lose hope and reckoned that they could break into the CC of BCP in Sofia. Indeed, on 25th September they met the central leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party. The meeting was attended by Traicho Kostov, Georgi Chankov, Tsola Dragoicheva, Dobri Terpeshev, Anton Yugov and others. Like in Gorna Djumaya, Tempo acted arrogantly and slightingly. After some disputes at party level an agreement was reached in which the BCP made more concessions. The document indicated that the population in the Bulgarian part of Macedonia had the right of sovereignty which should be understood as separation and joining to another state. In the area of Pirin "military-national units" could be formed which as parts of the Bulgarian army would fight till the end of the war. Simultaneously with that it was proposed national committees for liberation to be created with Gorna Djumaya as a center within the boundaries of the Fatherland Front power. Thus, Tempo and Kolishevsky tried to impose the Yugoslavian view for the future political and administrative structure of the area of Pirin. Taking into account the international situation they reckoned that the Macedonian Question could be solved only in one direction – the immediate joining of this region to the People's Republic of Macedonia having in mind the well-known phrase: "Give us the Pirin region, then we shall see whether we shall have a federation or not". The compromises that the Bulgarian communist party had made cleared the way for dual power in the region, which was what Dimitar Ganev spoke about in a report to the CC, still at that time. Next events showed that this not only led to dual power, which the Yugoslavians considered temporary, but also to unhindered interference in the politics of Bulgaria. The only opportunity for the Bulgarian leadership to manoeuvre was to postpone the controversial topics. A few figures in the BCP, as it would become obvious later, took advantage of the opportunity because the document itself was not of interstate but of party character.

Assuming that they had won one more round of negotiations, the Yugoslavian representatives proceeded for an attack. According to them the first thing to change was the ethnical belonging of the Gorna Djumaya district population by announcing it "Macedonian". Oral and printed Yugoslavian propaganda began through newspapers, magazines and other materials in "Macedonian language".

During the first stage the propaganda assumed sizes which were not of importance. Under Yugoslavian pressure a brigade was set up in the region which unsuccessfully finished its mission in Aegean Macedonia. At the same time the so-called "Yane Sandanski Macedonian Brigade" was formed consisting of partisans and volunteers.

A major task was assigned not only to the well known Tempo but also to L. Arsov, Vera Atseva, M. Apostolski, Kiril Miliovski, B.Andreev, etc. K. Miliovski led the Provisional Representation of the People's Republic of Macedonia in Sofia. Tempo and Kolishevski constantly were sending him instructions for preparation and joining of the Pirin region to Yugoslavia, irrespective of the development of the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian relations and the implementation of the idea of a Yugoslavian federation. Furthermore, according to Tito the Yugoslavian state would not agree to a union where Bulgaria would be equal to Yugoslavia.

Simultaneously to the activities of the Yugoslavian representatives a group of BCP figures like Vladimir Poptomov, General Boris Kopchev, D. Ganev, etc. were trying to overcome the hesitations and to avoid giving Gorna Djumaya area to Yugoslavia. According to them the problem would be solved by future joining of Macedonia to a Yugoslavian federation and not by ceding the area to Yugoslavia. Because of this resistance the Yugoslavian emissaries reckoned that the joining would not be decided at a local level here in Gorna Djumaya but in Sofia. However, the capital demonstrated some common sense in the middle of October 1944. On 20th October the party leadership of BCP adopted a dual resolution. On one hand, it stated that the joining of the Pirin area to Yugoslavia could not become possible without a preliminary union between the two states and, also, the Bulgarian government should be aware of all the events in that area. On the other hand, the necessity of "rising the Macedonian national consciousness among the population" was stated. The temporary suspension of all projects and talks was due to the sharp response of the USA and Great Britain against the rapprochement of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, supported by Moscow.

The disputes around the future federation and the fate of the Pirin area were the topic of discussion at the First District Party Conference (5-6.XI.1944). In the report of Kr. Stoichev the Macedonian Question was laid rather vaguely. The main formulations were based on the Comintern postulate of "a Macedonian" nation. Still, he aimed at diverting the main blow of Skopie - immediate joining of the

area to the People's Republic of Macedonia. Vl. Poptomov's position was more definite. Due to various reasons he believed that joining Macedonia to Yugoslavia was not on the agenda because the Macedonians in the Fatherland Front's Bulgaria did not feel any national oppression. This position of Vl. Poptomov provoked the anger of L. Arsov and the latter sent a special letter to K. Miliovski where he expressed his discontent from the behavior of the Bulgarian functionary.

In the progress of the discussions D.Terpeshev visited Belgrade. His visit turned out to be useless because he as well as other figures of the BCP shared the naive delusion of Tito's stabilizing role in the Balkans. On his part D.Ganev visited Skopie where he convinced himself that the Macedonian nation in Vardar Macedonia was being constructed in an anti-Bulgarian spirit. In a report to Politburo he announced that everywhere offensive actions were undertaken through allowed or forbidden means against everything Bulgarian. Information about the scales of that uttermost hostile campaign reached Sofia through other sources, as well. Being famous for his rambling on the Macedonian Question V.Ivanovski, in a letter to G.Dimitrov and V.Kolarov from 1st December 1945, reported for the anti-Bulgarian policy of the Skopie authorities when introducing the new alphabet and "the Macedonian language". On his part the Bulgarian Legation Secretary in Belgrade T.Mechkov presented the information collected about the anti-Bulgarian propaganda, executions in Veles, Štip and Bitola, Bulgarian literature not being allowed in Vardar Macedonia. No doubt that in Skopie at that time were laid the institutions' foundations for "producing the historical truth", for the creation of a new ethno-cultural model different from the Bulgarian one, for the invention of myths, etc. At the same time cultural delegations from Skopie propagandized in the area of Pirin "the Macedonian culture", launched ideas for publishing textbooks and other literature, it was even suggested the relics of Yane Sandansky to be transferred to Skopie.

The Macedonianist acts were in unison with the decisions of the Bulgarian government from 1945 for the deporting of refugees of Aegean Macedonia to Yugoslavia – about 17 000 people. All those activities were supported by the party and the Fatherland Front leaders from the Gorna Djumaya area.

The Macedonianist propaganda and the support of the official Bulgarian authorities was not synonymous. A resistance gradually rose which at first was vehement. At first the opposition, namely, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union

(BANU), “Zveno” and BWSDP (Bulgarian Workers’ Social-Democratic Party), part of the Fatherland Front, did not share all intentions of the BCP and the government concerning the Macedonisation of the area. Even the resolution about the Macedonian Question was not accepted by the District Committee of the Fatherland Front under their influence. The Opposition press condemned the ways and means of creating the “new Macedonian nation”, imposing of the Serbicized “Macedonian language”, falsifying of the Bulgarian history and culture, etc. In a series of articles were exposed the Serbian theories for the amorphous character of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia. Far too categorical was the position of BWSDP characterizing the standpoint of the government and the BCP as a criminal insanity for satisfying the hegemonist plans of Yugoslavia. Despite the “unenviable perspective of the opposition it openly expressed its civil position and national dignity about the artificially complicated Macedonian matters”.

The district leadership of the BCP ascertained serious resistance to the Macedonisation. At the beginning of 1946 a District Party Conference reported that the Macedonian Question was not taken seriously. According to the reports of the district committees most delegates defined themselves as Bulgarians, moreover in St. Vrach (Sandansky) there was not even one “Macedonian”. Vl.Poptomov amid the many conventional formulations declared: “If you wish Pirin Macedonia and Vardar Macedonia became one, you should know that this helps the forces of reaction... this means to stab Bulgaria in the back”. The attitude to the refugees was also criticized for they “had not fled to Serbia and Greece, but had come to Bulgaria where the Bulgarian people had shared their bread with them”. Except for some Communist Party and Fatherland Front committees, opponents of the Macedonian policy appeared at some other parts of the area population – young men from Nevrokop High Schools (now – Gotse Delchev), Sv. Vrach (now – Sandansky), etc.

Consequently, during the first stage “the immediate joining” was temporarily postponed. The issue for a federation of equality, i.e. dualistic 1:1 or with seven members, i.e. the six Yugoslavian republics and Bulgaria, remained undecided. Thus, the two main questions – the joining and the federation were not resolved. Yet, the propaganda about them continued. It became obvious for the Bulgarian political and state leaders that the main factors were the USSR and Yugoslavia. That is why their tactics was a policy of postponement by negotiating. However,

they actually made a series of concessions which made room for the many tragic events during the second stage. Whatever justifications were made later for the necessary support from Yugoslavia about future negotiations with the anti-Hitler coalition, they could not justify the unprecedented interference in the internal affairs of Bulgaria with the aim of violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

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Political pressure and Macedonisation in the area of Pirin assumed different dimensions during the second stage which began in the middle of 1946. They were already developing on the basis of the decisions taken at a plenum of BCP and the Agreements of Bled and Evksinovgrad. That stage started with a lot of fuss around the idea of a federation of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. A special accent was put on the joining of the Pirin area to Vardar Macedonia. This issue was already considered in another framework – first "cultural-national autonomy" and second – joining. Still, at the same time it was connected with giving back to Bulgaria the Western Border Lands, yielded to Serbia after the First World War.

During this stage of the two processes - the consecutive pressure from the Yugoslavian leadership and the concessions of the Bulgarian party and state leadership were best visible during the summer of 1946. As early as June the same year during a meeting with Stalin was negotiated the issue of the Western Border Lands and the area of Pirin to be solved simultaneously. However, Tito was of different mind. He reckoned that if only Pirin Macedonia entered Yugoslavia then "the Serbian people would agree to give back the Bulgarian lands". At the meeting in Moscow Stalin forced "cultural and national autonomy" to be given to Pirin Macedonia within the boundaries of Bulgaria. During that process Macedonian national consciousness to be imposed on the Bulgarians from the Pirin area.

The Bulgarian party and state leadership without objection accepted the advice of Moscow and took fatal decisions at the X Party Plenum. G. Dimitrov's report, as well as the resolution by V. Chervenkov, were in the spirit of the preliminarily coordinated and accepted at different levels well-known formulations – the population in the Pirin area was "Macedonian"; the forming of a federation be-

tween the two countries should precede its joining to Vardar Macedonia. The first step was entering into an allied treaty.

In such a way, as a result of the strong political pressure from the YCP and Tito's encirclement, Stalin's suggestions and the inconsistent and yielding position of the Bulgarian party leaders, in fact the Bulgarian Communist Party yielded completely and adopted the Yugoslavian approach for deciding the Macedonian Question. It became an accomplice and an instrument for a foreign policy by committing part of the sovereign territory of Bulgaria for foreign influence with all the dramatic events that followed.

Till the Tenth Plenum of the BCP the district party leadership in Gorna Djumaya was to a certain limit in a dual position. As one of the activists of the committee, Evtim Georgiev, said: "We were between the hammer and the anvil, between our party and the comrades from the Macedonian Republic". Skopie and Belgrade constantly blamed him for not working hard enough for a sooner joining. Whereas the Yugoslavian Macedonists counted on the anti-Bulgarian Macedonianism which they noticed and inspired in some ambitious party functionaries in the region because "the ministry positions in Skopie are not countless". Being susceptible to these suggestions figures like G.Y.Madolev, Kr.Stoichev, G. Hadjiivanov and others made inadmissible utter statements and actions. Thus, to G. Madolev was suggested by the Skopie emissaries that he could be the first minister in the Yugoslavian government. In one of his self criticisms in 1948 he stated: "We were blinded, uncritical and weak-willed before Tito's people".

On the other hand the CC of BCP despite issuing dual instructions blamed the district figures for being in a rush. The lack of oneness led to dissensions, for example, Vl. Poptomov spoke about one thing and defended it while D. Terpeshev fought for another, like G. Chankov, etc.

Only after the X Plenum the district functionaries of the BCP "understood" that they should expand the Macedonisation in every way possible, i.e. at first to change the ethnical belonging of the Bulgarian population in the area of Pirin and after that to create artificially for it cultural, educational and other institutions. All that was done once again in a too voluntaristic and subjective way. The ethnical belonging of part of the population of the country was defined "from above", in a way far remote from the simplest norms of democracy and justice. Furthermore, the population from the Pirin area did not feel it necessary to be turned into "Mac-

edonians" provided the concomitance in the past had created the unity which was expressed in the repeated national self-determination, in the political and spiritual fights for national liberation and unification. By the way, that was realized by many figures at central and local level but they did not have moral strength, courage and dignity to step out of the ready-made scheme for "a Macedonian nation" due to the misunderstood internationalism and the anticipated support at the Paris Peace Conference from the USSR and Yugoslavia. They did not grasp the logic of the events, allowed them to be fooled in a foreign policy without political insight and state wisdom.

Since mid-1946 the two processes – the actions of the Bulgarian government and the political pressure of the Yugoslavian leadership interweaved and mutually complemented. In the Pirin area far more dramatic events happened. Former members of the IMRO were arrested in order a possible resistance to be stopped. Simultaneously with that Yugoslavia launched a new propaganda campaign through the change of delegations, turning into Macedonian a series of cultural events, celebrating of anniversaries and so on. Skopie more and more defiantly circulated the "New Macedonia" newspaper, magazines and other literature, written in "Macedonian language", incomprehensible for the readers. "We sold "New Macedonia" newspaper on compulsion while we were handing out the rations"- a report said. Courses for students and teachers were organized. It was inculcated into everybody's mind that they were not Bulgarians but "Macedonians". The issue for a federation gradually passed to the background as it became much clearer that if there was a federation Yugoslavia would assume Bulgaria while the Bulgarian side still hoped for a federation at equal rights.

Parallel to the other events in 1946 a huge impact on many issues had the census of Gorna Djumaya region at the end of the year. As it had been anticipated that there would be resistance from different places on introducing the new nationality "Macedonian", first the "suspicious" counters had been changed. Meetings and instructions of the Communist Party and the Fatherland Front were held in the district town and the rest of the towns. According to the instructions of the Statistics Direction all people from the geographical area Macedonia were registered as "Macedonians" with the exception of temporarily residents from other parts of the country, as well as the Jews, Gypsies and Turks.

The Ministry of the Interior together with its local institutions also took part in the campaign by arresting, threatening, internment and other forceful methods when resistance was offered. Similar methods used other state authorities. A judge stated to a citizen from Blagoevgrad: “There are only Macedonians here; if you are Bulgarian, go home, Barakovo is over there”. The result from the unseen till then violence over the consciousness of national belonging was too indicative. In consequence of the imposed administrative and other measures from party, Fatherland Front and other state agencies about 70% of the population in the Pirin area was registered as “Macedonian”. In some settlements that percentage was considerably higher “while only the reactionaries registered as Bulgarians”. An insight into the documents of the Petrich regional committee of the BCP shows: “We exerted administrative pressure over the counters and using the geographical concept during the explanatory work we registered 98% Macedonians” – the review report said. It also said: “The district committee told us that if we did not register 70% of the people as Macedonians we should take our hats and run”. The situation was similar in the other regional centers. That unprecedented political act was met with huge indignation because the population did not make the difference between Bulgarians and Macedonians. The anxiety came from the propaganda suggestions that every Macedonian was totally different from any Bulgarian, that the “Macedonian people” had history, language, culture, etc., different from those of the Bulgarian people. Moreover, that change of nationality was not the result of a survey, referendum or a free expression of national self-determination but it was imposed by political and administrative methods. Through that act the authorities ignored important historical processes because the national consciousness had to be built for centuries of concomitance and not by political decisions.

After it became clear for the Yugoslavian leadership that the Bulgarian political and state leadership would carry out the Moscow treaty obligations uncomplainingly an advance began not only in Gorna Djumaya but also in the capital and other towns, especially at the places where refugees had been settled having arrived at different times in the free lands of Bulgaria. Skopie insisted on Belgrade to close and reorganize the refugee organizations of the Macedonian Bulgarians – National Committee, Ilinden Organization, Macedonian Scientific Institute and others. The property of the Macedonian Scientific Institute was scattered, part of the library, the archive and the ethnographic collection together with the relics of Gotse

Delchev were submitted to Skopie. Instead of the Brotherhood Organizations, a "Union of the Macedonian Cultural and Educational Societies in Bulgaria" was set up which for several years executed the Macedonist policy.

At the same time the invasion of the public-political and cultural front in the Pirin area continued. In Gorna Djumaya a bookshop was opened conducted directly by the Skopie emissary Pero Korobar. It turned into the regional headquarters of the Macedonist propaganda. There various propagandists gathered and reported, wrote articles in "Macedonian language", instructions were issued, materials were sent to the towns in the Pirin area, false telegrams to Skopie were composed, etc. Also, at that place delegation visits were coordinated, newspapers, magazines and movies in the "Macedonian language" were circulated. Suggestions were made how many and what kind of Bulgarian newspapers to be circulated in the area, for example, the Bulgarian newspaper "Septemvriiche" to be stopped and the Skopie 'Pionerche" to substitute for it. It was not by accident when at a meeting of the most active members of the BCP in 1948 in Gorna Djumaya was announced the generalization that "their teachers, booksellers and bookshops had turned into agitators and agitator points against Bulgaria". The same Pero Korobar and his assistants on a daily basis communicated to the district leaderships, issued advice, recommendations, and often in arrogant and non-objective forms. There originated also the suggestions to some local leaders to apply for ministers in Skopie.

The Skopie emissaries used to a maximum the open door in the Pirin area for propaganda and influence after the serial concessions from the Bulgarian side in Bled and the Evksinovgrad treaty in 1947. The term "Macedonian outskirts" was introduced. The so-called "cultural autonomy" was expanded. In the area more emissaries arrived such as D.Vlahov, M.Zafirovski, and others who were welcomed and assured every possibility to propagandize Macedonianism. Since the autumn of 1947 to study "Macedonian language" and "Macedonian history" became compulsory in primary schools and high schools as well as in courses for adults although the latter did not want to attend them. Following the same spirit it was decided one page of "Pirinsko delo" newspaper to be written in "Macedonian language" which continued till 1948. There they propagandized the common clichés for a federation, Macedonian nation, unification, etc. This puzzled the population more and filled it with fear of the propagandized "unification". From its side the Ministry of Public Education with regional order N 423 introduced some cor-

rections in history and geography textbooks which marked the start of the falsified Bulgarian history.

"The new" state with adjoined Pirin Macedonia needed the respective personnel in the education sphere. The Gorna Djumaya district sent two groups of 178 young men and women to be trained for "Macedonian teachers". The district party and state leadership accepted with relish the idea of Skopie in the area to be accepted 200 teachers from the People's Republic of Macedonia . After negotiations and specifications 93 teachers arrived in 54 schools. There was numerous documentation for the harmful influence of those teachers. Besides "the educational" activity they were occupied with many other affairs. Then, in Petrich under the leadership of the Skopie emissary Yurdan Jurdanov were recruited 20 people with the aim of gathering information for the location of military units, the economic development, the party, economic and other staff in the region and the district center. In "Sv.Vrach" (today-Sandansky) those teachers in connection with Skopie intelligence services gathered information about the economy of the region – logging, tobacco industry and others, with a view to the future management of the area.

The "educational" activity of the Skopie teachers was revealed clearly at the meeting of the District school council, as well as from the respond of students, parents and citizens. The regional inspectors of education reported in detail for the condition of the educational activity in the District council whose deputy-chief was the Skopie representative Mitko Iliev. The perspective did not look very promising. It became clear that those teachers had too suspicious education without pedagogical skills. The school inspector Dimitar Stoyanov stated that in Vardar Macedonia there were 200-300 high school diploma teachers who were sent here provided the Pirin area had its own very well prepared education staff with traditions and competence. The lack of professional qualifications of the Skopie teachers was compensated with self-confidence and loftiness reaching chauvinism. Numerous examples displayed their anti-Bulgarian activities in Bansko, Simitli, Gradevo, Levunovo, Petrich, Gorna Djumaya, Dobrinishte, Yakuruda and other settlements. A teacher in Razlog instead a grammar class laid the discussion of "some new manifestations of the Great Bulgarian chauvinism". In many schools the portraits of Botev and Levsky, Bulgarian party leaders and state leaders were put away and replaced with the portraits of Tito, Kolishevsky, Tempo, Rankovich and others. All

that provoked organized resistance of students, teachers, parents and wide public circles of the intelligentsia of the area. Many people even among the members of the BCP saw the erosion of national consciousness, the split of the people, the confusion and fear from the propagandized clichés for the joining and the studying of the difficult for understanding Serbicized local dialect proclaimed for "a Macedonian language", from the attempts to teach an already falsified history. Therefore, the intentional and conscious imposing of Macedonianism did not result in close relationship and thrust. Just the opposite, what was achieved through violence, turned out to be fragile and transitional.

In the meantime, the anti-Bulgarian activities in Vardar Macedonia expanded and became more serious. Bulgarian newspapers, books and magazines were not allowed. Inscriptions on schools, community centers, places of executions referring to Bulgarian past were deleted and erased. Priceless in value for the European civilization monuments of the material and spiritual culture were destroyed and violated with "fire, sword and word" in order any memory for the Bulgarian culture and past to be uprooted. Imposter historians falsified the historical and cultural past of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia. Contrary to the historical facts events, facts, people and cultural achievements of Bulgarian creators as early as the National Revival were appropriated. One of the most eminent Bulgarian cultural and political figures were announced "Macedonians". Thus, the beginning of a real crusade against everything Bulgarian was laid. The people supporting their Bulgarian ethnical belonging, Bulgarian consciousness and language were subject to prosecution, physical and spiritual harassment, without court or sentence hundreds of democrats and communists, intelligent and mediocre workers, university and high school students, soldiers and officers were massacred. Thousands went to camps like Goli Otok, Idrizovo and others. For the people like the Damoclean sword was the burden of the law for "protecting the Macedonian national honour" in compliance to which a person may go to prison for 10 years or his personal property to be confiscated. In accordance with that and many other similar laws over 700 trials were held. The balance of that anti-Bulgarian campaign was more than sorrowful – over 16 000 were the victims of the regime and over 100 000 went through camps, prisons. We witnessed a rare phenomenon in the new human history. No other country has exerted so many material and spiritual efforts against its

neighbor, in this case Bulgaria, in order to change the nationality of a part of the population and to prove that it has nothing to do with Bulgaria and the Bulgarians.

The same fate reached the Bulgarian population which remained in Aegean Macedonia. Chased by the vortex of the Civil War it was deprived of the self-identification right, free expression of its Bulgarian national consciousness. Some of them were forcefully settled on the islands in the Aegean Sea, others were compelled to leave their native towns.

In 1948 Bulgarian ruling circles realized that with the arising situation – contradictions became pressing between the YCP and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – it had become impossible to realize neither a Yugoslavian federation nor the new idea for a Balkan- Danubian confederation. The central leadership began to scrutinize more closely and discuss the situation in the Pirin area. According to Vl. Potomov the Macedonist propaganda in the Gorna Djumaya district brought with itself national and political separatism and triggered division among the Bulgarian nation. He understood the danger and strived to bring it to minimum in the way Bulgarian interests required it. One of the decisions of Politburo of the BCP said that until the Pirin area became part of a federation it remained in Bulgaria and everything happening in that area should be "under the leadership of the Bulgarian state, economical and public organizations… We cannot let the artificial and forceful Macedonisation of the whole population".

After a number of anti-Bulgarian activities in Skopie and the notorious speech of L.Kolishevsky the disputes became really heated. Despite late, the BCP and the government started protecting the sovereignty of the Pirin area and rejected the attempts for joining this region to Yugoslavia outside a Yugoslavian federation. In May 1948 in Sofia the exact information of the anti-Bulgarian campaign and the persecution of the Bulgarians in Vardar Macedonia was already available. The Bulgarian authorities attempted also some partial measures against the forceful Macedonisation of the population. Some figures, connected with the pro-Yugoslavian propaganda and actions, etc., from the region were dismissed.

Although they had at hand irrefutable evidence for the dual and nationalistic policy of the Yugoslavian leadership, the Bulgarian politicians and statesmen lured by internationalism and doctrinal ideas on the national question did not grasp the insincere, hegemonist position of Tito and his encirclement in their strive to absorb part of Bulgaria or the whole country and to deprive it of its sovereignty.

The feeble and indecisive attempts to turn down the Yugoslavian hegemonism in the mid- and the second half of 1948 signaled certain release from some incorrect grasps and delusions. But in its essence the BCP, as well as, the government did not relinquish the Macedonist theses because over the next years they still sustained their view about the Macedonian nation, "Macedonian language", cultural autonomy, etc. For four years (1944-1948) a lot of harms to the Bulgarian national interests were done. The Bulgarian ruling circles needed almost 15 years to leave the vicious circle they had entered due to historical circumstances and their own mistakes.

The first more serious distinction and the beginning of the reassessment of the Bulgarian positions on the Macedonian Question was done at the XVI Plenum of the CC of the BCP in 1948. The leadership of the BCP had seriously to think about some questions from the past of the Bulgarian – Yugoslavian relationships, the events that had happened in the Pirin area and to express more definite and clear positions on the Macedonian Question. That happened at the Plenum to some extent which was evident by the decisions, namely: to be stopped the forceful Macedonisation; "the population from the Pirin area to define free its own nationality"; the learning of the "Macedonian language" to be introduced as a facultative instead of compulsory subject with Bulgarian teachers, etc.

FIRST ATTEMPTS FOR RECONSIDERATION

After the XVI Plenum of the BCP meetings were organized with the most active Macedonian societies in Sofia where G. Chankov and Vl. Poptomov spoke. On 27th June 1948 in Blagoevgrad a meeting of the regional council of the most active party members was held and after that there were plenums of the regional committees of the BCP in Blagoevgrad, Gotse Delchev, Razlog, Sandansky and Petrich. At these meetings, councils and plenums generalizations were drawn, the actions of the district party leadership were criticized, facts and political and administrative actions for 1944-1948 were revealed which had turned the Pirin area into a state within the state. At the end of 1946 the population was Macedonized.

Against this course of policy there was a stormy and organized resistance of the population, intelligentsia, opposition.

Despite these acknowledgements and generalizations neither the decisions of the XVI Plenum, nor the V Congress of the BCP gave a clear assessment of all the activities in regard to the Macedonian Question, of its essence, origin and evolution until the 1940s. An exception was only the part that referred to Yugoslavia. Those decisions were inconclusive, contradictory and gave an opportunity for continuing the old political course, for the imposing of a dual policy. On one hand, some mistakes, concessions, compromises were seen, on the other hand, there was no political will for real practical actions.

How were the duality and non-linearity expressed?

1. The policy for "cultural autonomy of the Macedonian population in the Pirin area" continued as well as the practice of sticking to the geographical principle. If somebody was born anywhere in the geographical area Macedonia he was said to be Macedonian even if this place was outside the borders of Bulgaria. In March 1949 the BCP sent a delegation to the Congress of the National Unification Front (NUF) of "the Macedonians in Greece". The political immigrants who had arrived after the Civil War in Greece were reckoned Macedonians. Till 1953 documents mentioned political immigrants of Macedonian origin from Greece.

2. The Macedonian organizations in Sofia, the Macedonian Scientific institute (MSI) and other bodies were legally liquidated. A new formation was established in 1951 - the Union of the Macedonian Cultural and Educational Societies in Bulgaria (UMCES) to whose name was transferred the building of the MSI and the "Gotse Delchev" Society received the rest of the property. The statute of the UMCES was confirmed by Politburo. It said about Macedonians in Bulgaria without difference in nationality, gender, religion. The aim of the new union was to stabilize the Macedonian consciousness and to fight Tito's and Kolishevsky's followers.

3. At the end of 1951 Politburo approved theses for the leadership of party committees and organizations in the Pirin area and their practical activity on the Macedonian Question written by V. Chervenkov. The theses reflected the comprehension of the BCP at that time for the class-party approach towards the National Question which was perceived as subordinate, secondary for the preparation and the victory of the Socialist revolution.

4. In a decision of the CC of the BCP and the National Council of the Fatherland Front from 1952 for the tasks and the condition of "Pirinsko delo" newspaper was said that the newspaper did not explain clearly and systematically enough to the population from the Pirin area the Macedonian Question and the way for its solution by building national cultural autonomy.

5. In 1956 a new census was carried out. For the Pirin region it was just a repetition of the census from 1946. Without any explanations the population "officially" was registered as "Macedonians", a fact which till today Skopie politicians have been using for self-interested goals.

So, by the mid-1950s feeble, indecisive steps for distinguishing and overcoming the wrong course of the Macedonian Question could be noticed. From today's point of view the BCP can be reproached with different and often politicized and ad hoc qualifications. Without justifying the policy of the BCP as a whole and especially on the Macedonian Question, however, from the distance of time one cannot help noticing that this policy was entangled and dependent on a whole mosaic of various external and internal factors. The historical picture of the events at that time could be recreated when recognizing the effect and the connection among them, when comparing them and analyzing the facts and actions.

The BCP ruled and represented a state which was defeated in the war. Bulgaria did not have a peace treaty with the victors, yet. That was an opportunity for Tito and his encirclement to manoeuvre, to set different conditions, to dictate. The authority of Stalin, questionable as it may seem today, inspired with respect the Bulgarian figures, very often laid in humiliating positions. With Tito, in the role of a rising star as a leader, they did not have a chance to win the benevolence of Moscow and Bulgaria to occupy an important position in the USSR strategic plans.

On the other hand, the preparation, education, understanding, mentality of the party cadres was of great importance. Almost all responsible party functionaries had gone through courses, schools and universities, mainly in the USSR, where they mastered the Marxist theory about the National Question in its Stalin, voluntarist version. It was difficult for the party activists to abandon the Stalin dogmatic settings of the National Question, stereotypical thinking formed before the 1944 events and the following years. A considerable part of them were under the influence of the sectarian dogmatic period when the establishment of Macedonian, Thracian and Dobrudja nations was proclaimed, other had worked in the Comintern

and were closely connected with its units. Not a small part of them worked according to the instructions of the BCP in IMRO (united) and had been on leading positions in it. They believed naively in internationalism putting it above patriotism. The ideas lead to particular actions. And when there is discrepancy of ideas and practice, when the reality refutes them, then disappointment steps in and not every man can overcome it and admit he has done a mistake. Many documents showed how difficult and how much time was necessary for the BCP leaders at the central and lower level to swallow the bitter pill that they had committed an injustice to their own people when changing its nationality.

Under the circumstances of restricted sovereignty the BCP options for manoeuvring were limited. Its actions were ranging from absolute obedience to Moscow to manoeuvring with Tito for the federation and the fate of the Pirin area. The lack of political will and dignity on the essential National Question led to confusion and anxiety among the population and society and in Vardar Macedonia opened a possibility for the Macedonists to carry out an extreme anti-Bulgarian policy, to outrage everything that was Bulgarian. Definite guilt and responsibility had the Central Committee of the BCP and G. Dimitrov personally because they had been informed by figures like Pavel Shatev, Vasil Ivanovsky, Alexander Martulkov, Venko Markovsky and others about the situation in Vardar Macedonia. Thus, in a critical period of the new Bulgarian history the ruling classes and especially the BCP were unable to find power and political will in order to protect the national interests of Bulgaria.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW COURSE

After restoring the relationships between the USSR and the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Bulgaria also made attempts for bringing to normal the inter-state relationships. In October 1956 a Bulgarian delegation visited Belgrade. Yet, at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s in SFRY and in the Union of the Yugoslavian Communists a serious discussion was held between the unitarists and the federalists. Internal difficulties rose and the attention had to be pointed outwards. Systemic attacks against Bulgaria began on the occa-

sion of the 80th anniversary of the Liberation from Ottoman rule. Yugoslavia saw in that event a resurrection of San Stefano Bulgaria and raising territorial claims. Meetings, processions, especially in the People's Republic of Macedonia, were organized; Bulgarians, visiting relatives in Macedonia, were prosecuted and provoked; families from the Western Border lands were exiled and Macedonized, etc. The propaganda affected all aspects of the Macedonian Question – historical, cultural, political, etc.

Every scientific article in Bulgarian magazines concerning the Macedonian Question, was interpreted as interference in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia. In March 1959 on returning from Greece, Tito slandered inadmissibly Bulgaria and the BCP which was blamed to be one of the first factors for instability in Yugoslavia. A mobilization of all intellectual powers in Vardar Macedonia followed - historians, linguists, ethographers, in order to be broken every connection of the population in the People's Republic of Macedonia with Bulgarian history, culture, language, etc., with the "Bulgarian name" as a whole. A great anxiety was expressed about "the rights of the Macedonian minority" in Bulgaria. The Yugoslavian intelligence service was activated by recruiting people during meetings, on visits, delegations, etc.

In these conditions the Bulgarian ruling circles and especially the BCP started slowly, painfully and gradually to refuse some of the propaganda clichés and practices on the Macedonian Question. As early as the mid-1950s some different views and assessments about IMRO were noticeable. Separate opinions were formed in Politburo according to which IMRO was a mass organization that had involved a lot of people but not all of them committed crimes. They should be drawn to the cultural, economic and political life of the state. The Macedonian societies in Sofia and the Communist Party organizations in the Blagoevgrad region criticized severely the inertness and vagueness of the CC concerning the Macedonian Question. On the occasion of the thesis of Politburo from 1952 Hr. Kalaidjiev wrote a letter to Valko Chervenkov which said that "the lower structures evade the issue out of fear not to make a mistake". The secretaries of the district committees in the Blagoevgrad region put forward the question why CC would not come up with a definite formulation about the Macedonian Question since the confusion continued not only among the party members but also amid the population. At a regional party conference the secretary of the regional committee in Petrich

Leonid Sharlandjiev underlined that the CC should come up with a clear formulation, "openly and clearly to respond to Skopie and to other figures who are speculating with the Macedonian Question". He also criticized the Regional Committee for not dealing with the issue, that it still had not differentiated itself from the activities of the previous years.

It was also the time of the appearance of the first Bulgarian scientific article in the Bulgarian periodicals. In "Istoricheski Pregled" (Historical Review) Academician Dimitar Kosev for the first time criticized the Skopie authors and their anti-scientific thesis for "a Macedonian nation". From a scientific point of view was put forward the question about the Exarchate's role, the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary organization (IMARO), the nationality of the population in the Pirin area. In its essence that was a new approach towards the problems of the national-liberating movement of the Bulgarians. Along the same lines are also some researches of Lubomir Panayotov and Dobrin Michev.

Simultaneously with that the members of the central leaderships of the BCP made statements on the occasion of various events and especially about the 80th anniversary of the Liberation of Bulgaria. Thus, D.Ganev in 1958 stated in Razlog that the population from the Pirin area in the past as well as nowadays was a part of the Bulgarian nation. A row of other practical actions followed.

Politburo and the CC gradually agreed on analytically approaching the Macedonian Question, following its rise, evolution through different periods. That was also mentioned in Todor Zhivkov's speech on opening the Blagoevgrad textile plant in 1962. All that led to the March Plenum of the CC of the BCP on 11th and 12th March 1963. After nearly 20 years since the BCP had come to power, that plenum put an end to the various ramblings, hesitations and obscurities and formulated a political conception based on the documents from the past – home and foreign, on the numerous manifestations of national consciousness of the Bulgarians from Macedonia.

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION IN BILATERAL BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAVIAN MEETINGS AND CONVERSATIONS

The Bulgarian-Yugoslavian relationships from the 1960s and 1970s covered a wide range of problems. The analysis of the two states' meetings and conversations at different levels showed that independently of the economical, diplomatic and cultural relationships discussions on the Macedonian Question always came to the fore. It displaced all other issues and became a main matter in the debates. Opinions were drawn together on different questions, followed by sharp setbacks, harsh polemics moving to all spheres of the public-political life.

A change in the relations between the two countries and a process of getting out of the crisis from the period of Cominforbureau (1949) occurred only after the mid-1950s. At that time external and internal factors and circumstances gradually created conditions for meetings and conversations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, for meetings of party, parliamentary, economical, syndical and cultural delegations. The border with the Republic of Macedonia was opened. Its leaders at that time Kraste Carvenkovsky and Lazar Moysov had meetings with T. Zhivkov and other state rulers.

It was hard to speak about any consent achieved. Most of the meetings ended with expressing the viewpoints on the Macedonian Question without achieving any concrete agreements. In that way, till the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s the mutual political visits and meetings allowed to be clarified the two positions on the Macedonian Question.

After the crisis 1968 and 1969, since the beginning of 1970 a series of new meetings and conversations began. T. Zhivkov proposed that a treaty for waiving territorial claims and a treaty of friendship should be signed. Tito sent a written respond. The meetings of Velko Vlahovich and Kr. Carvenkovsky with T. Zhivkov in 1970 turned out to be also unfruitful. New polemics started in the mass media. The Yugoslavian side began to refuse the border fairs (Petrich, 1971), in Shtip the student Pliska Manasieva was taken to court, a Bulgarian citizen was sentenced for alleged spying.

Since the relationships at that time were variable, towards the end of 1971 (as if) the Bulgarian side, probably under Soviet influence, made partial compro-

mises. An agreement for cooperation was signed in the tourism sphere. An article published in "Rabotnichesko delo" newspaper from 27th December 1971 stated that the ideals in the name of which the fights in Macedonia had been led, were realized today in Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia. As some foreign researchers wrote it seemed that Bulgaria gave up half of its historical heritage. In the same spirit can be viewed the signing of the agreement for cooperation between the universities in Sofia and Skopie, the participation of Bulgarian representatives in the Struga poetry evenings, etc.

Since the autumn of 1973 Bulgaria and Yugoslavia entered a new stage of negotiations on the Macedonian Question. First of all, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs Petar Mladenov and Milosh Minich met in Sofia. On the agenda were included a wide range of issues but for the Yugoslavian side most important was the matter on the "Macedonian minority" in Bulgaria. This meeting like the previous ones ended unsuccessfully. The Yugoslavian side undertook a series of steps intensifying the tension. At the beginning of 1974 "New Macedonia" criticized severely the BCP report at the February Plenum where "Macedonian minority" in Bulgaria was not mentioned. The following year the same newspaper rose the question about the "political assimilation" of Pirin Macedonia.

In respond to these extreme statements in the media, not without the support and suggestion from official Yugoslavia, T. Zhivkov visited the Blagoevgrad region. In his statements and speeches he talked mostly about the Blagoevgrad region being inextricably bound up with the Motherland through historical, cultural, linguistic, etc. connections. The end of that part of the public discussion was the census carried out in Bulgaria.

The above-stated facts from the tense atmosphere obviously convinced both sides to seek ways to reduce the tension through a new meeting between T. Zhivkov and Y. Tito. That was why it was agreed to be held a meeting of the Working Group of the Yugoslavian and Sofia delegations in Bulgaria from 22nd to 27th September 1976. The meeting of the Working Group, led by Alexander Lilov from Bulgaria and Dobrivoe Vidich from Yugoslavia, in reality revealed once again the positions of both sides on the Macedonian Question. The Yugoslavian delegation posed as main and important the questions for "the Macedonian minority" in the Pirin area and its allegedly breached rights using for a basis mainly the documents from 1944-1948. The Bulgarian position, stated by Alexander Lilov,

was built on the March Plenum decisions of the CC of the BCP from 1963 and the following party and government documents. It was argumentatively proven that in the Blagoevgrad district (Pirin area) had never been and would never be a minority neither in the past, nor in the future. The population of this region had always had active Bulgarian consciousness, despite some hasty and violent actions carried out in 1944-1947.

However, the position of the BCP had a weak side. There was no doubt that it was burdened with the understanding that Bulgaria should not interfere into the big policy of the USSR in the Balkans. Due to that the issue of the position of the Bulgarians in Vardar Macedonia after 1945 was not put forward. Indeed, the Bulgarian delegation stated that the Macedonian state and the attempts for creation of "a Macedonian" nation were done on anti-Bulgarian basis. Yet, the events and processes in 1945 and afterwards were not mentioned, nor were stated the victims, the forcefully imposed dogmas in the spheres of culture, history and the social sciences as a whole, etc. In short, the Bulgarian position was historically true, precise in facts, but in its essence was defensive.

If you look from the distance of time and compare the nowadays claims of the Skopie leaders to Bulgaria it is clear they have not gone further their forerunners since the half of the last century. During the whole post-war period Skopie continuously put forward the question of the mythical "Macedonian minority" in Bulgaria before different international organizations although science made its statement long ago. Suspicious political moves would not turn history back in time. The silence and the neglectful attitude of the Bulgarian side towards some provocative activities of the ruling circles in the Republic of Macedonia do not provide good references for the external policy of the Bulgarian state. Posing one and the same questions, made up out of political conjuncture reasons and leaving them without a firm response from Bulgarian side opened the possibility for them to be placed on the agenda in the next century.

THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION AT THE END OF THE XX AND THE BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY

Over the last 20 years important changes have happened in the world and in the Balkans. The new situation requires the content of the term "Macedonian Question" to be defined and the opportunities appearing for its settling to be defined.

Before all it s necessary to take into consideration the evolution of the understanding of the Macedonian questions in terms of demography, politics, economics, etc. The approach towards the three parts of Macedonia cannot be one and the same. The historical and geographical region of Macedonia is not possible to be perceived as something homogeneous, as an entity. The time of the numerous slogans for a unified and independent Macedonia, which used to be just and advisable, has passed and they are impracticable today. Nowadays the reviving and raising of such slogans and ideas may lead again to tragic events.

On the 15th January 1992 Bulgaria was the first to recognize the Republic of Macedonia. Not only the government circles but also the wider layers of Bulgarian society being traumatized by the decades of confrontation, hoped for the future the deeply rooted problems and warnings from the Second World War, the Comintern schemes and the leftovers of Tito's communist rule to be removed. The recognition of Macedonia happened during a period when as a result of the changes Bulgaria was forming a new foreign policy in the spirit of European norms and standards free from totalitarian thought and action. Lead by a sense of historical responsibility Bulgaria recognized the independence of the new state with a view to be stabilized more quickly in a period when the Yugoslavian federation was falling apart. The Bulgarian recognition was disinterested. Our country helped also other states to recognize it and did not agree to any proposals or suggestions for territorial divisions.

Bulgarian government and public opinion across the country believed that democratic changes would take place there and everybody would be capable of defining their own national belonging. Moreover, at different point of time 600 thousand refugees had been sheltered who had their children here and today almost one third of the population of contemporary Bulgaria had its origin from Vardar

and Aegean Macedonia. The echo of the events in the far and recent past lived in the subconscious of today's generations of Bulgarian citizens. They kept in their families' memory the pursuits, the killings and the forceful persecution from their homeland and they had never discontinued the connections with the relatives and nearest and dearest who had been left outside the borders of Bulgaria. These were one and the same people connected with countless threads from the past and the present and people who would like to have friendly relationships on both sides of the border.

Another issue was the hasty and unconditional recognition of the Republic of Macedonia irrespective of the abovementioned political and humanitarian motives. Could have this happened in some other way by a treaty or a bilateral document for a number of disputable and indisputable issues from the sphere of history, culture, science and etc. It was possible for the problems that followed between the two countries to be of other nature, to be directed to a positive, constructive spirit.

During the years following the recognition of the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, despite some reservations by a number of countries and international organizations which used the name of the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (FYROM), the new Republic had two paths for development. The first one was the path of the neighborly proper relationships with the neighboring countries and especially Bulgaria, establishment of a normal policy in all areas of economy, culture, science, sport and etc. The other path was to carry out the Serbian Communist project with a distinct directness to Bulgaria. Unfortunately, the ruling elite in Skopie independently of some touches in the governments of Nikola Klyusev and Lyubcho Georgievski chose the path of confrontation with Bulgaria, with provoking constant crises in the relationships between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia and at definite moments even with acts not typical of the present spirit and the time which reminded the Cold War.

The political and ruling elite in Skopie has oriented itself to the well-known scheme of the aggressive anti-Bulgarian policy since the 1960s and 1980s. The anti-Bulgarian campaign went through different stages which often acquired paranoic character especially in the media – radio, television and press. Full of emotion politicians, government men accompanied them in chorus so as to represent Bulgaria and the Bulgarians like the worst enemy of the "Macedonians" all over the world.

As far as Bulgaria was concerned and its ruling and political elite, the country walked its way striving selflessly to improve the comprehensive relations in all fields of the social, political and economical life. During the most serious crisis when the young state was blocked from the south and north with embargo the Bulgarian government opened a special corridor for maintaining the economical life with fuel, food, industrial goods and etc., later it rendered military help in the arising conflict with the Albanians. On February 1999 a serious step was made for the relationships between the two states to be opened. The document was signed in the official languages of the two states – Bulgarian, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and Macedonian, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, despite that under the terms of Bulgarian and European science Macedonian language was a written regional form of the Bulgarian language or an artificially created language with political aims. In compliance with art. 11 from the Declaration: "Both states will not undertake, stimulate and support acts towards each other of unfriendly character". Also, it had been taken into account that "acts of undermining separatist nature" should not be admitted.

This document for that moment considerably regulated some disputable issues with the recognition of the new Balkan state and its symbols. In Bulgaria the Declaration was accepted as a heavy political, national and governmental compromise. The serial political concessions to Skopie did not improve the relationships and did not reduce the tension. Among the Bulgarian cultural and scientific public continued to linger the bitter taste that this step by Macedonia was only the first more serious step to further Macedonian hegemony and that the ruling classes in Skopie would continue the policy of the anti-Bulgarian rhetoric within the state borders and outside them, also in international organizations.

What was this constant anti-Bulgarian policy expressed in? The first manifestations of the democratic changes in Europe and in the Balkans gave rise to the feeling among the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia that the first thing done was to abolish the fear well implanted for decades. Not a few voiced their Bulgarian national feeling, formed their own organizations. Yet, according to the letter of Law for the Protection of Macedonian National Honor those who have expressed Bulgarian ethnical consciousness were subject to pursuit and physical terror, dismissed from work, called to and examined at police stations, etc. Any attempt to create any association or organization, celebrating an event or a person were taken

to court or taken care by the police. Many examples could be indicated starting with Vlado Paunkovski and finishing with Spaska Mitrova, who was prosecuted on the day when the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs was giving his "unconditional" support for Skopie for a membership in the European Union and NATO.

On visiting their nearest and dearest in the Republic of Macedonia many Bulgarian citizens were subject to moral harassment, humiliating police and judicial procedures. Undoubtedly these were the remainders from the Yugoslavian time when Tito's Secret services unconditionally issued orders, executed all kinds of surveillance, provocations and challenges. On the whole, in the years after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and declaring the Republic of Macedonia independent state it was done everything possible to erase the word "Bulgarian" , this word not to be mentioned. [1]

The uncontrolled attacks against everything belonging to Bulgaria did not give a chance for full valued contacts over the last 2 decades. The false layers, diligently imposed myths had gone deep into the society. A whole generation was formed and perceived wrong perceptions for history. Over the last years, an ethnogenetic myth, ethno-cultural model different from the Bulgarian one since ancient times till today had been inculcated. The ethno-genetic myth was the main part in the Macedonian scheme. The myth being propagandized by all means in this version required encroaching upon somebody else's territory and violation of the history and culture of Bulgarian people. An approach like that at all costs seeks for an enemy most often personified by Bulgaria. At every possible occasion the Skopie authorities spread facts and rumours discrediting Bulgaria, especially to some international organizations when Bulgaria applied for the European Union and NATO.

A typical example for deluding the foreign representatives was the report of the International Crisis Group from December 2001 prepared by some anonymous experts from Skopie. The commission report contained the settings from the

[1] There are various examples: Nedka Doneva Ivanova, sentenced hastily because of a conversation where she said Bulgarians lived in Macedonia; Ani Paskova from the village of Kluch, Blagoevgrad region was maltreated and sentenced to prison because she said on the bus that Macedonians were Bulgarians. Andon Spasov was not let entering his own house; Bulgarian young people-tourists from Blagoevgrad region were ill-treated because they said they were Bulgarians; the police spied on Bulgarian tourist groups, checked luggage in hotels, etc.

thousands of anti-Bulgarian articles in the Skopie press. Bulgaria was requested once again to confirm its refuse of territorial claims which actually had never existed - nor during the totalitarian regime, nor in the conditions of democratic changes, namely, for a language, nation and country and that was the condition for Bulgaria to become a member of the international organizations. According to the understanding in Skopie, the Bulgarian state should come up with a declaration or should vote a decision for repeated confirmations of a nation, language, etc. categories which did not require legal confirmation. Some politicians and "scientists" from the home school of historians like Blazhe Ristoski advised direct interference into the legislative activity of Bulgaria for closing down organizations and institutions, etc.

In all documents, declarations, the noise in the media, etc. continuously was posed the question for some "Macedonian" minority in Bulgaria or more precisely in today's Blagoevgrad region (Pirin Macedonia). Reasons for the existence of "Macedonian minority" have never existed, there are not any still today. The Skopie theoreticians and practitioners relied on the census from the time of the forceful change of nationality in 1946 when on the insistence of the Yugoslavian leadership led by Tito, under Stalin's pressure and the nihilist position of the Bulgarian ruling classes an administrative pressure was exerted and the nationality of the Bulgarian population in the Pirin area was changed forcefully. As it was well-known this nihilist period from the Bulgarian history was outlasted a long time ago and the historical truth about the population from this area had been restored. However, that was not to the liking of the contemporary followers of the Comintern and Tito's Yugoslavia. For years on end Skopie had been insisting on registering the separatist, anti-Bulgarian organization United Macedonian Organization (UMO) "Ilinden" irrespectively of the scanty group that was formed by the Yugoslavian government in Sofia during the first years of the changes, later financially supported by Skopie. Thus, nowadays the same old and absurd great Serbian pretensions for a phantom Macedonian minority continue to be manifested. Despite the numerous changes in statutes, programs, noisy declarations and so on the actions of UMO-figures were directed to the territorial and spiritual oneness of Bulgaria, an aspiration to break off the Pirin area from the Bulgarian state in military, political, religious and cultural attitude.

In the contemporary Republic of Macedonia a serious problem was the crossing point between politics and science, to what extent it existed and how far it could be called science in the classical sense of the word. The historical science continued to be a function of the politics. In a scientific form were made manipulations and falsifications for proving the origin of "the Macedonians". After 1945 the efforts of both politicians and scientists were aimed at searching for evidence that the Slavic population since the time of Samuil had been "Macedonian", not Bulgarian. Recently, politics and science have been outcompeting proving that "Macedonians" had come since the age of Phillip and Alexander of Macedon. These irrational efforts were made in order to overcome the ethno-political borders and to lay claim to history and culture – Macedonia and Macedonians were used to be a center of Christianity, Apostle Paul used to be the first one to step on Macedonian land, Macedonia and the Macedonians - a center of Slav writing, Cyril and Methodius were Macedonians, etc. Thus, the whole Medieval and Revival Bulgarian history and culture were proclaimed "Macedonian".

Thus, were launched and idealized utmost ethnocentric versions for faraway times who were summoned to prove a heroic past with "Macedonian" contribution to the European civilization and culture. Those ideas had pervaded and were consciously implanted in the primary and secondary school, in the university, social life and the media. The coming generation and a considerable part of the political and ruling elite in the Republic of Macedonia live in a virtual world, a world of high self-assessments and endless pretensions which left the boundaries of the young Balkan state. The formed Macedonocentrism should be backed with arguments, should be constantly proven everywhere, both in the Republic of Macedonia itself and outside its boundaries.

If the development of the relationships between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia could be resumed, for the last 18 years have to be taken into account some significant compromises from the Bulgarian side like the unconditional recognition, opening the border during the embargo, rendering of military help, etc. Among these good-natured steps Bulgaria not only did not receive gratitude or a sign of good intentions but public figures, politicians expressed uttermost offensive anti-Bulgarian opinions about our country. The Bulgarian side did not succeed in connecting that unconditional support with bringing the bilateral relationships to normal, searching for ways and means for solving part of the issues which nowa-

days are on the agenda. It should be added that incompetent statements of Bulgarian public figures and political scientists of different newly formed centers imposed the old Comintern schemes alternated by substituting the old terms for new ones. At press conferences, in the media, on the radio and television incompetently were mixed historical, linguistic and ethnologist categories with terms from international law and thus were formed absurd requirements for "recognizing" nation, language which was not done anywhere in the world. Some Bulgarian statesmen due to insufficient understanding of the problem, directly or indirectly supported the circles in Skopie who contradicted the natural relationships of the two states.

Nowadays the Republic of Macedonia is on the threshold of starting negotiations for membership in the European Union. Some official statements from Bulgarian side once again confirmed that Bulgaria unconditionally will support the start of the negotiations. Opinions were exchanged for signing agreements for protecting and maintaining cultural monuments, abolishing the "language of hatred" although some moves and signals of the Skopie rulers do not give credit and hope for understanding. Taking into account the former practice in the European Union and the problems which rise between different countries a real danger exists the European Union to be loaded with more issues due to the relationships between Bulgarian and the new Balkan country the Republic of Macedonia. That is why the Bulgarian ruling circles, irrespective of which party is in power and rules the country, should pose in a good-natured and friendly manner on the agenda the questions which require further clarification and in the future are likely to cause conflicts. The requirement of good neighbor relations is a supreme criterion for membership. Still, the good neighbor relations are not dependent on only one country.

A main issue which should be discussed is for the past and the common roots. In Bulgaria the cultural and scientific public cannot observe indifferently the change of the cultural-historical heritage of the Bulgarian people through the centuries, how are imputed feeling and thoughts to the dead which they did not have when they were alive, in the name of a made-up "Macedonian" nation. This matter is in the base of all disputes till now. If it does not find solution in some way in a political plan, in a historical plan it was solved long ago. European and Bulgarian science have proven that till 1945 one cannot speak about Macedonian state, nation and language; for many more years foreigners would be amazed why two delegation arrive in Rome and what we are arguing about. If these disputes continue, the

efforts of scientists and cultural figures would be directed to pointless discussions of which the contemporary state and political leadership of Skopie is making attempts to take advantage, laying down different conditions to Bulgaria. No matter what attempts are made by scientific and political equilibristic, the common root cannot be erased. That is why Sofia University bears the name of St. Clement of Ohrid and the National Library in Sofia has been named after the teachers Cyril and Methodius.

Another matter is what happened in Vardar Macedonia after 1945, what means were used for the creation of the new "Macedonian" nation, what have become the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia of Bulgarian origin and how they feel. This is an internal problem for the rulers in Skopie. Nowadays self-determination cannot and should not be imposed forcefully. Those acts remained back in the past of division of Europe and the Cold War. Now it is important that democratic conditions ensure free self-determination and do not allow the ones who express themselves as Bulgarians to be persecuted..

There are a series of questions about the educational system especially concerning the textbooks of history, full of falsifications about Bulgaria and the Bulgarians. For decades on the young generations have been suggested an unreal past, a patterned consciousness was formed, hatred against the Bulgarians was inflicted which sometimes is almost racial. The researches and textbooks have to be rewritten objectively. In this connection should be guaranteed the preservation of the Bulgarian historical heritage, recreated by the former generations in Vardar Macedonia, as well as the original inscriptions on cultural monuments, churches, schools, etc.

Last but not least, is the question for the search of "Macedonian" minority in the contemporary region of Blagoevgrad. In the free lands of Bulgaria thousands of refugees had arrived at different times after the Russian-Turkish war, the Kresna-Razlog and Ilinden-Preobrazhen uprisings, after the Balkan wars and the First World War and the last wave arrived after 1944/45. All they have come to Bulgaria because in the past as well as today they feel Bulgarians. The ruling circles in Skopie now want to go back to the dramatic events after the Second World War when pleasing the pretensions of Tito and Skopie and with the help of Stalin and the nihilism of the Bulgarian government, dominated by the Communist Party was committed violence over the national consciousness of the population of this area and it was constrained

by administrative and forceful methods to change its nationality. That period of Bulgarian history is part of the past now. But what are the criteria to declare that population “Macedonian”? Do we need more experiments in the XXI century?

It is high time the relationships between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia were placed on principle and good neighbor relations basis and overcame “the language of hatred”. Keeping silent about some pretensions of Skopie and consciously imposing mistrust and hatred against Bulgaria and the Bulgarians will be perceived as giving legitimacy to policy and practice which no one self-respecting state would afford, all the more a member of the European Union.

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