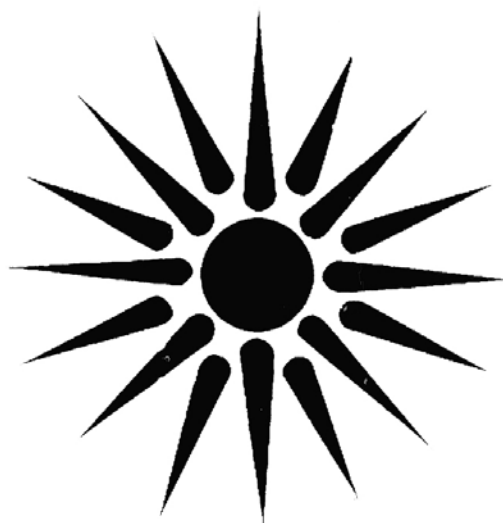


MACEDONIA

**What went wrong in the last
200 years?**

A collection of articles



**By
Risto Stefov**

MACEDONIA
What went wrong in the last 200 years?

A collection of articles

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Part I - 1800 - 1878

Even before Alexander's time Macedonia was a single nation. With time she grew and shrunk but always remained a single nation until her partition in 1912-13. Today however, while new nations spring up and flourish, Macedonia is still partitioned and fighting for her identity. Why? What went wrong and who is responsible?

If the Balkan roots lie in antiquity then the first stem that created the modern Balkan countries sprang up in the 19th century. The 19th century is the most important period in modern Balkan history and will be the subject of this and subsequent articles.

The intent of this article (Part I) is to present the reader with a wider perspective of Balkan history from about 1800 to 1878. If you think there is too much outside interference in Macedonia today, or if you think Great Powers are "here to help us", this article is for you.

There is no event in recorded history that unfolded without Great Power intervention and there is no time in recorded history where one nation put another nation's interests ahead of its own.

Note: Prior to 1829 there was no state, place name or geographical region called Greece or Hellas. During Roman times, after the fall of the Macedonian Empire, there existed a small region called "Achaia". (page 126 & 134, Fishwick, "The Foundations of the West"). Also see the inside cover of Vasil Bogov's book "Macedonian Revelation, Historical Documents Rock and Shatter Modern Political Ideology".

Similarly, prior to 1878, there was no state, region or place name called Bulgaria.

The history the new states adopted prior to the 19th century belongs to all the Balkan people, the Macedonians in particular. Those states (Greece and Bulgaria) that claim exclusive rights or have altered history to fit their current agenda are committing "historical fraud". More on this subject in parts II & III of this article.

Before I get into the details of this article I want to clarify some things about the word “Slav”

The word “Slav” is an English translation of the Macedonian word “Slava” like the word Macedonia is an English translation of the word Makedonija. Slava in Macedonian means “glory, fame, renown”. “Slaven” in Macedonian means “glorious, famous, renowned, celebrated, illustrious”. “Slavi” in Macedonian means “to glorify, to celebrate, to extol”. (page 925, Dushan Tsrenkovski’s “The Standard Dictionary, English-Macedonian, Macedonian-English”).

The word “Pravo” in Macedonian means “right” (page 850, Dushan Tsrenkovski’s “The Standard Dictionary, English-Macedonian, Macedonian-English”).

Putting the two words together “Pravo Slava” assumes a holy meaning like “Pravoslavna vera” or “Eastern Christian faith”.

I want to make it perfectly clear that "Pravoslaven" in Macedonian means "Most Glorious" and refers to the Christian religion. "Slava" translates to "celebrate" as in a holy celebration. By no means does the word "Slav" have any connection to "nationality". "Slav" to a Macedonian once meant the same as Catholic to an Italian, Jew to a Hebrew, Orthodox to a Greek, Muslim to an Arab or Hindu to an East Indian. Today however, the beauty of the word "Slav" has, for political purposes, been twisted into something ugly, undesirable and denigrating to all Macedonians. More specifically, the Greeks and now the Albanians call the Macedonian people “Slav” to mean “new comers”, “foreigners”, “barbarians”, “simpletons”, “ignorant”, “inconsiderate”, etc. So please do not call the Macedonians "Slav", just call them Macedonian.

The Pravoslaven Empire (later renamed Byzantine Empire) lasted from 324AD when the Pravoslavna vera was first adopted as the official religion of the Empire to 1767 when the Phanariots with Ottoman help, officially extinguished the Macedonian Church. After that up until 1850, the Macedonian Church lived underground and continued to operate illegally keeping the “Pravoslavna vera” and the Macedonian culture alive.

It is well documented that the language of liturgy of the Pravoslavi (people of the Byzantine Empire) was what we now call “Old Church Slavonic”. Old Church Slavonic is a Macedonian (Solunski) dialect spoken and understood to this day in most parts of geographical Macedonia.

Before I get into details of the last two hundred years, I want to summarize some events that led up to the 19th century.

Macedonia’s problems can be traced back to the 1200s after Tsari Grad (Constantinople) was sacked by the crusaders in 1204. While the Pravoslaven (Byzantine) Empire was recovering from the crusader attack, a Nomad Muslim tribe was entering Anatolia from Central Asia. The tribe was called “Ottoman” named after their first leader Osman. The Ottomans first made their presence and crossed into Europe in 1345 as mercenaries hired by the Byzantines to defend their Empire. As the Ottomans grew in numbers, they settled at Galipoly west of the Macedonian Dardanelles (Endrene) and used the area as a staging ground for conquest.

In 1389 the Ottomans attacked Kosovo and destroyed the Pravoslavna army also killing the nobility in the process.

In 1392 they attacked and conquered geographical Macedonia including Solun but not Sveta Gora (Holy Mountain).

In 1444 while attempting to drive north through today’s Bulgaria they were met and crushed by the Western Crusaders at Varna.

Soon after their recovery, they besieged Tsari Grad and took it in 1453, looting all the wealth that was accumulated for over two millennia.

Feeling the sting of 1444, the Ottomans turned northwest and in 1526 they attacked and destroyed the Hungarian army killing 25,000 knights.

After that they unsuccessfully tried twice to take Vienna, once in 1529 and then again in 1683 but failed. Failure to take Vienna halted the Ottoman expansion in Europe.

After sacking Tsari Grad the Ottoman nomads adapted much of the Pravoslaven administration and feudal practices and began to settle the Balkans. The conquered people of the new Ottoman territories became subjects of the Empire to be ruled according to Muslim law.

At the head of the Ottoman Empire sat the Sultan who was God's representative on earth. The Sultan owned everything and everyone in the empire. Below the Sultan sat the ruling class and the Pashas (generals) and below them sat the Raya (protected flock). Everyone worked for the Sultan and the Sultan in turn provided his subjects with all of life's necessities.

In the beginning Ottoman lands were divided into four categories. The "meri" lands such as valleys, forests, mountains, rivers, roads, etc., belonged exclusively to the Sultan.

The "temar" lands were meri lands loaned or granted to Ottoman civil and military officials. Years later as the Empire introduced land reforms temar estates converted to private property and became known as "chifliks".

The "vakof" lands were tax-exempt lands dedicated for pious purposes and to support public services such as fire fighting, etc.

Finally, the "molk" lands were private lands occupied by peoples' houses, gardens, vineyards, orchards, etc.

The Islamic Ottomans belonged to the Sunni sect of the Muslim religion. The Empire's subjects belonged to one of two religiously (not nationally) divided Millets. The Islam Millet was exclusively for Muslims and the non-Islam or Roum (for Roman) Millet grouped all other religions together.

The reasons for separating Muslims from others had to do with how Islamic law was applied. Unlike our laws today, Ottoman Muslim law had nothing to do with civil rights and everything to do with

religious rights. Muslim courts were appointed for the sole purpose of interpreting the Koran and very little else. The Koran dictated Muslim conduct and behaviour including punishment for crimes. In the Ottoman mind only religion and the word of God had sole authority over peoples' lives. Religion was the official government of the Ottoman State. Islam was the only recognized form of rule that suited Muslims but could not be directly applied to non-Muslims. So the next best thing was to allow another religion to rule the non-Muslims. The obvious choice of course was the Pravoslaven Christian religion, which was the foundation of the Pravoslaven (Byzantine) Empire. There was a catch however. The official Muslim documents that would allow the "transfer of rule" were based on an ancient Islamic model which denounced all Christianity as a corrupt invention of the "Evil one". The conservative Ottomans regarded the Christians as no more than unclean and perverted animals. Also, the ancient documents called for sacrifices to be made. A Christian religious leader for being granted leadership by the Muslims, was expected to sacrifice his own flock on demand, to prove his loyalty to the Sultan. It was under these conditions that the Patriarch accepted his installment as sole ruler of the Christian Orthodox faith and of the non-Muslim Millet.

While the first Sultans destroyed Tsari Grad, they tolerated Christianity as the Government of the non-Muslim Millet and sold the Patriarchate to adventurers who could buy (bribe) his nomination. Once nominated, the Patriarch in turn sold consecration rights to Bishops, who in turn regarded their gain as a "legitimate investment" of capital and proceeded to "farm their diocese". Under Ottoman rule, religion became corrupt and the old way of Pravoslavism began to fade away. This was also the beginning of the end for the Slavonic (Macedonian) Churches in the Ottoman Empire.

In addition to being a religious ruler, the Patriarch and his appointed Bishops became civil administrators of the Christian and non-Muslim people. Their authority included mediating with the Ottomans, administering Christian law (marriages, inheritance, divorce, etc.), running schools and hospitals, and dealing with the large and small issues of life. There were no prescribed provisions however, on how to deal with criminal matters or the limit of

authority on the part of the Bishops. In other words there was no uniform way in which Christian criminals could be punished or how far a Bishop could exercise his authority. This opened the way for interpretation, neglect, abuse and activities of corruption such as favouritism and bribery.

For the purposes of administration, the Ottoman territory was divided into provinces called “Vilayets”. Each province was governed by a “Vali” who was equal in rank to a “Pasha” (military general). There were six Vilayets in European Turkey, Albania, Jannina, Scutari, Solun, Monastir and Ushkab. To the east were Endrene (Andreonople) and Istanbul (Tsari Grad). The larger Vilayets were sub-divided into two or more “Sandjaks” each governed by a “Mutesharif” who also ranked as a Pasha. Kazas (departments) were in turn governed by Kamakams (prefects) whose rank was that of “Beks” (military colonel). After that came the “Nahieis” (districts) governed by Mudirs (sub-prefects).

Muslim Ottomans always administered the Ottoman government and the Military. However, due to lack of manpower to rule an expanding empire, the Ottomans in the 1300’s adopted the “devshirme” or child contribution program. Young Christian boys were abducted by force and converted to Islam. After being educated, the bright ones were given administrative roles and the rest, the “Janissary”, were given military responsibilities. The devshirme was abolished in 1637 when the Janissary became a problem for the Sultan.

Failure to seize Vienna in 1683 weakened the Ottoman Empire and brought it into constant conflict with Austria and Russia. One such conflict ended in 1699 with the Treaty of Karlwitz. By this Treaty, the Ottoman Empire lost Hungary to the Habsburgs (Austria) and part of the Ukraine to Russia.

After annexing Hungary the Habsburg Empire (1200-1900) became ruler of the Catholic part of Eastern Europe while the Ottoman ruled the Orthodox Balkans. The Habsburg Empire, in 1867 (after losing the war with Germany in 1860), became known as the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

Another minor but crucial event for the south Balkans took place in 1711 when one of the Moldovian gospodars (prince) was accused of collaborating with the Russian army and was held responsible for the Russian invasion of Romania. As punishment the Ottomans replaced all Romanian and Moldovian gospodars with Phanariots from Istanbul.

The Phanariots were a group of Christians mostly from a wealthy class of people that lived in the “Phanar” or lighthouse district of Tsari Grad. After the Sultan installed the Patriarch in Istanbul, the Phanar became a thriving Christian culture. As I mentioned earlier, the Sultan placed the phanariot Patriarch in charge of the Christian millet because he found him more agreeable than his other (poor) Christian counterparts. The Patriarchy functioned like a state within a state with its own administration and services. Having the Sultan’s favour, the Patriarch sought the chance to expand his dominion over the entire Eastern Christian Church by replacing whatever legitimate bishoprics he could with his own corrupt people.

For example, the Old Serbian bishoprics were abolished as punishment for helping the Habsburgs. At about the same time, the Macedonian including the powerful Ohrid bishopric were also abolished. After becoming gospodars the Phanariots, one by one replaced all the Romanian bishoprics.

After becoming gospodars in Romania, the Phanariots abolished Church Slavonic (Macedonian) liturgy and replaced the Macedonian speaking clergy with Romanians. The Romanians however, didn’t care much for the Phanariots and pursued Romanian ways.

Eventually, as more and more bishoprics were shut down the Phanariots redefined the old culture, Christian faith and Christian education.

The Ottomans trusted the Phanariots well enough to give them a role in the central Ottoman administration. This included the office of the “Dragoman”, the head of the Sultan's interpreters’ service (Muslims were discouraged from learning foreign languages). Phanariots participated in diplomatic negotiations and some even became

ambassadors for the Ottoman Empire. Phanariots were put in charge of collecting taxes from the Christian Millet for the Ottomans and whatever they could pilfer from the peasants they kept for themselves. Many scholars believe that Romania's peasants never suffered more than they did during the Phanariot period. Phanariots also secured food and other services for the Ottoman court.

The Phanariots through the Dragoman were largely responsible for providing "all kinds" of information to the outside world about the Ottoman Empire including their own desires to rule it. Despite what modern Greeks claim, the Phanariot dream was to replace the Ottoman Empire with a Christian Empire like the Russian model. In theory, they wanted to re-create a multi-cultural Byzantine type Empire but with a Patriarch in charge. This is where the "Megaly Idea" comes from which to this day dominates Greek expansionist desires.

The Phanariots believed that with Russian or German help it was possible to achieve the Magaly Idea. Unfortunately for the Phanariots, the Great Powers had different plans for the Balkans.

The next turning point for the Ottoman Empire came during the Russian-Ottoman war of 1769 to 1774. After Russian forces occupied Romanian principalities, Turkey was defeated and the 1774 Kuchuk Kainarji Treaty gave Russian ships access to the Black Sea, the Bosphorus and Endrene (the Macedonian Dardanelles). Russia became the "protector of Orthodox Christians" inside the Ottoman domain including Wallachia (Romania) and Moldavia. Also, for the first time, the Ottomans allowed Russian consular agents inside their empire.

Russia at the time did not have enough ships to fill the shipping demands so many of the shipping contracts went to Phanariot captains who were on friendly terms with both the Russians and the Ottomans.

The Kuchuk Kainarji Treaty bolstered Russian expansionism in the Balkans, which alarmed the Western Powers and initiated the "Eastern Question" of "what will happen to the Balkans when the Ottoman Empire disappears"?

The Eastern Question of the 1800's later became the Macedonian Question of the 1900's.

At about the same time as Russia was making her way into the Balkans, the West was experiencing changes of its own. The industrial revolution was in full swing coming out of England and progressing towards the rest of the world. France was the economic Great Power but was quickly losing ground to England. The French Revolution (1789) gave birth not only to new ideas and nationalism but also to Napoleon Bonaparte. As Napoleon waged war in Europe and the Middle East, French shipping in the Mediterranean subsided only to be replaced by the Phanariot and British traders. French trade inside the Ottoman territory also declined and never fully recovered. By land, due to the long border, Austria dominated trade with the Ottoman Empire exercising its own brand of influence on the Balkans especially on the Serbian people.

As the turn of the 19th century brought economic change to Europe, the Balkans became the last frontier for capitalist expansion. By the 1800's Europe's political, economic and military institutions were rapidly changing. Western governments and Western exporters were aggressively pursuing Balkan markets on behalf of their Western manufacturers. This aggressive pursuit smothered Balkan industries before they had a chance to develop and compete. As a result, Balkan economies began to decline causing civil unrest and nationalist uprisings. While Western countries were left undisturbed to develop economically and socially, external forces prevented Balkan societies from achieving similar progress. Mostly regulated by guilds, Balkan trades could not compete with Western mechanization and went out of business. Without jobs, most city folk became a burden on the already economically strained rural peasants for support. The economic situation in the Balkans deteriorated to a point where people could no longer tolerate it and they started to rebel against their oppressors.

From the modern Balkan states, Serbia was the first to rebel. The first revolt took place in Belgrade in 1804, the same year that Napoleon became Emperor. The immediate causes of the armed uprising were oppression and a further deterioration of the Ottoman

system. When Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798 the Sultan took troops from the Balkans and sent them to fight the French in Egypt. Leaving the region unguarded in 1801 Belgrade became a sanctuary for bandits and unruly Janissaries. Robbery and murder became commonplace. Then in February of 1804 some bands of killers murdered seventy prominent village leaders and priests. They did this to frighten the population and to stop their Serb leaders from complaining to the Sultan. To save themselves, some of the Serb leaders fled to the forests and organized the villagers into armed units. They attacked the Janissary in the county side and fought them until they were pushed back into Belgrade. The war ended in a stalemate.

The stalemate was broken in 1806 when the Serbs decided to no longer expect help from the Sultan and took matters into their own hands. At about the same time the French and the Ottomans became allies. Since France was already an enemy of Russia this alliance made Turkey also an enemy. Now being enemies of the Ottomans, the Russians intervened on behalf of the Serbs and in 1807 helped them take back Belgrade. The Sultan offered the Serbs full autonomy, but the Russians advised against it. They insisted on negotiating for full independence instead. Unfortunately, when the war between Russia and France ended, Russia in 1807 made peace with Napoleon and became allied with both France and Turkey. For selfish interests on Russia's part the Serbs were left on their own. The Serbs lost Belgrade to a Ottoman army attack in 1808 and many Serbs fled into exile while the rest continued the guerilla warfare from the forests.

The revolt began again in 1809 when Russia renewed its campaign with Turkey, and ended in 1813 with a Serb defeat. The Serbs failed to win because Russia was unsure about its commitment to Serbia. Russia had a lot more to gain by appeasing Turkey especially when war with France became imminent. When Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, the Russians abandoned the Serbs and in 1813 an Ottoman army invaded Serbia forcing many of her people to flee as refugees into the Austrian Empire.

Relations between Serbs and Ottomans turned from bad to worse when the Ottomans extorted provisions from the Serbs by force,

tortured villagers in search of hidden weapons, and started raising taxes. A riot broke out at a Ottoman estate in 1814 and the Ottomans massacred the local population and publicly impaled two hundred prisoners inside Belgrade. The Serbian leaders decided to revolt again and fighting resumed on Easter in 1815. This time Serb leaders made sure captured Ottoman soldiers were not killed and civilians were released unharmed. To ease Ottoman fears, the Serbs also announced that this was a revolt to end abuses and not to gain independence.

After the Russians defeated Napoleon in 1815, Ottoman fears were raised that Russia would again intervene on Serbia's behalf. To avoid this the Sultan gave Serbia autonomy.

After the Russian-Ottoman War of 1829-30, a new treaty was signed which put an end to most abuses in Serbia. All Muslims except for a small garrison left Serbian territory. Serbs took control of the internal administration, the postal system, and the courts. Individual taxes and dues paid directly to the Sultan were replaced by a single annual tribute payment from the Serbian State to the Sultan. Serbia remained autonomous until 1878 when she was granted independence.

Second to rebel against Ottoman rule were the Phanariots. The Phanariot uprising was not a true rebellion like the one in Serbia. Unlike the Serbs, most Phanariots were wealthy and as I mentioned earlier, already enjoyed substantial privileges in Ottoman society. To revolt was a poor choice for them because they had a lot to lose and little to gain.

When the Ottomans imposed the millet system the Phanariots began to gain advantages over the other Balkan Christians. In time, the Patriarch appointed clergy took control of administering the entire Christian millet. Patriarch appointed clergy had religious, educational, administrative, and legal power in the Ottoman Balkans. In other words, Phanariots were more or less running all political, civil and religious affairs in the Christian Millet.

Religion, not ethnicity or language, was the first criterion for identifying individuals within the millet system. Religion, not

language or place of residence, distinguished wealthy Christians from wealthy Muslims. There was no definable place called "Greece" other than the one-time Roman province of antiquity called "Gracea". Morea was about the only inland region that resembled anything that could be considered Greek.

Because Morea was poor, most of the countryside had no Ottoman presence and Christian primates or "kodjabashii" virtually ruled themselves. Christian militia or "armatoli" kept the peace, while "klefts" or bandits roamed the hillsides robbing and pillaging their neighbours.

By the 1700s, Phanariot ship owners in the islands dominated Balkan commerce. As Christians, Phanariot traders were exempt from Muslim ethical and legal restraints (especially when dealing with money) and were permitted to make commercial contacts with non-Muslims. Westerners who did business in the region used local Jews, Armenians and Phanariots as agents. Different branches of the same Phanariot family often operated in different cities, ties of kinship reducing the risks of trade.

Between 1529 and 1774 only Ottoman ships were allowed to navigate the isolated waters of the Black Sea. Phanariot trade grew without competition from the Venetians or other Western traders. As I mentioned earlier, the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji opened the Ottoman straits to Russian commerce. There were not enough Russian ships to meet all shipping demands so Ottoman Phanariots filled the void. Also, the Napoleonic conflicts between England and France created new opportunities for the neutral Phanariot ships and by 1810 there were 600 Phanariot trading vessels conducting commerce.

For the Phanariots, especially the well to do, Ottoman rule provided many advantages in comparison to other Balkan groups. Rich ship owners, agents, prosperous merchants, high officials in the Christian Church, tax collectors, gospodars in Romania, primates in the Morea, and members of the interpreters' service all had much to lose and little to gain by rebelling.

How then can one explain the movement that led to the revolution in 1821?

Poor peasants, poor village priests, poor sailors, etc. who lived in the Morea had no investment in the Ottoman status quo. Without ideas or leadership, these people lived miserable lives and preyed on each other to survive. Outside interference started the rebellion.

The original instigators were members of the "Filiki Eteria" a secret society founded in 1814 in the Russian port of Odessa. The Filiki Eteria sent representatives into the Morea to recruit fighters. A number of important klefts and district notables answered their call by organizing peasants and forming armed bands.

The 1821 revolution began as a planned conspiracy involving only selected elements of the population. At that time the idea of "nationality" remained very elusive, even for the most enlightened revolutionaries. The intent of the uprising was to liberate all of the Balkan people from Ottoman tyranny and unite them in one Christian State.

The Filiki Eteria planned to start the uprising in three places. The first was the Morea where a core group of klefts and primates supported the idea. Second was Tsari Grad, where the Phanariot community was expected to riot. Third, Phanariot forces were expected to cross the Russian border from Odessa to invade Moldavia and Romania. Plans however, did not go as expected. When 4500 men of the "Sacred Battalion" entered Moldavia in March, 1821 the Romanian peasants ignored the Ottomans and instead attacked the Phanariots. The Phanariot invasion of Romania was a complete failure. At the same time, "class divisions" in Phanariot society hampered the uprising in Istanbul. The Ottomans reacted by hanging the reigning Patriarch. A new Patriarch, at the insistence of the Great Powers was appointed at Tsari Grad for the first time in 1850.

The only success was in the Morea and only because the primates feared the Ottoman Pasha's retribution. Fearing arrest or even execution the primates joined the klefts and massacred the Ottoman population of Morea. Turkey was unable to squelch the uprising and

the conflict remained in stalemate until 1825. The stalemate in part was due to internal problems among the Phanariots reflecting pre-existing class differences i.e. the armed peasants and Klefts in the Morea were loyal to Theodoros Kolokotronis, a kleft. Opposing them were the civilian leaders in the National Assembly which were made up mostly of primates and well-connected Phanariots. By 1823 the two sides were locked in a civil war. The stalemate was also due in part to interventions from Britain, France and Russia. Each of these states had strategic political and economic interests in Turkey, and each wanted to make sure that the results of the war in Morea would be in their best interest. The British were sympathetic to the Phanariot cause (in part due to Phil-Hellenism) but at the same time they wanted a strong Turkey to counter Russia. Initially, the British were prepared to support Turkey to prevent Russia from gaining control of the Ottoman Straits and threatening the Mediterranean trade routes. Later as Britain gained control of Cyprus her plans changed (more on this later). The Russian Czars in turn had sympathy for the Christians but feared the possibility of a Morean state becoming a British ally. French investors held large numbers of Ottoman State bonds, which would be worthless if Turkey fell apart. France was also anxious to re-enter world politics after her defeat by Russia in 1815.

The Great Powers, from the stalemate could see that the Morean revolution would not go away and were prepared to intervene and make sure the final result was acceptable to their own interests. Foreign interference ran from 1825 until 1827. It began with the intervention to block the Egyptian navy from invading Morea in 1825 (Mehmet Ali's capture of the port of Navarino) and ended in 1827 when the British, French and Russians sank the Egyptian navy. The European Powers sent a combined fleet of 27 ships to Navarino Bay to observe the Egyptian navy but things got out of hand when musket shots were fired and the observation escalated into a battle. When it was over the European fleet had sunk 60 of the 89 Egyptian ships. The loss of the Egyptian navy left the Sultan without armed forces and the inability to reclaim the Morea or resist the Great Powers. Turkey was squeezed into providing concessions for Morea but the Ottomans kept stalling.

To end the stalling the Russians invaded Turkey in 1828 (Russian-Ottoman War of 1828-1830) and almost reached Istanbul by 1829. The Sultan gave in to Russian demands. Russia too gave in to Western Power demands and agreed to British and French participation in the peace settlement of the London Protocol of 1830 which gave birth to a small, independent Greek kingdom. Prince Otto of Bavaria a German prince and a German administration were chosen by the Great Powers to rule the new Greek Kingdom. The choice was a compromise but acceptable to all three powers.

Two overwhelming “forces” came into being in the 19th century which transformed the Balkans. The first was the 1848 “Western economic revolution” which thrust the Balkans into social and economic upheaval. The second was “increased intervention” from non-Balkan political forces. As the century advanced, these developments merged, and worked not for the interests of the Balkan people but for the benefit of Europe's Great Powers.

Before I continue with internal Balkan developments I want to digress a little and explore the “external forces” and their “political desires” in Balkan affairs.

Besides Turkey, there were six Great Powers during the nineteenth century. They were Russia, Great Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany. From time to time the Great Powers expressed interest in the Balkan population, but in crisis situations, each followed its own interests. When the Great Powers made compromises, they did so to avoid war with each other and often failed to address the real issues that caused the crisis in the first place. This is similar to what the Great Powers are doing in the Balkans today.

Russia tended to be the most aggressive and was usually the cause of each new Ottoman defeat. The 1774 Kuchuk Kainarji Treaty, in addition to allowing Russia access to the north shore of the Black Sea, gave her “power to act” on behalf of the Orthodox millet and to conduct commerce within the Ottoman Empire.

Russia’s goals in the Balkans were (1) to gain exclusive navigation rights from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea for both

merchant and military ships and (2) to annex Tsari Grad and Endrene (the Macedonian Dardanelles) for herself, both of which were unacceptable to the Western Powers.

After the end of the Crimean war in 1856, by the Treaty of Paris, the Western Powers made sure Russia's desires for expansion were curbed. First, all Russian warships were barred from the Black Sea and second, the Black Sea was opened to merchant ships from all the states. After that all the Great Powers, not just Russia, became the guarantors of the Balkan states.

From 1815 to 1878 Great Britain was Russia's strongest rival for Balkan influence. British interests led her to intervene against the Ottomans in the Morean revolution of the 1820s, but went to war against Russia in 1853 (Crimean war) on Turkey's behalf.

The British goals in the Balkans were to maintain access to the Eastern Mediterranean and to secure shipping lanes to India. Most of the trade routes passed through Ottoman controlled waters and Turkey was too weak to be a threat, so Britain was inclined to oppose France, Russia and Germany, when they became a threat to Turkey.

To bolster its claim to the Eastern waterways in 1878 Britain took control of the island of Cyprus, and in 1883 occupied Egypt and the Suez Canal. After that Britain kept a close watch on Morea and Russian access to the Straits interfering less in Ottoman affairs.

Britain also had important commercial interests inside the Ottoman Empire, and later in the successor states. Investors in railroads and state bonds took as much profit as they could, as soon as they could, which in the long term contributed to the Ottoman Empire's instability.

France, like Britain, had both political and economic interests in the Balkans. During the Napoleonic wars, France was a direct threat to Ottoman rule (Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798) but after her 1815 defeat she lost military and political clout.

France had commercial rights in Turkey dating back to the Capitulation Treaties of the 1600s and relied heavily on trade with the Ottoman Empire.

In the 1820s, France joined British and Russian intervention on behalf of the Moreans. France did this mostly to protect her commercial interests but also to counter-balance Russian-British domination in the region. Also, let's not forget the "Philhellenic sympathy" the French had for the Moreans.

More so than the British, French investors played a key role in Balkan policy. During the Eastern Crisis and the war of 1875-78, the Ottoman State went bankrupt and French bondholders were the biggest potential losers in case of default. So when the Ottoman Public Debt Administration was created to monitor Ottoman State finances, French directors were right in the middle of managing Ottoman State finances. Like the British investors, French investors forced Turkey to maximize their returns and ignored the needs of the Ottoman people. (More about this later).

Austria had been the main threat to Ottoman rule at one time, but after 1699 Russia replaced her in that department. Austria retained a major interest in the Ottoman Empire mainly because it was neighbouring Hungary. In other words, Vienna had no desire to replace a weak Ottoman neighbour with a strong Russia or Russian allies like Serbia or today's Bulgaria.

Austria's goals were aimed at creating a Western Balkan economic resource and a potential market. Control of the Adriatic coast was key to Austria's foreign trade through the Adriatic Sea. Austria made sure she exerted enough influence to keep the hostile Great Powers away and to prevent the growing new Balkan nations from annexing it. Austria had no desire to annex the Western Balkans for herself. The ruling German Austrians, or the Hungarians had no ethnic or religious ties to the Slavs in the region.

After 1866 Germany (not Austria) became the leader in Central Europe. Austria now had only southeastern Europe where she could exert influence. Austria was too weak to absorb the Balkans by herself so she preferred to sustain a weak Ottoman Empire instead of

“Russian controlled” states. This explains why Vienna took an anti-Russian position during the Crimean War, and why she became allied with Germany later. Germany was an ally of both Russia and Austria, but Austria turned on Russia so Germany had to abandon the Russian-German alliance to please Austria (more about this and the Crimean war later).

Serbia and Romania created problems for Vienna which she unsuccessfully tried to manage through political alliances and economic treaties. Romania feared Russian occupation and Bucharest generally accepted alliances with Austria. Serbia however, had fewer enemies and less incentive to bend to Austrian wishes. The two states (Austria and Serbia) found themselves on a collision course that resulted in the war of 1914 (World War I).

Italy became a state in 1859 after fighting a successful war against Austria. In 1866, the Kingdom of Piedmont united the Italian peninsula and took its position as a new Great Power. Italy lacked economic and military might in comparison to the other Powers but made up for it in influence at the expense of the weaker Ottoman Empire.

Italy viewed the Western Balkans, especially Albania, as her “natural zone of influence” and her leaders watched for opportunities to take the area away from the Ottomans.

Italy's Balkan goals were not only a threat to Turkey but also to Serbia and Greece who both had aims at seizing the Adriatic. Italy was too weak to seize Balkan territory so she followed a policy of “lay and wait” until 1911 and 1912 when she took the Dodecanese Islands and Tripoli (Libya) from the Ottomans.

Germany, like Italy, became a Great Power at a later time after the German State unification of 1862 to 1870.

Due to her strong military and economic might, Germany had more influence in Europe than Italy, but no direct interest in Balkan affairs. For the new German Empire the Balkans were only economic outlets.

After defeating Austria in 1866, Germany made Austria-Hungary an ally and to retain loyalty, Germany had to support Austria in Balkan matters. After 1878 Germany could no longer reconcile Russian and Austrian differences over the Balkans and by 1890 Germany and Austria strengthened their alliance and pushed Tsarist Russia into a conflicting partnership with republican France. After that, German policies in the Balkans supported economic and military investments in Turkey. This made Germany a rival not only of Russia but also of Britain. The Great Power alignments of 1890-1914 established a pattern that dominated the two world wars.

Germany had no stake in the development of any of the successor states which left her free to support the Sultan (and later the Young Ottoman regime). German officers trained Ottoman troops and German Marks built Ottoman railways.

The Ottoman Empire of the 19th century was the weakest of the Great Powers, especially after the Crimean war. At the 1856 Treaty of Paris, Britain and France granted Turkey “legal status” in the Balkans that was far beyond her control. The Western Powers desperately wanted the Ottoman Empire stable and intact.

The Ottomans on the other hand, mistrusted the other Powers, partly because they were infidels and partly because of bad past experiences. Russia was clearly Turkey's greatest enemy, bent on dismantling her empire. To keep Russia at bay, Turkey cooperated with the other Powers but was always wary of falling under the influence of any single Power. From the 1820's to the 1870s, Britain was Turkey's guardian. After 1878 Germany replaced Britain as economic and military sponsor. Ottoman relations with the new Balkan states were poor at best. Any gains for them usually meant losses for Turkey.

The Western Great Powers believed that if corruption, crime and poverty could be eliminated, Balkan unrest would end and the Ottoman Empire could remain intact. After all, they didn't want anything to happen to their goose that laid golden eggs. So instead of kicking the “sick man” out of Europe, they pushed for reforms.

However, it was one thing to draw up reforms and another to make them work. By examining Ottoman efforts in Macedonia it was obvious that the Ottomans lacked the resources and the will to carry out reforms. Also, Europeans failed to grasp that suggestions and wishes alone could not replace six hundred years of Ottoman rule. The Ottomans believed their way of life was justified (More on this in Part II).

In 1865, a group of educated Ottomans formed the secret Young Ottoman Society. Their aim was to revitalize old Islamic concepts and unite all the ethnic groups under Islamic law. Threatened with arrest, the Young Ottoman leaders went into exile in Paris.

In 1889, a group of four medical students formed another secret Young Ottoman Society. They rejected the “old Islamic aims” and embraced a new idea, “Ottoman nationalism”. Ottoman nationalism became the foundation for a secular Turkey in 1908 after the Young Ottomans came to power and again in 1920 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey proper.

The next important event in Balkan history was the Crimean War of 1853 to 1856, which pitted Russia against Turkey, England and France.

The crisis ignited over the issue of who was in control of Christian Holy Places in Ottoman-ruled Jerusalem. Orthodox and Catholic monks quarreled over insignificant issues like who should possess the keys to locked shrines. By old treaties Russia and France were the international guarantors of Orthodox and Catholic rights respectively, but in 1852 Napoleon III tried to undo that. He needed to distract French Catholic public opinion away from his authoritarian government so he instigated the problem.

Because the issues of dispute involved the highest levels of the Ottoman government, to the nations involved it became a symbolic struggle for influence. The Russians badly misjudged the other Powers and failed to see that Britain could not accept a Russian victory. Tensions rose as all sides prepared for conflict. A Russian army occupied two Romanian Principalities failing to see that this threatened Austria's Balkan interests. Russia expected gratitude from

Vienna for her help against Hungary in 1849 but Austria refused her. With support from the Western powers, the Ottomans refused to negotiate and in 1853 declared war on Russia.

The Crimean War pulled in the Great Powers even though none of them wanted to go to war. In 1854 Austria forced the Russians to evacuate the Principalities and Austria took Russia's place as a neutral power. In 1856 the Allied Western Powers took Sevastopol, the chief Russian port on the Black Sea, by force. After that Russia agreed to their terms at the Treaty of Paris.

As a result of the Treaty of Paris, the Danube River was opened to shipping for all nations. Russia lost southern Bessarabia to Moldavia. She also lost her unilateral status as protector of Romanian rights. The two Romanian principalities remained under nominal Ottoman rule. However, a European commission was appointed and, together with elected assembly representatives from each province, was responsible for determining "the basis for administration" of the two Principalities. Also, all the European powers now shared responsibility as guarantors of the treaty. On the surface it appears that Turkey won and Russia lost the Crimean war. In reality however, both Russia and Turkey lost immensely. The Crimean War financially bankrupted Turkey. As for Russia, she lost her shipping monopoly on the Black Sea and allowed capitalism to enter into Eastern Europe. Russia did not only lose influence in Romania and Moldavia but she was also humiliated in front of the entire world. This set the stage for future conflicts including the most recent "cold war".

As I mentioned earlier Turkey's financial collapse opened the door for Western Governments to manipulate internal Ottoman policies as well as divert needed revenues to pay foreign debts. On top of that the Ottoman Empire was forced into becoming a consumer of Western European commodities. While Western Europe prospered from these ventures, Ottoman trades and guilds paid the ultimate price of bankruptcy. Lack of work in the cities bore more pressure on the village peasants who were now being taxed to starvation to feed unemployed city dwellers, as well as maintaining the status quo for the rich. The Ottoman Empire became totally dependent on European capital for survival, which put the state past the financial

halfway point of no return and marked the beginning of the end of Ottoman rule in Europe.

By 1875 the Ottomans entered a crisis situation owing 200 million pounds sterling to foreign investors with an annual interest payment of 12 million pounds a year. The interest payments alone amounted to approximately half the state's annual revenues. In 1874, due to some agricultural failures, military expenses, and worldwide economic depression, the Ottoman government could not even pay the interest due on the loans. At the brink of bankruptcy, to preserve Ottoman stability and to make sure Turkey paid up Western European debts, the Great Powers in 1875 took over the management of Ottoman revenues. This was done through an international agency, called the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA). To continue to receive credit, the Sultan had to grant the OPDA control over state income. Therefore, control of the state budget and internal policies fell into foreign hands. The agents in control were representatives of the rich capitalists and were only interested in profit, and very little else. This was definitely not to the advantage of the local people.

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Part II - 1878 - 1903

In the previous article (part I) I covered events leading up to but not including the 1877 Russian invasion of the Ottoman Empire which ended with the dreaded 1878 Treaty of Berlin. Events covered included the Serbian and Greek uprisings, Great Power interventions in the Ottoman realm, results of the Crimean war, and the 1875 economic crisis in the Balkans.

In this article (part II) I will start where I left off in part I and cover events from 1878 up to the developments leading up to the Macedonian Ilinden uprising of 1903.

I want to apologize for the large number of quotes I have included in this document. This is the only way I can “stave off” those who accuse me of “inventing” or “making up things”. I will also do my best to reference Western and neutral sources in order to keep my arguments as unbiased as possible.

On top of paying heavy taxes to the Ottomans, the village peasants of the Balkans were now burdened with additional taxes to pay off Western European loans. For some the burden was too great and it manifested itself in a number of independent uprisings. Discontentment with Ottoman rule, economic plight and pure neglect of human life precipitated the “Eastern Crisis”.

The first of these uprisings began in 1875 in Bosnia but soon spread to Montenegro and Serbia. About a year later the village peasants in Bulgaria showed their discontentment and staged a massive liberation struggle. To a lesser extent, the liberation struggle extended to Macedonia where an armed insurrection took place in Razlog in 1876.

The growing discontentment of the peasantry in the Balkans disturbed the Great Powers who now had a vested interest in protecting the Ottoman Empire from falling apart. A conference was convened in Tsary Grad (Istanbul) in 1876 to discuss strategies on how to deal with the insurrections and the “Eastern Question” in general. Representatives of Russia, Austria-Hungary, Britain, Germany, France and Italy attended the conference and decided to

place Macedonia and Bulgaria under the control of the Great Powers. Turkey rejected their demands and soon after found herself at odds with Russia. By early 1877, war broke out in Serbia and Montenegro followed by a massive Russian invasion of Bulgaria. The Ottoman armies were decimated and Turkey was forced to talk peace. Peace was negotiated between Russia and Turkey on March 3rd, 1878, (the San Stefano Treaty) without Western Power consent. Russia, as usual, was concerned more with self interests and less with the interest of the people she was trying to protect, so she sought the opportunity to realize a long held ambition in the Balkans, access to the Mediterranean Sea. The following agreements were reached:

Turkey was forced to recognize Greek sovereignty over Thessaly.

Montenegro was declared independent.

Turkey was forced to provide autonomy to an extended Bulgaria that included Macedonia, Western Thrace, a part of Albania, and a district of Serbia.

The conclusion of this treaty sent shock waves not only through the Western Powers who had a lot to lose (financial investments in the Ottoman Empire) but also to states like Greece and Serbia who had territorial ambitions of their own towards Ottoman territories.

Disturbed by the Russian tactics, the Western Powers re-convened the Eastern Question at Berlin in July 1878. At this point the San Stefano agreement was revised as follows:

Independence was granted to Serbia, and Montenegro as well as Romania.

Bosnia was given to Austria-Hungary (“Britain did not want more Slavic states to form”. Page 379, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century)

The territory of present day Bulgaria was divided into two administrative districts. Bulgaria proper and Eastern Rumelia. Eastern Rumelia was given back to the Ottomans.

Macedonia, Thrace, Kosovo and Albania were given back to the Ottomans.

At the verge of bankruptcy Russia could not resist the Western Powers and gave in to their demands.

With the exception of clause 23 that required the Ottomans to provide a small degree of economic autonomy to Macedonia, Macedonia was once again committed to Ottoman oppression. The conditions of clause 23 unfortunately, were never enforced by the Great Powers or complied with by Turkey.

In the spring of 1878 Macedonia reached the crossroads of her destiny. She was one step away from overthrowing six hundred years of Ottoman tyranny when Western Powers stepped in to prevent it. Why? Was Macedonia less deserving than Greece, Serbia or Bulgaria? Were the Macedonians less Christian than the Greeks, Serbians or Bulgarians? Was the Macedonian struggle to free itself from Ottoman tyranny not convincing enough? The real reason for throwing Macedonia back to the wolves had little to do with religion, nationalism or human rights and a lot to do with economics, profit and access to the Mediterranean Sea. Russia desperately wanted to access the Mediterranean but the Western Powers desperately wanted to prevent it. Here is what Trevelyan has to say about that. "Throughout the 19th century Russia was striving to advance towards Constantinople over the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. She was drawn forward by imperialist ambition, in the oppressed Christians of her own communion, many of whom were Slav by language and race, and by the instinct to seek a warm water port-a window whence the imprisoned giantess could look out upon the world. The world however, had no great wish to see her there".

"Canning (a British politician, 1812-1862) had planned to head off Russia's advance, not by direct opposition, but by associating her with England and France in a policy of emancipation, aimed at erecting national States out of the component parts of the Ottoman Empire. Such States could be relied upon to withstand Russian encroachment on their independence, if once they were set free from the Ottoman. The creation of the Kingdom of Greece was the

immediate outcome of Canning's policy" (page 372, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century).

Russia had no economic stake in the Ottoman Empire so she wanted the Ottomans out of the Balkans. The Western Powers invested heavily in the Ottoman economy and infrastructure and were anxious to keep the Ottoman Empire alive and well in the Balkans. The success of the Crimean war (Turkey won), convinced the British to slow down their policy of creating new Balkan States in favour of exploiting the lucrative Ottoman markets and collecting returns on loans made to Turkey.

At the stroke of a pen Bulgaria was freed (autonomous) while Macedonia was sentenced to suffer further indignity and humiliation. Back in the hands of the Greek clergy and the Ottoman Authorities Macedonia now entered a new era of suffering and cruelties, destined to pay for the sins of all the other nations that rose up against the Ottomans.

Between the spring and summer of 1878 Macedonia's fate was decided not by Russia, or the Western Powers but by Britain alone. Britain who created Greece and introduced the curse of Hellenism in the Balkans, was now prepared to fight Russia, by military means if necessary, to keep her out of the Mediterranean. To avoid war a compromise was reached. "The essentials of this compromise were agreed upon between England and Russia before the meeting of the European Congress, which took place at Berlin under the chairmanship of Bismarck, and formally substituted the Treaty of Berlin for the terms of San Stefano" (page 377, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century).

"To our (British) eyes the real objection to the San Stefano lies not in its alleged increase in Russian power, but in the sacrifice of the fair claims of Greeks and Serbians, who would not have remained long quiet under the arrangements which ignored their racial rights and gave all the points to Bulgaria. Lord Salisbury felt this strongly, especially on behalf of Greece."

"Beaconsfield's success, as he himself saw it, consisted in restoring the European power of Turkey. It was done by handing back Macedonia to the Port (Ottomans), without guarantees for better

government. This was the essence of the Treaty of Berlin as distinct from the Treaty of San Stefano. ‘There is again a Turkey in Europe’ Bismarck said. He congratulated the British Prime Minister – ‘You have made a present to the Sultan of the richest province in the world; 4,000 square miles of the richest soil.’ Unfortunately for themselves, the inhabitants went with the soil. Since Beaconsfield decided, perhaps rightly, that Macedonia should not be Bulgarian, some arrangements ought to have been made for its proper administration under a Christian governor. Apart of all questions of massacres, the deadening character of the Ottoman rule is well known. Lord Salisbury seems to have wished for a Christian governor, but nothing was done in that direction. A golden opportunity was thus let slip “(page 378, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century).

After gaining status as protector of the Suez Canal and the waterways to India, Britain was awarded Cyprus. Content with her gains, Britain became lax and agreed that Russia and Austria-Hungary should oversee Ottoman affairs in Macedonia. “The British people, when left to themselves, neither knew or cared who massacred whom between the Danube and the Aegean. Byron’s Greece had appealed to their imagination and historical sense, but the Balkans were a battlefield of kites and crows” (page 373, Trevelyan, British History in the 19th Century).

The Macedonian people were not at all happy about what went on in the Berlin Congress and showed their discontentment by demonstrating first in Kresna then in Razlog but as usual, their pleas were ignored. The Ottoman army was dispatched and the demonstrations were violently put down.

Facing the possibility of becoming extinct in Europe, the Ottoman Empire began to re-organize and take demonstrations and rebellions seriously. After the Greek uprising the Sultan became distrustful of the Phanariots and expelled most of them from his services. He came close to ousting the Patriarch and his tyrannical Bishops but Russia stepped in and prevented it. Many of the Slav people were not happy with being ruled by a Greek Patriarch and after Russia’s show of solidarity to the Greeks and the Patriarch, they threatened to convert to Catholicism. This created a real concern for Russia. “In

the days when Panslavism was a force in Russia and General Ignatieff ruled Constantinople. Russia naturally feared that if the Southern Slavs became Catholics she would lose her ascendancy over them” (page 73 Brailsford’s Macedonia). In 1870 Russia convinced the Sultan to allow a new millet to form thus creating the schismatic Bulgarian Exarchate Church which was immediately excommunicated by the Patriarch. Fracturing the Rum (Romeos) Millet into two opposing factions suited the Ottomans perfectly because now Christians, instead of rebelling against the Ottomans, would fight one another. Now, in addition to the Ottoman and Greek, a third government was created that would rule the same people in three conflicting ways. From a religious standpoint, minor differences distinguished the Greek from the Bulgarian Church. Both were Christian Orthodox except the Greeks acknowledged the authority of the Greek Patriarch while the Bulgarians obeyed the Bulgarian Exarch. The language of liturgy was about the only distinct difference between the churches. The Bulgarians used the Old Church Slavonic (Macedonian), familiar to Macedonians, while the Greeks used an ancient language no Macedonian could understand.

The creation of the Exarch Church stepped up nationalistic activities inside Macedonia and increased the stakes for territorial claims.

From the day they were liberated, both Serbia and Greece were strengthening their economies and poisoning their people with nationalist propaganda. Serbia introduced education for the masses and was teaching her youth about her ancient exploits and past empires that ruled Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia and that the Slavs (except for the Bulgarians who were Serbia’s enemies) were truly Serbs.

The modern Greeks on the other hand, infatuated with the discovery of the Ancient Greeks were going overboard promoting “Hellenism” and making territorial claims on Macedonia based on ancient rites. At the same time the same Greeks were making wild claims that all Orthodox Christians were Greeks. Their argument was that if a person belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church they were Greek. Here is what Brailsford has to say about that. “Hellenism claims these peoples because they were civilized by the Greek Orthodox

Church. That is a conception which the Western mind grasps with difficulty. It is much as though the Roman Catholic Church should claim the greater part of Europe as the inheritance of Italy. To make the parallel complete we should have to imagine not only an Italian Pope and a College of Cardinals which Italians predominate, but a complete Italian hierarchy. If every Bishop in France and Germany were an Italian, if the official language of the church were not Latin but Italian and if every priest were a political agent working for the annexation of France and Germany to Italy, we should have some analogy to the state of things which actually exist in Turkey” (page 195 Brailsford’s Macedonia). Here is what Brailsford has to say about how the Greeks received title to the Orthodox Church. “The Slavonic (Macedonian) Churches had disappeared from Macedonia, and everywhere the Greek Bishops, as intolerant as they were corrupt-‘Blind mouths that scarce themselves know how to hold a sheepphook’-crushed out the national consciousness, the language, and the intellectual life of their Slav (Macedonian) flocks. It is as a result of this process that the Eastern Church is a Greek Church. The sanctions of ‘Hellenism’ so far as they rest on the Church, are the wealth of the Phanariots and the venality of the Ottomans....the Slav libraries in the old monasteries were burned by the Greek Bishops (page 196 Brailsford’s Macedonia).

After 1878, for a Macedonian to be Hellenized meant that he had to give up his name, his own language, his own culture, his history, his folklore and his heritage. Here is what Karakasidou has to say. “...the ideological content of notions of the Hellenic nation, which far from being ecumenical has shown itself to be intolerant of cultural or ethnic pluralism, has lead many inhabitants of Greek Macedonia to deny or hide those aspects of their own personal or family pasts...” (page 125, Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood).

Hellenization was never made by choice, only by brute force. One was made to “feel Greek” when it suited the Greeks but the moment one wanted something from the Greeks or one crossed one of the Greeks, they were reminded of their “true identity” and quickly “put in their place”. To be Hellenized meant to lose dignity and to suffer constant and unwarranted humiliation because no matter how hard one tried to be a Hellene, they could never measure up. A

Hellenized person was neither Greek nor Macedonian but a soul in limbo.

To quote David Holden “To me, philhellenism is a love affair with a dream which envisions ‘Greece’ and the ‘Greeks’ not as an actual place or as real people but as symbols of some imagined perfection” (page 12 Greece without Columns). What is Hellenism then?

Before I answer that question, I will once again quote David Holden. “Further back still beyond the War of Independence, when the modern nation-state of Greece came into being for the first time, the whole concept of Greece as a geographical entity that begins to blur before our eyes, so many and various were its shapes and meanings. But if geography can offer us no stable idea of Greece, what can? Not race, certainly; for whatever the Greeks may once have been,, they can hardly have had much blood-relationship with the Greeks of the peninsula of today, Serbs and Bulgars, Romans, Franks and Venetians, Ottomans, Albanians,....,in one invasion after another have made the modern Greeks a decidedly mongrel race. Not politics either; for in spite of that tenacious western legend about Greece as the birthplace and natural home of democracy, the political record of the Greeks is one of a singular instability and confusion in which, throughout history, the poles of anarchy modulated freedom has very rarely appeared. Not religion; for while Byzantium was Christian, ancient Hellas was pagan.” (page 23 Greece without Columns). Unlike Macedonia and other Balkan nations who have natural and vibrant languages, Greece artificially created and used (up until the 1970’s) an imposed adaptation of the classical language called the Katharevousa. “Hellenizing” under these conditions not only rendered the Hellenized races mute but also imposed a meaningless and emotionless language on those doing the Hellenization (if you want to learn more about the Greek language controversy read Peter Mackridge’s book “The Modern Greek Language”).

When Greece was born for the first time in 1832, it was unclear what her national character was. To quote David Holden, “the Greek nation-state was a product of western political intervention-‘the fatal idea’ as Arnold Toynbee once called it, of exclusive western nationalism impinging upon the multi-national traditions of the

eastern world. By extension, therefore, at any rate in theory, it was a child of the Renaissance and of western rationalism..." (page 28 Greece without Columns).

Officially, Greeks call their modern state Hellas, and are officially known as Hellenes, but at the same time they call themselves Romios (from the Ottoman Rum millet) implying that they are descendents of the Romans. Greece however, is a derivation of the Latin "Graecia" (page 29, Holden, Greece without Columns) the province of the Western Roman Empire which extended from Mount Olympus to the Peloponnese. Again, to quote David Holden " its international use to describe the sovereign state that currently occupies that territory is merely a reflection of the fact that 'Greece' in this modern sense is literally a western invention" (page 29 Greece without Columns).

If philhellenism is a love affair with a dream, then Hellenism is a dream of a few "evil geniuses" (Phanariots) who sought to destroy what was real in favour of creating something artificial, like a Frankenstein's Monster. Hellenism may be a dream for a few (mad men) but it has been a nightmare for Macedonia. Here is what Karakasidou has to say. "Greek natural identity was not a 'natural development' or the extension of a 'high culture' over the region of Macedonia, although now it is frequently portrayed as so. The ideology of Hellenism imposed a homogeneity on the Macedonian region and its inhabitants" (page 94, Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood).

If modern Hellenism is a western invention propagated by the Phnariots, then who are the Modern Greeks?

According to historical records, a large majority of the Greeks of Morea that fought during the Greek War of independence were Tosk Albanians that became Hellenized after the 1930's. The Slavs of Peloponisos (what happened to them?), the Vlachs of Larissa, the Albanian Tosks of Epirus (what happened to them?), were also Hellenized. In other words, the Greeks of today are a "forcibly Hellenized diverse collection of people". Even the Greek national dress, the fustanella is fake. The fustanella is the national costume of the Albanian Tosks (page 230 Brailsford's Macedonia).

In addition to desperately trying to define an identity and a language for herself, after 1878 Greece stepped up Hellenization activities inside Macedonia through the Orthodox Church and by employing (bribing) the services of the Ottoman authorities. Willing young Macedonian men were enrolled in Greek schools in Athens with promises of education only to be poisoned with Hellenization and Greek nationalist propaganda. Many of these young came back (home) to Macedonia only to be used as agents of Hellenism.

After the creation of the Bulgarian Church, Bulgaria was not far behind in her attempts to instill Bulgarian nationalism in the Macedonian youth. This was most evident when Macedonian young men like Gotse Delchev were expelled from the Bulgarian schools for wanting to use the Macedonian language and to learn Macedonian history. Here is what Radin has to say about that. “In the 1870’s, six Macedonian districts seceded from the Exarchate. Bulgarian schools were destroyed, with the Macedonian teaching intelligentsia organizing students against the Exarchate. Macedonian literary associations were discovered, to study Macedonian history and culture. The periodical ‘Vine’ was published to mobilize Macedonians against the vehement propaganda. In 1891, an attempt was made to re-establish the Macedonian Church. This national renaissance significantly produced a Macedonian intelligentsia that was to later prove instrumental in founding IMRO” (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) (page 45 of A. Michael Radin’s book “IMRO and the Macedonian Question”).

Russia’s rash attempt to gain access to the Mediterranean by creating a “Greater Bulgaria” (San Stefano Treaty), gave the Bulgarians rationale to make territorial claims on Macedonian territory. On top of the Greeks forcibly trying to Hellenize Macedonia, the Macedonian people now faced a new enemy, Bulgarian chauvinism. In the hands of the Ottomans, Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians and Serbians, Macedonian misery seemed to flourish as if all the evil in the world was unleashed at once and struck Macedonia with all its fury. What makes Macedonia’s misery even more tragic is that the entire world stood by and watched the horrors unfold and did nothing.

While the Greeks employed brutality, the Bulgarians adopted intrigue to sway Macedonians to their side. They were publicly calling for Macedonian autonomy all the while they were promoting a Bulgarian nationalist agenda. In the next decade after 1878, nationalist fever gripped the Balkans. The new nations (Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria) were making exclusive claims not only on Macedonian territory, but also on the Macedonian people, each claiming that Macedonians were Serbs, Greeks or Bulgarians. Each new nation desperately tried to prove its claim by propaganda campaigns, coercion and forcible assimilation. Here is what Brailsford has to say on the subject. “Are the Macedonians Serbs or Bulgars? The question is constantly asked and dogmatically answered in Belgrade and Sofia. But the lesson of history is obviously that there is no answer at all. They are not Serbs, ... On the other hand they could hardly be Bulgarians... They are probably what they were before a Bulgarian or Serbian Empire existed...” (page 101, Macedonia Its Races and their Future). As for the Macedonian’s being Greek, this is what Brailsford has to say. “The Greek colonies were never much more than trading centers along the coast, and what was Greek in ancient times is Greek today. There is no evidence that the interior was ever settled by a rural Greek population” (page 91, Brailsford’s Macedonia).

“The period immediately following the Berlin Congress demonstrated therefore, that Balkan chauvinist intent was not merely to occupy, govern and exploit Macedonia, but to eradicate the Macedonian culture, and superimpose its own culture upon a people alien to it. By guile, gun, religion and quasi-legal manipulation, the Balkan States attempted to divest the native Macedonians of their language, religion, folklore, literature, traditions and consciousness. The ultimate goal therefore, was to anaesthetize the Macedonian people, and then remold them into Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbians” (page 45 of A. Michael Radin’s book “IMRO and the Macedonian Question”).

Did it not once occur to Westerners that in the heart of Macedonia, perhaps there was a unique Macedonian culture living there? Did it not once occur to them that perhaps the Macedonians with their multicultural and multiethnic character did not want to be molded to fit the Western profile of what a nation should be? By throwing her

back to the Greeks and the Ottomans, was Macedonia punished for her stubborn ways, for refusing to be molded into a monolithic uni-cultural, pseudo-homogeneous nation? Only those who participated in the 1878 Berlin Congress and who forever committed Macedonia to suffer more cruelty and injustice can truly answer these questions. One thing is for certain however, as the West is now growing old and gaining wisdom and experience it is realizing that the way to peace and prosperity in a small planet is tolerance of minorities, democratic freedom and cultural and national pluralism. Macedonia as it turns out, always had those qualities. As for the rest of the new Balkan States, one day when they realize the error of their ways they will forever bear the shame of what they did to their neighbours, the Macedonians.

I know that words can do no justice to the suffering the Macedonian people endured since 1878, but I will do my best to describe what life was like to be ruled by the Ottomans, governed by the Greeks, pillaged by the Albanians and robbed and beaten by the villains of society. It has been said that education was a curse in Macedonia. No educated Macedonian lived to a ripe old age. If a man was educated, he died at the hands of his enemies, not because he was educated but because he was feared. The Ottomans feared him because he may rise up against them. The Greeks feared him because he may oppose them. The Bulgarians feared him because he may expose them. (If you wish to learn more about the horrors committed by the Ottomans in Macedonia, read Brailsford's book, Macedonia, Its races and their Future).

The 1878 Treaty of Berlin awakened the Moslem Rulers (Ottomans and Albanians) in the Balkans to the reality that their Empire came close to disintegrating. But instead of searching for a rational solution, the Ottomans did what they always did best, turn to violence. They took counter measures to suppress the "troublemakers" by extinguishing their rebellious spirit. In practice this manifested itself into a variety of punishments that included the following:

Taxes were raised to pay off Western loans. The Ottomans and Muslim Albanians were a predatory (parasitic) race and produced

nothing themselves. Instead they lived off the earning power of the Macedonians and other Christians.

To prevent further uprisings and rebellions, the Ottomans stepped up espionage activities and searches for weapons. In reality however, the weapons searches were nothing more than an excuse to take revenge and further pillage the Macedonian peasants. Those who could afford to pay bribes paid off the Ottomans and avoided misfortunes. Those who couldn't were tortured and usually beaten to death. If by any chance weapons were found, the entire village was burned to the ground. Even if the weapons belonged to a thug. The Ottomans were not above shaming or kidnapping Macedonian women either. In fact it was common practice for Muslim soldiers to grab Christian women while conducting raids on villages. (For a Macedonian woman death was preferable over a lifetime of shame). The Macedonians of the Ottoman era were extremely moral people and conducts of this nature were not taken lightly. Unfortunately, there was nothing that could be done to avenge the women, so women carried the burden of shame alone for the rest of their lives. No Christian was allowed to bear arms and defend his family and there was no one to complain to because in most cases the perpetrators and the villains were the law. No Muslim could be punished for doing harm to a Christian, no matter what the crime.

In addition to contending with the Ottoman authorities, Macedonians faced kidnappings and assaults from the Albanians. Any man, woman or child that ventured too far from the village exposed themselves to the risks of being kidnapped (an old Albanian pastime) by Albanian marauders or by Ottoman outlaws who demanded a hefty ransom for a safe return or face death if no ransom was paid.

There were also the roving Ottoman patrols that traveled the highways and if someone happened to cross paths with them, they would be robbed, beaten and humiliated in a number of different ways depending on the mood of the soldiers.

The greatest threat to Macedonian life came from the Bashi-buzouks or armed civilian Muslims. Most of the Bashi-buzouks were Albanian who made a career out of pillaging, burning Macedonian

villages and torturing the inhabitants. After 1878, Bashi-buzouk raids escalated to a point where they became intolerable. The Christians had no legal recourse to fight back. Being Muslims, the Bashi-buzouks were immune from legal prosecution. The only way Macedonians could fight back was to flee to the mountains and join the outlaws.

Let's not forget the annual routine homage and tributes paid to the Albanian clans for not burning the villages and crops, the local policemen for not humiliating and beating family members and the local hoods for not assaulting and bullying the women and children.

It would be an injustice if I didn't mention the way Ottomans treated women. No Macedonian woman was safe from the Ottomans. If a woman caught a Ottoman's eye there was no escape, she would be plucked kicking and screaming from her home and family, converted to Islam by force and thrown into a harem to become an object of lust. No woman was safe, not even a bride on her wedding day.

I want to mention here that after the Western Powers decided to do something about the Ottoman cruelty against the Macedonians, they began to record complaints from the people. Macedonians were encouraged to report acts of injustice and cruelty to the European consuls. All the complaints were recorded in what was referred to as "the blue books". What happened to the "blue books"? If anyone has any knowledge of their whereabouts please let me know. It is very important for the Macedonian people that these "blue books" be found.

By the time taxes and bribes were paid to the authorities, the warlords and the town hoods, a Macedonian family was left with 25 to 40 percent of their meager annual earnings to live on. To make ends meet Macedonian men were accustomed to taking on additional jobs within the Ottoman Empire or abroad to make enough to survive the winter.

It has been said that after twenty-five years of achieving autonomy, Bulgaria was thriving economically thanks to the cheap labour of the Macedonian migrant workers.

I want to mention here that Macedonians have always earned their living by sweat and blood and deserve more than they have been dealt with in the past. The maesto's (maistori) of ancient Rome were skilled Macedonians not Greeks as modern history claims them to be. Even the word "history" comes from the Macedonian saying "tie i storia" which translates to "they did that" or "they made that".

The West, including the USA and Canada were to some extent, also beneficiaries of cheap Macedonian labour. Western traders flooded Macedonia with cheaply manufactured goods and bankrupted the local (antiquated) industry (run by the guilds). Raw materials purchased from Macedonia were manufactured using cheap Macedonian labour and the finished products were sold back to the Macedonians at a profit.

A Macedonian could not rise above his tyrannical existence on his own because every time he did he was killed for his education, robbed of his wealth, kicked out of his home for his lands, murdered for defending his family and humiliated for his existence. This is not what Macedonians wanted for themselves, but those powerful enough, refused to help them. The Greek clergy who were responsible for the well being of the Macedonian people were the first to condemn them. Their first priorities were to Hellenize them so that they could steal their lands. The Greeks with their "superior attitude" despised the Macedonians because of their race (the Slavs were the enemy) and because of their agrarian abilities (which the Greeks loathed).

The Great Powers in their zeal to dominate the Balkans found themselves at odds with each other and by 1878 were either content with "doing nothing" or stifled by frustration and "turned their backs" on the mess they created.

Turkey, for the West was the goose that kept on laying golden eggs.

No excuses or apologies from the English and the French can make up for unleashing Turkey and Hellenism on Macedonia after 1878. No Macedonian, and for that matter, no human being should ever forgive the Western Powers for putting profit ahead of human life

and intentionally turning their backs on the Macedonian people. No argument can convince me that “that was the right thing to”.

Labeling people “Slav” and “Barbarian” because they were not educated does not make them inhuman and certainly does not excuse the “civilized” western societies for tormenting them. Here is what Petrovska has to say. “It is erroneous to dismiss peasant culture as backwards, simply because they are not literate cultures. Indeed the opposite is the case. Children were educated by way of story telling and folklore, which contained morals and lessons about life, relationships and their places in the world” (page 167, *Children of the Bird Goddess*). (If you want to learn more about life in Macedonia there is a gem of a little book written by Kita Sapurma and Pandora Petrovska entitled “*Children of the Bird Goddess*”, an oral history that spans over 100 years and explores the lives of four generations of Macedonian women. You MUST read this book, you will not be disappointed).

One has only to examine Macedonian traditions, customs, dress, folklore and attitude towards life to find an “old race” full of vigour, enduring hardships, living as it always lived close to nature, always craving everlasting peace. Macedonian songs are timeless records of sorrow and of hope that “someday this too will pass”.

Macedonians have survived to this day because they have a caring quality and a capacity to give and forgive, never wanting anything in return. Anyone who has visited a Macedonian home or has lived among Macedonians can attest to that.

Macedonia had done no ill against any nation to deserve her punishment from the Ottomans and the Greeks. Macedonians did not desire to be labeled “barbarian Slavs” or choose to be illiterate. It was “pure prejudice” on the part of Western Societies that degraded the Macedonian people to barbarian status and created the conditions for the Ottomans and the Greeks to abuse them. The West’s artificial creation of Greece and Hellenism and the Greek quest for purity and national homogeneity is what upset the “natural balance” in the Balkans. Macedonia, since Alexander’s time has been a “worldly” nation and has maintained her multi-ethnic, multi-cultural pluralistic character. If you take the Ottomans out of

Macedonia in the 19th century you will find a society of many nations working and living together in peace, each doing what comes naturally. Anyone who has lived in Macedonia can attest to that. It has always been “outsiders” that shifted the balance and disturbed the peace in the Balkans. While Western Europe slept through her “dark ages” the people of the Balkans lived in relative harmony for over 1,100 years. Each race played an important role in maintaining the social and political balance and the economic self-sufficiency of the region.

During the 19th century almost all Macedonians lived in village communities. There were no Greeks living in the Macedonian mainland and only a small minority lived in the coastal towns, islands and the larger cities. The majority of the villages were Macedonian with the odd Vlach village nestled here and there in the mountains. Macedonians spoke the Macedonian language and lived an agrarian life working the lands. Among the Macedonians lived some Vlachs who spoke both Vlach and Macedonian. Their main occupation was retail trade, running the local grocery stores and retail businesses. In addition to the Vlachs, were the roving Gypsies who traveled from village to village trading their wares. They traded pack animals like horses, mules and donkeys, repaired old and sold new flour sifters, loom reeds, and other fine crafts. They bartered with the village women and traded beads, string and sewing needles for beans and walnuts. To those that could afford it, they sold silk kerchiefs, hand made baskets and purses. With those who couldn't afford them they traded their wares for vegetables, eggs and a few bales of hay. Among themselves the Gypsies spoke their Gypsy dialect but with their customers they spoke Macedonian.

Another race that frequented the Macedonian landscape were the panhandlers from Epirus and Thessaly who performed magic on old copper pots and pans and made spoons and forks shine like mirrors. In addition to their own language, they too spoke Macedonian and were open to bartering for their wares and services.

Carpenters, stone masons, barrel makers, and woodcutters came from far and wide. They came from as far as Albania or as close as the poorest Macedonian village. For a fair wage, some rakija

(alcohol spiced with anise during distillation) and three meals a day, they built fences, porches, staircases and entire houses.

For the Macedonians, the soil provided most of life's necessities, the rest was bought, traded or bartered for.

The only desires Macedonians had in the 19th century were to rid themselves of the tyranny of the oppressive Ottomans. This was most evident in the communiques, appeals and manifestos of the legendary Macedonia Revolutionary Committee (more about this in part III).

While Macedonia was being choked by the Ottoman noose of oppression, tormented by Hellenism, and frustrated by Bulgarian deception, the Greek army in 1881 annexed Thessaly and in 1885 the Bulgarian army (with Russia's support) annexed Eastern Rumelia. While the Ottoman Empire was crumbling at the edges, it was tightening its grip ever harder on Macedonia. Looting, burning homes and murders were on the rise. More and more Macedonians were made homeless and forced to become outlaws. The brave ones took up arms and fought back only to see that their actions caused more deaths and misery. The Ottomans and their Albanian allies didn't care who they killed. If one Ottoman or Albanian died in battle, the army took revenge on the next village they encountered. Thousands of innocent women and children were murdered in revenge killings not to mention the assaults on countless young girls. Occupied homes with people inside were burned down and the inhabitants shot as target practice as they ran out to save themselves from the fire. Those too old or too sick to move died a horrible fiery death.

Many of the survivors from the burned out villages joined the outlaws in the mountains and as their ranks swelled they began to organize and fight back.

Western Europeans and Russians, on the other hand, were flooding the Ottoman Balkans on vacation, to do business or to lend a helping hand as missionaries or relief workers. They enjoyed all the freedoms and privileges as honorary citizens of the Ottoman Empire

under the protection of their county's flag, and paid nothing for the honour bestowed upon them, not even taxes.

To be continued in part III, events leading up to the Ilinden Uprising.

Before I finish with part II, in view of what is happening in Macedonia today, I would like to say a few words about how the Albanians came to be in Macedonia.

It has been said that soon after the Ottomans conquered Albania, Albanians began to convert to Islam. As Muslims, the Albanians to a large extent enjoyed the same privileges and advantages as their conquerors. The advantages of becoming a Muslim as opposed to staying Christian were obvious. Those who wanted to retain title to their lands did not hesitate to convert. In fact many realized that by converting they could amass wealth and increase their own importance at the expense of their Christian neighbours.

By the 19th century, about two-thirds of the Albanians embraced Islam and served in almost every capacity in the Ottoman administration including the Sultan's palace guard. Also by the 19th century a great deal of the Ottoman services became corrupt and self-serving. Being Muslims, the Albanians were protected from prosecution of crimes committed against the Christians. This encouraged them to perform predatory acts like kidnappings for ransom, illegal taxation, extortion, and forceful possession of property.

There are two documented ways, that I have come across, that describe how Albanians of the 19th century came to live in Macedonia, among the Macedonians.

1. To keep the Macedonians in check, the Ottomans created and strategically positioned Albanian villages inside Macedonia among the Macedonian Villages.
2. By expelling or killing a few families in a Macedonian village, Albanian bandits could claim squatters rights and move in. By the next generation, the children of the squatters would become the

“begs” of the village which made them legitimate landowners. Being in charge of the village they then appointed their own family members and trusted friends into positions of authority like tax farmers and policemen. In this manner, they could rule unchallenged.

Forceful occupation of villages was most prevalent during campaigns in the absence of the Ottoman army. When the Ottomans were sent to fight against Russia in the East or against Napoleon in Egypt, the Albanians sought their chance and moved in unabated. Here is an excerpt from Brailsford’s book about the habits of some Albanians. “He will rob openly and with violence but he will not steal...He will murder you without remorse if he conceives that you have insulted him”...(page 224 Macedonia its Races and their future).

To be fair, I want to mention that Albanians have their good qualities as well. Brailford speaks very highly of them when it comes to loyalty and honesty. As I mentioned earlier, under the right conditions Albanians can peacefully co-exist with other nationalities and be a contributing factor to the wealth of a nation. The Macedonians have always co-existed side by side with the Albanians. Also, the Albanians that fought to liberate Greece in Morea did not fight for Hellenism, they fought for the good of all the people of the Balkans, including the Macedonians.

There was also that one-third of the Albanian population who remained faithful to Christianity that equally suffered the injustices of the Greek clergy and the Ottoman authorities, that also deserves mentioning.

"People who originate from one and the same race, speak the same language, live together in harmony, and have the same customs, songs and mentality, constitute a nation, and the place where they live is their homeland. In this way, the Macedonians are a nation and their homeland is Macedonia" (Gjorgji Pulevski, 1875).

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Part III - Before 1903

In the previous article (part II) I covered events leading up to but not including the 1903 Ilinden Macedonian Uprising. Events covered included the 1878 Berlin congress and its effects on the Macedonian people.

In this article (part III) I will start where I left off in part II and cover events from about 1880 to about 1903 with a special focus on Macedonian affairs and events that led to the 1903 uprising.

The 1878 Treaty of Berlin set events in motion in the Balkans for the next forty years. The re-appearance of Ottoman soldiers, the worsening economy and the rain of terror imposed by the Greek clergy was crushing the spirits of the Macedonian people. In the meantime the economic situation of the Great Powers and the new Balkan States was improving daily.

In 1881, the Muhareem Decree gave Europeans complete control of Ottoman finances and trade markets. During the same year the Constantinople Conference of Great Powers agreed to the Greek annexation of Thessally and Epirus. Later that same year Austria-Hungary agreed to allow Serbia to annex parts of Macedonia in some future time. Four years later, Bulgaria with some Russian help annexed Eastern Rumelia.

While the Western Powers were contemplating the “Eastern Question” and collecting returns from Ottoman loans, the new Balkan states were plotting Macedonia’s demise. Here is what each of them had to say;

“Bulgaria’s whole future depends on Macedonia, without her our State will be without importance or authority. Solun (Salonika) must be the main port of this State, the grand window to illuminate the entire building. If Macedonia does not belong to us, Bulgaria will never be firmly based”.

“Macedonia is the lung of Greece, without it the rest of Greece would be condemned to death. For Greece to become a greater power she must expand into Macedonia.”

“We (Serbia) are ready to enter into any combination if necessary in order to prevent the Macedonian Question being settled in any way that harms our vital interests, without which Serbia cannot survive”.

In addition to being handed back to the Ottomans, the 1878 Treaty of Berlin now subjected Macedonia to three new tyrants. In time, Macedonia would be subjected to all kinds of evil but the most cunning would turn out to be Bulgarian chauvinism.

The Macedonian people knew very well where they stood with the Greeks. Greek policies were straightforward, Hellenize everyone by any means possible, force and brutality included. The Bulgarian approach was very different. The Bulgarians were interested in educating the Macedonian masses into believing that they were Bulgarians. Anyone who showed any opposition didn't live to tell about it. And so became the legacy of so many educated Macedonian young men.

In part II of this article I explained, with ample evidence, that Greece was a “Western creation” to achieve two objectives. One, to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean Sea and two, to break up the Ottoman occupied Slav lands into small, nationally divergent, easily manageable and loyal States (a solution to the “Eastern Question”). Created by the Western Powers, the new Balkan States would be loyal to their creator, British politicians were counting on it. The Western powers introduced “nationalism” in the Balkans as a way of replacing the Ottoman Empire, not with a single state but with many “divergent” and manageable sized States. Nationalism however, was not a way with which Balkan people identified before the 19th century. For over 2,300 years the region was without borders and without a sense of national identity. For over 1,800 years, the people in the region lived with “religion as the only unifying force” which brought them together and allowed them to live in peace. Freedom of movement allowed the diverse people to travel anywhere within the empire to settle and mix with other people. So, how does one create “national consciousness” where one does not exist?

Ignoring the fact that the Ottoman Empire of the 19th century was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural pluralistic society, the Western

Powers initiated the nation building process anyway. To them, it didn't matter what kind of "nations" they were building provided that the new nations were a "non-Slav" singular society that agreed to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean. While the Western Powers were trying to break up the Balkans into small and divergent states, Russia was promoting "Panslavism" to unite all the Slavs under Russian leadership.

The national awakening of Serbia was an accident that couldn't be helped but Greece was created by design. Greece was the opposite of Serbia and a solution for keeping the balance of power in the Balkans. While Serbia was destined to become a Slav State, Greece would be destined to become the "opposite". The name "Greece" was chosen to denote a "Latin" lineage, to represent the Latin "Romaos" (Roman) character of the people. The name "Hellas" was later chosen by Hellenized Phanariots to denote a lineage from the old City States of antiquity. Both of these names were foreign to the 19th century Balkans, but ideal to reflect the character of the new State.

The pre-19th century Phanariots has no notion of nationalism or knowledge of the Ancient City States. Their aim was to drive the Ottomans out of the Empire and keep the Empire intact so that they could rule it themselves. But this was not what the Western Powers wanted.

The process of Hellenization began by educating some Phanariots about the existence of the old City States and their exploits. Phanariots that studied abroad, London in particular, were seduced by the eloquently written, romantic stories about a people that lived at the bottom of the Balkans a long time ago. Phanariots were especially thrilled when they were received by Westerners as the descendents of those Ancient people. Not all Phanariots were Hellenized or convinced to take the Hellenic road, some still wanted to re-create the Byzantine Empire ("Megali Idea") but the West gave them no such choice.

It was one thing to "create a nation" and another to "give it life and a past". The idea of modeling the new Greece after the old City States was well received but lacked continuity. No one could explain how

the Greeks progressed from the old City States to the present, pre-19th century history has no record of it. There was no Greek culture and no Greek language that would tie the Modern Greek to the old City State citizen.

With some creative imagination and a lot of convincing, the problem was solved. Ancient history was “re-engineered” to fit the modern Greek model. Yes, read your (fake) classical history and learn how the Mighty Macedonian Empire was “Hellenized”, not by a powerful race, not by super intelligent beings, but by “the vanquished and subjugated” people of the old City-States. Alexander the Great, the most hated man of the old City-States, the King who wiped out and brutally crushed the spirits of the old City-State citizens, is now the “Great King of the Greeks” whom they revere and hold in such high honor. What hypocrisy!!! Perhaps some day, the English people will crown “Sitting Bull” as their King and rally around him (no offence to the native people of North America).

Altering classical history to say that the Ancient Macedonians were Hellenized, does not explain how and why there are “Slavs” all over the Balkans today. Thousands of years of Slav influence and culture could not be easily erased, but thanks to the ingenuity of the Western mind that problem too was solved. When the Westerners began to write the new “Greek” history, they quickly discovered that there was no continuity to tie the Modern Greeks to the Ancient City-States. Ancient Macedonia extinguished all the City-State cultures when she annexed them. The only continuity from the City-States to the Roman era was through Ancient Macedonia. Only through a Hellenized Ancient Macedonia could modern writers claim continuity for the Greeks. It was there and then that the “history revisionists” decided to KILL Macedonia in order to keep Greece alive. There is NO Greece without Macedonia! If Greece is to live then she must inherit everything that was Macedonian.

Even after that however, there was still the “Slav problem”. The Slavs were always in the way of Greek Nationhood and for these reasons the “Real Macedonians” became and still are Greece’s worst enemy. The Greek zeal to become “who they cannot be” was transformed into jealousy and hatred for Macedonia and her people. From the outset, the Greek State deliberately chose Macedonia and

the Macedonian people as “the enemy” as is so often eloquently put and without hesitation announced for the world to hear. Again, thanks to the ingenuity and brilliance of the western mind the Slav problem for Greece was solved with the creation of “Bulgaria”.

“What is not Greek must be Bulgarian, what is not Bulgarian must be Greek, there is no such thing as Macedonian”, are words echoed to this day. This is what Macedonians faced and must face, lived and must live, every day of their lives both at home and abroad from the 19th century to this day.

The 19th century creation of Bulgaria was the “answer” to covering up all remaining evidence of the existence of a Macedonia outside of the “Hellenic model”.

Never scientifically proven, the so-called “Slav invasions” were concocted to cover up thousands of years of Macedonian culture and influence in the Balkans (and beyond). Modern history, without scientific proof, claims that the Ancient Macedonians died off (mysteriously to the last one) and were replaced by the “newcomer Slavs”. It was later declared that the Slavs living in Macedonia were actually Bulgarians of sorts.

To divide the Bulgarians from the Slav fold and to show that they were a distinct society, different from other Slavs (such as the Serbs), the non-Balkan name “Bulgaria” was chosen to represent a Balkan State created for the first time in the 19th century. The name “Bulgaria” is derived from the river “Volga, allegedly where the Bulgarians came from. We are also led to believe that the Bulgarians were descendents of a small Tartar/Ottoman tribe that invaded the region a long time ago and were assimilated by the Slavs.

So according to Western sources, Bulgarians are not exactly pure Slavs or pure Tartar/ Ottoman but a mix of both, enough to make them different from other Slavs and enough to divide them from the Slav fold. Being part Slav, Bulgarians could lay claim to the “Slav speaking residents of Macedonia” on account that they too were Slav. Being part Tartar/Ottoman and a descendent of the “Volga” made the Bulgarians newcomers in their own land. Thus being newcomers to the Balkans, the Bulgarians could not lay claim to the

heritage of Ancient Macedonia. Bulgarians however, could lay claims to items that did not fit the Hellenic model like the Modern Macedonian (Slav) Culture and language.

More on this in future articles. If you wish to learn more about the above you will find useful information in George Macaulay Trevelyan's book "British History in the Nineteenth Century (1782 – 1901)", Longmans 1927.

After 1878, while the Macedonian economy was crashing down by leaps and bounds, the Bulgarian economy was improving dramatically. This was partly due to the cheap labour provided by a large influx of Macedonian pechalbari (migrant workers).

Experiencing a very different life in Sofia in contrast to life in the village, many Macedonian pechalbari were seduced into believing the Bulgarian propaganda (Macedonians are Bulgarians).

After 1878, the first Macedonians to take up arms were those who were wronged and wanted to see justice done. Soon however, they realized that their efforts were futile and their revenge only resulted in the loss of innocent lives (relatives and neighbours were punished for their crimes, sometimes by death).

Macedonian leaders came to the conclusion that what they truly wanted could only be achieved if the Ottomans were expelled from Macedonia for good.

It was the charismatic humanitarian William Gladstone, a British Prime Minister three times, who uttered the words "Macedonia for the Macedonians" which rang out like loud church bells throughout Macedonia. "Macedonia for the Macedonians" was the signal that rallied the Macedonians into action and gave them hope that finally the West would support their cause. In spite of his great sympathy for the Macedonian people, unfortunately, Gladstone was not in a position to help. The best the Great Powers could offer were "reforms". A great number of reforms were drafted and agreed upon but never implemented. The Ottoman Pashas continued to humour the Westerners with reams and reams of fictional statistics and accomplishments while the Begs (feudal lords) continued to

dominate the “Chiflik” (estates) and squeeze the village peasants out of their existence. The only visible reforms were rail and road improvements sponsored by western companies who were able to divert Ottoman finances from the state budgets. Peasants who owned some land were taxed so excessively that they had to work on Sundays at road and bridge building to catch up on back taxes. To get such a job, they had to resort to bribery.

As if that was not enough, in 1889 the tax burden was further increased by re-imposing a personal tax of seven shillings per year for each newborn son, reduced only when the boy was able to work at age fifteen. Some of these taxes were raised to assist small-scale manufacturing, which was largely owned by foreign investors. Village peasants were forced to sell, for next to nothing, their most valued possessions, hand-made crafts, old coins and heirlooms to pay for these taxes.

To further aggravate the situation, lawless acts by the Ottoman authorities, without any avenue for appeal, contributed to the oppressive climate in the villages. In addition to pillaging, Ottoman soldiers now plundered the farms and villages for their daily sustenance. The Ottoman administration was in such disarray that suppliers of the military were not paid for long periods of time and were refusing to feed the army.

To counter the plundering, peasant militias began to form but were soon outlawed by the Ottoman authorities.

By late 1890, those Macedonians who had land couldn't afford to work it because of high taxes and frequent raids. Those who worked for the Bega were at the mercy of their landlord without rights or legal recourse. The courts were clearly working against the Macedonians and beyond “external intervention” there was no way to challenge their tyrannical authority.

Though the land was fertile, there was no incentive to work. Agrarian life became a burden, filling village life with hopelessness and crushing the spirit of the Macedonian peasant.

Many Macedonian men left their families and turned to pechalbarstvo (migrant work), travelling to various foreign countries in search of work but often returned home poorer due to high travel and lodging expenses. It was during these times that large emigrant Macedonian communities began to form in cities like Sofia, Paris, London, etc. Besides migrant workers, Macedonian young men also traveled abroad to attend higher education. They too became involved in the growing Macedonian worker communities. By the late 1890's over 100,000 Macedonian men were working or studying outside of Macedonia. Cafe conversations, dominated by discussions of "what to do to improve the situation at home" became commonplace. It was clear to many that the discontentment they were experiencing was not a local or village issue, but a matter that enveloped all of Macedonia. It was also clear that Turkey would not allow Macedonia to protect herself or Ottoman courts to rule in Macedonia's favour. It became clear to all that the only option open to a Macedonian was outright rebellion, a rebellion that would have common purpose, tactical mobilization and central direction. There were many lessons to be learned from the great deeds and disasters of the American war of Independence, the French Revolution and others.

By the late 1890's, Ottoman tyranny was not the only ill in Macedonia. There was also the process of Hellenization, Greek propaganda and the Greek clergy to contend with. Beyond that, there was Bulgarian propaganda that was becoming more venomous by the day.

On another front, escalated Bulgarian activities in Macedonia prompted Greece and Serbia to reconsider an old alliance (1866-67) of restoring ecclesiastical unity under the Patriarch in order to take away from the Exarch. This alliance, due to Greek greed, for the time did not work out. This however, would be a prelude for a future and deadlier alliance that would last to this day.

By 1890, the rebellion started to organize and gain momentum. The students were the first to take action. A student revolutionary organization was formed in Switzerland and one in Bulgaria. Both used various tactics to combat anti-Macedonian chauvinist Balkan propaganda. Organized in 1891, the group in Bulgaria allied itself

with the organization of Macedonian emigrant workers (Pechalbari) in Sofia and had much success. In time more organizations sprung up in Russia, Britain and Greece but none could match the achievements of the Sofia based “Young Macedonian Literary Society” under the tutelage of Petar Pop Arsov. This Society of young Macedonians formulated its own constitution and managed the revolutionary publication “Loza” (Vine). The first issue of Loza came out in January of 1892, followed by six more publications before the Society was denounced by the Greek and Serbian press, and claimed as “its own” by the Bulgarian press. According to official Bulgarian State policy, “Macedonians were Bulgarians” and any worthwhile Macedonian creation belonged to Bulgaria.

While émigré Macedonian students were fighting Greek and Bulgarian propaganda and shoring up Western support, an historic moment inside Macedonia was about to unveil. It was October 23rd, 1893 in Solun (Salonika) when two high school teachers, Damjan Gruev and Anton Dimitrov together with Petar Pop Arsov, a former editor of Loza and Hristo Tatarchev, a doctor got together in bookshop owner Ivan Nikolov’s house for an informal meeting. The main point of discussion was the plight of the Macedonian people and what to do about it. As word got around a committee was formed, more Macedonians got involved and a second (formal) meeting was held on February 9th, 1894. The topics of discussion included the drafting of a constitution to guide the committee. By the end of the meeting the committee made the following resolutions:

The committee will be revolutionary in nature and will remain secret.

Its revolutionary activities will be confined to inside Macedonia’s borders.

Irrespective of nationality or religion, any Macedonian can become a member of the committee.

The committee also set out for itself the following objectives, which were later ratified at the first Revolutionary Congress held in Resen in August 1894:

destroy the Ottoman social system, remain an “independent” organization, and seek Macedonian autonomy.

The organization became known as Vnatrezhna (Internal) Makedonska (Macedonian) Revolutsionerna (Revolutionary) Organizatsia (Organization), VMRO (IMRO).

Being of clandestine nature, IMRO had some difficulties recruiting new members but within a year or so, its influence extended beyond Solun and into the rest of Macedonia. Initially, the organization was more ideological and less practical with the majority of its recruits being teachers, most of whom taught at the Exarchate schools inside Macedonia. To rally the masses the organization needed to educate them and bring them in line with IMRO’s objectives. For that, it needed a charismatic leader who was able to talk to people at their own level, and who was free to travel without too much interference from the authorities. The man who answered that call was Gotse Delchev, a man of vision matched by only a few, the father of the Macedonian Revolution and the soul of the movement. (If you want to learn more about the IMRO leadership, you must read Michael Radin’s book “IMRO and the Macedonian Question”). Gotse was a realist and at the same time an idealist who loved people, hated tyranny and saw the world as a place of many cultures living together in peace. As a realist Gotse knew that in order for a revolution to be successful it had to be a “moral revolution” of mind, heart and soul of an enslaved people. People needed to feel like people with rights and freedoms and not like slaves. With that in mind Gotse set out to build up a revolutionary conscience in the Macedonian population and thus set the revolutionary wheels in motion. Gotse’s installment as undisputed leader of the IMRO was consolidated during the Solun Congress of 1896 after which IMRO began to massively organize.

Gotse’s abilities to “listen and learn” brought him close to the problems of ordinary people who wanted freedom but also wanted to preserve their religions, culture and way of life. With Gotse’s field research in mind, the IMRO strategy was to “give the people what they want” and win them over. Initially, the strategy worked

well and won IMRO the support it needed and by 1896, it was able to exert influence to a point where it acted as a state within a state taking over administrative positions from the Ottomans, leading boycotts against Ottoman institutions and offering isolated villages protection from Greek and Bulgarian sponsored brigands. In time, IMRO operatives were able to penetrate Ottoman economic, educational and even judicial functions. The downside of “giving the people what they want”, opened the doors for Bulgarian infiltration.

By “attitude” and by use of the Greek language, it was easy to recognize Greek influence but it was not as simple to recognize the Bulgarian one. While the Greeks cared nothing about Macedonian affairs and loathed the Macedonian language, the Bulgarians were a part of Macedonian affairs and eloquently spoke the Macedonian language. By far the largest Bulgarian infiltration into Macedonian affairs took place in Sofia among the pechalbari. As I mentioned earlier, the cosmopolitan lifestyle in Sofia, a far cry from life in the village, seduced some Macedonians to succumb to Bulgarian propaganda which resulted in the formation of the “External Macedonian Revolutionary Organization” better known as the “Supreme Macedonian Committee”. This organization was formed in Sofia in March of 1895 and was termed the “Trojan Horse” of IMRO by Gotse Delchev. The initial membership consisted of emigrant Macedonian nationalists but in time its leadership was infiltrated by officers from the Bulgarian State army ranks. The objectives, on the surface of this “two faced” organization termed “Vrhovist” (Supremacist) by the IMRO, were to fight for Macedonia’s independence by armed intervention in an aggressive revolutionary manner. Its true nature however, (concealed from the people) was to undermine the IMRO by subordinating its central committee to its own “Supremacist directives”. This and the fact that Vrhovism masqueraded itself as “Macedonian patriotism” in the eyes of the Macedonian people very much disturbed Gotse Delchev. True to his nature of keeping an open mind, Delchev along with Gruev took a trip to Sofia in hopes of reconciling their differences with the Vrhovists but came back more disillusioned. Instead of receiving a handshake, on March 20th, 1896, Gotse was informed that IMRO would no longer be supported by Bulgaria and all finances and arms would be cut off and from here on forward, the

Vrhovists would decide what actions the IMRO would take inside Macedonia. This was indeed an attempt by the Vrhovists to usurp control of IMRO. Disappointed but not disillusioned, Gotse turned to “Mother Russia” for assistance, but there too he found no welcome reception. Russia had no interest in helping IMRO because there were no advantages to gain from liberating Macedonia (given Russia’s current relationship with the Western Powers).

Due to IMRO’s popularity, strength and ability to recognize a “Trojan Horse”, the Bulgarian led organization failed to achieve its true objectives. After that it resorted to violent attacks and assassination attempts with the aim of eliminating the entire IMRO structure and its leadership. It used armed interventions in order to provoke Ottoman reprisals against innocent village peasants and put the blame on IMRO. By selective propaganda and by vilifying the Ottomans in the eyes of the world, the Bulgarian led organization was hoping for a Great Power intervention to weaken the Ottoman and at the same time create a climate for a Bulgarian invasion (disguised as a “liberation” of the oppressed Macedonians).

In the meantime both Delchev and Gruev were promoted to the rank of “District Inspector of Schools” in their employment, enabling them to travel unabated and without suspicion. Using inspection tours as cover, they were able to find ways to purchase and smuggle arms into Macedonia. They also took time to address Macedonian villages and make personal contacts with the village chiefs. Many people flocked to hear what these legendary figures of men, patriots, and saviors had to say. Unfortunately, lecturing out in the open placed IMRO leaders at risk from spies. As a result on one occasion, Gotse was arrested by the Ottoman authorities in May of 1896 and spent 26 days in jail. When the Ottomans couldn’t find anything to charge him with, Gotse was released.

Bulgarian influence was not limited to Vrhovist actions alone. Bulgarian undercover agents were dispatched to Solun to spy on IMRO activities and report back to the Bulgarian State. The Exarchate also had policies of its own and continued to rally the Macedonian youth for its own cause. When it seemed like the IMRO was unbreakable, the Vrhovists resorted to infiltrating the IMRO leadership itself, which in time brought them some success.

Bulgarian interference in IMRO policies caused hardships and internal squabbling between executive committee members and eventually caused the organization to split into hostile factions. This undermined IMRO's credibility with the outside world.

The Vrhovists badly wanted to provoke Turkey so that they could "liberate" Macedonia, but the Great Powers, especially Russia and Britain "didn't buy it" and saw their actions as provocative and dangerous. While the Vrhovist leadership agreed to curb its provocative actions, its armed wing of insurgents however, had already penetrated and captured parts of Eastern Macedonia.

Even though the invasion lasted about two days, it became clear as to "who was who" and the true Vrhovist agenda was exposed. After that IMRO gave the Vrhovists a stern warning to "stay out of Macedonia" and to use Delchev's words, "whoever works for the unification with Greece or Bulgaria is a good Greek or Good Bulgarian but NOT a good Macedonian". After that while IMRO worked for a "Macedonia for the Macedonians" the Bulgarian Supreme Committee openly worked for a "Macedonia for the Bulgarians". IMRO leadership strove to purify IMRO from the Vrhovist infiltration. In essence, the IMRO constitution was bolstered to exclude Vrhovist demands and still be able to give the Macedonian people what they wanted. The IMRO leadership, without much success, made attempts to infiltrate and sabotage the Vrhovist Supreme Committee by making frequent trips to Sofia and attempting to rally dissident emigrant forces inside Bulgaria.

While the Vrhovists were plotting against IMRO and the Macedonian people from the north, a new menace was brewing from the south. On April 9th, 1897 armed Greek bands began to aggressively cross into Macedonia. The Ottomans protested this action to the Great Powers but the Greeks denied responsibility insisting all along that it was the Macedonian Cheti. It didn't take too long before the Ottomans took the offensive and drove the Greeks out of Thessaly. When the Ottomans were about overtake the entire country the Great Powers intervened on Greece's behalf to once again save her. The Greek Government in charge of the invasion fell out of grace and when a new Government was elected, it agreed to pay a hefty fine, which consisted of four million

Ottoman pounds, as well as giving up Thessaly to the Ottomans. In addition to losing grace, Greece had to relinquish control of her own finances (to the Great Powers) to ensure prompt payment of the fine. The Great Powers, without German support forced the Sultan to accept the offer and sign a peace deal. The Germans never forgave the Greeks for lying to them about their aggressive actions against the Ottomans. The Germans at that time were responsible for Turkey.

Outside of Greek brigand actions, for the moment at least, Greece was not a direct threat to IMRO.

IMRO demonstrated great leadership by its ability to organize Macedonia into seven revolutionary districts (Solun, Serres, Strumitsa, Shtip, Skopje, Bitola and Endrene {Macedonian Dardanelles}). It also demonstrated its weaknesses. Having allied itself with the poor village peasants and striving to refrain from obligations and debts, IMRO found itself strapped for finances. The IMRO committee was unable to raise all the necessary funds to finance its campaigns. While the leadership turned a blind eye, the local commanders resorted to kidnapping rich landowners, merchants and foreign dignitaries for ransom. Kidnappings did not exclude foreign missionaries like Miss Stone who fell into the hands of Sandanski's Cheta (armed band). Taken by the plight of her captors, Miss Stone herself voluntarily made sure the ransom was paid in full.

Short of finances mostly due to the unfriendly terms with the Vrhovist Supreme Command in Sofia, IMRO found itself lacking the necessary arsenal to wage war. Subordination to Bulgarian demands was out of the question so Gotse had to look elsewhere to get his weapons. Efforts were made to purchase weapons from Greece, Albania and even from the Ottomans themselves but without too much success. By 1897, the situation was getting desperate so the IMRO leadership resorted to purchasing from the black market, even stealing weapons. One such purchase was made from the Bulgarian Military. The military allowed the sale of outdated guns but later refused to sell cartridges, fearing the weapons may be turned against them. On October 1900, Chakalarov, a local chief in the Lerin/Kostur regions who spoke

Greek, dressed up as an Albanian pretending to be from Ianitsa, was successful in purchasing some arms from Athens. Later attempts by others however, were not so successful. On one occasion, a translator betrayed the purchasers to the Ottoman console on the advice of a Greek priest. After that the Ottomans trusted this translator and made him a sergeant in their gendarme. He served the Ottomans well and brought them much success in their search and destroy missions until he discovered he could make even more money by taking bribes before turning people in. As a result of this man's actions many band members were killed in many villages.

The lack of sufficient arms brought home the realization that this "uprising" was going to be a long one. Here again Gotse and the IMRO leadership proved their worth by adopting a policy of self-arming. With a little bit of skill on weapons manufacture, learned from the Armenian Revolutionaries, IMRO set up a number of munitions factories in remote and secluded areas, capable of producing home made bombs and other explosives. Unfortunately, in 1900 during a raid at one of these factories, Dame Gruev was arrested by the Ottoman authorities and imprisoned in Bitola. He came back to active duty in April 1903.

In spite of all efforts made to obtain them, the Macedonian "Cheti" lacked arms but had plenty of courage to make up for it, which in time put fear in the Ottoman hearts.

As IMRO grew beyond its ideological stage, it began to recruit, equip and train fighters. Volunteers were recruited mainly from the villages, young men who were willing to fight for their freedom. Those who were in trouble with the law (brigands) were armed and recruited into active duty. Those were men who flourished by attacking Ottomans and stealing from them. They were admired for their courage and ability to live free. They were men who practiced the art of war, knew how to live in the open, how to ambush and how to hide. They were the men who taught the young Macedonian recruits to fight and win.

The rest were reservists and lived at home, only called to duty as required. Each reservist was expected to purchase and secure his own rifle and ammunition. Recruitment was carried out in utmost secrecy. Even women were enlisted in the Macedonian revolution,

but their role was limited to cooking, washing, mending clothing and nursing the wounded.

The primary role of a fighter was to defend the people from Ottoman and brigand attacks. The Cheti consisted of about five to ten men, organized for rapid mobilization and quick response. The goal was to have one Cheta responsible for one village (preferably their own) in all of Macedonia. The leader of each Cheta was chosen for his abilities to lead his men, and more so, for the peoples' confidence in him to protect their village. To respond quickly, the Cheta had to be familiar with the village's terrain and escape routes. To maintain secrecy all orders were given by word of mouth.

The IMRO mobilization managed to elude the Ottoman authorities for a long time. However, an unfortunate discovery of some explosives accidentally uncovered the secret and led the Ottoman militia on wide "search and destroy missions". The militia's conduct unfortunately was less than honourable when the soldiers took to torturing innocent people and burning properties in order to obtain confessions. The Cheti's responsibility was to ambush the militia, using guerrilla tactics, before they entered villages and prevent them from doing harm. This however, did not always work so some of the Cheta Chiefs resorted to retaliations and reprisals for crimes already committed. Although poorly armed and vastly under-manned (sometimes as high as 10 Ottomans to 1 Macedonian), the Cheti fought fierce battles and gained legendary reputations among both the Ottomans and the Macedonians. Unfortunately, as the Ottoman authorities became more aware of IMRO's intentions the Ottoman militias began to swell with soldiers. If that was not enough, at about the same time the Exarchate, suspecting IMRO affiliation, began to dismiss Macedonian teachers on mass. Even though most Macedonian teachers despised working for the Exarchate, they used the schools as a means of promoting IMRO's aims. They frequently gave lectures, taught Macedonian patriotic songs, canvassed house to house etc. This was a blow to IMRO.

A more severe blow however, came in April of 1897 in what was termed as the "Goluchowski-Muraviev Agreement". This was an agreement drawn up by Tsar Nikolas II of Russia and Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria regarding the future of the remainder of the

Ottoman Empire. In part, the agreement stated that, at some future time, the Macedonian territory would be divided equally between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. In other words, when the Great Powers got their fill of Turkey and abandoned her, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria were welcome to take their turn. This indeed was bad news and as history showed, it was devastating for IMRO and disastrous for the Macedonian people.

In about 1898, the Bulgarian Exarchate, instructed by the Bulgarian Prime Minister, created a Vrhovist organization inside Macedonia, based in Solun known as the “Revolutionary Brotherhood” which in turn began to form its own Cheti. While pretending to be part of IMRO, the purpose of this organization was to carry out terrorist activities and in the eyes of the world, discredit the real IMRO.

By the year 1900, IMRO’s enemies were growing in numbers and intensifying in ferocity. IMRO’s woes were just beginning when they discovered that the Vrhovists had dispatched six assassins to murder Delchev and Sandanski (a legendary Cheta chief affectionately known as the “Tsar of Pirin”). The Vrhovist Cheti were raining terror on Macedonian villages provoking the Ottomans to act. Although never proven, it was alleged that the Vrhovist leaders were working with the Ottomans in successfully arresting members of IMRO, destroying munitions depots and torturing, raping and murdering people. Even the Ottomans themselves participated in sabotage tactics. Several Greek spies were killed at one time and the IMRO was blamed. As a result of this, many organizers were rounded up and arrested. In reality however, it was Ottoman Begs who committed the crimes as was later discovered. The same Begs were seen attacking Ottoman tax collectors.

Failing to assassinate Delchev and Sandanski, the six assassins, in their frustration, turned to attacking people, burning down villages and stealing money and claiming it to be the work of IMRO. Several important leaders, including the famous “Marko Lerinski” (the “Tsar of Lerin”), Cheta leader of the Lerin and Kostur Regions, was killed in these attacks.

All was not lost however, during the next attack, Sandanski was ready for the Vrhovists and in September 1902, sent them packing.

The Ottomans did the rest by crushing the Vrhovist remnants in November of the same year.

The disturbances and civil strife were enough to convince Turkey that yet another uprising may be imminent and that she should take action to prevent it. As usual, violence was answered with more violence. The Ottomans initiated a wide campaign of search and destroy missions exacting serious retributions and terror on the village populations. In addition to regular Ottoman troops, the Ottomans now enlisted reserves from the Albanian Muslim fold. Every bridge, railway cutting and railway tunnel was guarded. Also, every village had a garrison of ten or more troops guarding it. While the Ottoman troops were content with “fighting it out” with the Cheti then retiring to their barracks, the Albanian reservists avoided direct confrontations and preferred to join the Bashi-Bazouks (armed civilian Muslims) in pillaging and plundering the villages. These gendarmes, recruited from the Albanian Gheg Muslim community, had a vested interest in disorder. The gendarmes allowed law-breakers to exist so that they could keep their employment. They rarely engaged in combat and their meager pay was always in arrears so they readily accepted bribes to make their living. Both the Patriarchate and Exarchate were known to bribe the gendarmes in order to allow Greek and Bulgarian brigands to function freely.

To make a bad situation worse, at the end of August 1902, the Vrhovists showed up in Macedonia uninvited and began to issue orders directly to the local chiefs to start the rebellion. According to Vrhovist plans the rebellion was ordered to begin September 20th, 1902. This was news to IMRO. This latest bold Vrhovist action turned a lot of heads including that of Vasil Chakalarov. Chakalarov was a respected chief and managed to sway the people away from the Vrhovists. But the Vrhovists were not finished and began to publicly accuse Chakalarov and the others of being cowards and peasants for not wanting to fight. When that still didn't work, Chakalarov was personally called a thief, allegedly having stolen a fortune from the Vrhovist money allocated for purchasing arms. Fortunately the Macedonian people knew that Chakalarov was a decent man. They also knew that the Vrhovists didn't contribute any

funds for purchasing arms. Left alone, unable to start the rebellion, the Vrhovists tucked their tails and went elsewhere to cause trouble.

This latest Vrhovist action did not go unnoticed by the Ottomans and put IMRO in a difficult situation. The Vrhovists, for a long time wanted to get IMRO into a fight with the Ottoman army but so far were not successful. This time unfortunately, their wishes were about to come true. The Vrhovists believed that a fight with IMRO would weaken Turkey enough to make a Bulgarian invasion possible. They encouraged the Cheti Chiefs to “start the insurrection and Bulgaria would finish it” for them. “Bulgaria has hundreds of thousands of troops standing by and will come to your rescue as soon as the first shot is fired” is what the Vrhovists were preaching to the Macedonian chiefs.

IMRO knew that its fighters were not ready for a frontal attack with the Ottoman militia. They also knew that fighting or not, the Ottoman militia was going to destroy Macedonia village by village one way or another. The Vrhovists on the other hand, could not be trusted for their help because they had no intention of honouring their promises, their actions made that point very clear in the past.

In either case, IMRO had no choice but to act soon. The search and destroy missions were putting many innocent people in jeopardy including women and children. Local informants, Greek, and Bulgarian brigands did not hesitate to inform on the villages, especially if they had an axe to grind. On many occasion Patriarchate and Exarchate brigands (hired goons) were put out of action by the Cheti and that made their benefactors angry, who in turn informed on the villages. Brigands were hired to harass and exact terror on villagers to sway them to change allegiance from one church to another. The Cheti were fierce fighters and fought gallantly when it came to protecting their villages but were undermanned and poorly armed. As much as they wanted to they were not capable of always standing up to the large and well-equipped Ottoman militia. The militia on the other hand, did not always operate under the best of ethics and was open to bribes. The poor people who couldn't afford bribes fared the worst. Some say it was less of a punishment to produce a rifle than not to have one at all. Some resorted to purchasing rifles and turning them in just so

that they received a lesser punishment. On many occasions the houses of those suspected of aiding the Cheta were burned to the ground. The Ottomans did not even hesitate to jail old women accused of that crime. Historical accounts show that during the height of the search and destroy activities the jails in Macedonia were filled beyond capacity. In fact a Solun jail with the capacity for 500 was holding 900 prisoners (some were held in the White Tower). There is an old Macedonian saying, “there is nothing worse than being locked up in a Ottoman jail”.

On January 31st, 1903, the Ottomans declared IMRO illegal and sought ways to destroy it. The bad news for IMRO gave the Vrhovist the necessary momentum they needed to become a wedge between those in IMRO who wanted an immediate uprising, and those of IMRO who believed that an uprising at this point in time was suicidal. Gotse Delchev was against this “willing sacrifice” and was hoping to find a better solution, but time was running out.

A second Solun Congress, dominated by the Vrhovists was staged in February of 1903. Delchev and most of IMRO’s loyal supporters did not attend. A resolution was reached, but not ratified by the regional committees, that an uprising would take place on Ilinden, on the 2nd of August 1903. To weaken the Ottomans, the Vrhovists staged a number of bombings and terrorist acts. The Solun to Tsary Grad railway was bombed on March 18th as was the Solun Ottoman bank a month later. This did not weaken the Ottomans as expected but instead it brought more Ottoman troops into Macedonia and further escalated the violence against innocent civilians. If that was not enough, the sudden rise in violence against Ottoman institutions was not well received by European investors and businessmen who saw Ottoman Macedonia as a safe place to invest. The few lonely voices in London calling for Macedonian support were quickly drowned out by the many voices of discontent calling for the demise of the terrorists.

Tragically, Gotse Delchev was killed by the Ottomans in Banitsa on May 4th, 1903 a day after the IMRO Smilevo Congress had started. Termed the Bitola Congress, the purpose of the Smilevo Congress was to review the resolutions from the Vrhovist dominated Solun Congress held earlier in the same year. Damjan Gruev (a native of

Smilevo) chaired the Congress and tried hard to realistically present the situation by arguing for and against an early uprising. When the matter was put to a vote however, the majority declared themselves in favour of an uprising. With these words “better an end with horrors than horrors without end”, Gruev also voted in support of the Ilinden rebellion. From here on there was no turning back. A general staff was elected with Gruev as the head and preparations for the uprising began. In due time plans were made, a military strategy was prepared, weapons, medical supplies and food-stuffs were requisitioned and stock piled, Cheti were organized and training drills performed.

On July 26th, 1903, by a dispatch to the Great Powers via the British vice-consul in Bitola, the General Staff formally announced the uprising. Then on July 28th, 1903, IMRO dispatched mounted couriers to all the sub-districts with the message “let the uprising begin”. On the same day the General Staff informed the Ottoman Director of Railways to warn travelers to choose a different mode of transportation in order to avoid being hurt.

In spite of all odds the brave people of Macedonia heroically rose to the task with valour. They knew well that the fight they were forced to fight might not bring them what they wanted but they chose to fight anyway because it was a fight for freedom and freedom after centuries of slavery was valued above life itself. That however, did not convince the Great Powers to lend a helping hand. Macedonia, again for a second time within a quarter century was exposed to treachery that would make the 1878 betrayal look like a picnic.

NOTE: Many of you have asked me to say something about the word “Slav”

The word “Slav” is an English translation of the Macedonian word “Slava” like the word Macedonia is an English translation of the word Makedonija. Slava in Macedonian means “glory, fame, renown”. “Slaven” in Macedonian means “glorious, famous, renowned, celebrated, illustrious”. “Slavi” in Macedonian means “to glorify, to celebrate, to extol”. (page 925, Dushan Tsrenkovski’s “The Standard Dictionary, English-Macedonian, Macedonian-English”).

The word “Pravo” in Macedonian means “right” (page 850, Dushan Tsrenkovski’s “The Standard Dictionary, English-Macedonian, Macedonian-English”).

Putting the two words together “Pravo Slava” assumes a holy meaning like “Pravoslavna vera” or “Eastern Christian faith”.

I want to make it perfectly clear that "Pravoslaven" in Macedonian means "Most Glorious" and refers to the Christian religion. "Slava" translates to "celebrate" as in a holy celebration. By no means does the word "Slav" have any connection to "nationality". "Slav" to a Macedonian once meant the same as Catholic to an Italian, Jew to a Hebrew, Orthodox to a Greek, Muslim to an Arab or Hindu to an East Indian. Today however, the beauty of the word "Slav" has, for political purposes, been twisted into something ugly, undesirable and denigrating to all Macedonians. More specifically, the Greeks and now the Albanians call the Macedonian people “Slav” to mean “new comers”, “foreigners”, “barbarians”, “simpletons”, “ignorant”, “inconsiderate”, etc. So please do not call the Macedonians "Slav", just call them Macedonian.

The Pravoslaven Empire (later renamed Byzantine Empire) lasted from 324AD when the Pravoslavna vera was first adopted as the official religion of the Empire to 1767 when the Phanariots with Ottoman help, officially extinguished the Macedonian Church. After that up until 1850, the Macedonian Church lived underground and continued to operate illegally keeping the “Pravoslavna vera” and the Macedonian culture alive.

It is well documented that the language of liturgy of the Pravoslavi (people of the Byzantine Empire) was what we now call “Old Church Slavonic”. Old Church Slavonic is a Macedonian (Solunski) dialect spoken and understood to this day in most parts of geographical Macedonia.

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Part IV - The 1903 Ilinden Aftermath

In the previous article (part III) I covered the rise of IMRO and internal Macedonian events leading up to but not including the 1903 Ilinden Macedonian Uprising.

In this article (part IV) I will start where I left off in part III and cover the 1903 Ilinden aftermath with special focus on the atrocities committed by the Ottomans and by the so called Greek-Bulgarian “religious wars”.

Before I get into the details of the uprising I would like to make a few points very clear. Many village civilians died in the aftermath of the 1903 uprising and they were ALL Macedonian. Brailsford in his book “Macedonia Its Races and their Future“ and Dakin in his book “The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913” as well as many other authors provide statistics that show Greek and Bulgarian civilian casualties. Let me assure you that beyond some high-ranking Greek and Bulgarian clergy (bishops) and consuls most of whom lived in the larger cities, there were no Greek or Bulgarian civilians living in the Macedonian villages at that time. Everyone who died in the villages was Macedonian. The people that were (forcibly) Hellenized and pledged allegiance to the Greek Orthodox Church were Macedonian. The people that were lured by Bulgarian propaganda and fooled into joining the Bulgarian Orthodox Church were Macedonian. The informants that were killed by the Cheti (Macedonian armed revolutionary bands) were Macedonian. The Greek informants who informed on the Exarchists were Macedonian. The Bulgarian informants who informed on the Patriarchists were Macedonian. The Patriarchate priests who preached in Greek in the Churches were mostly Macedonian. The teachers who taught Greek in the Patriarch sponsored schools were mostly Macedonian. The Exarchate priests who preached Old Church Slavonic in the Churches were Macedonian. The teachers who taught Bulgarian in the Exarchate sponsored schools were Macedonian. Even some of the Patriarchate and Exarchate sponsored hoodlums and brigands were mostly Macedonian.

What makes this sad affair bizarre is that while Macedonians were dying at the hands of the Ottoman, Albanian, Greek and Bulgarian

armed bands the Greeks were falsifying statistics claiming the victims to be Greek and Bulgarian. Since there were no Greek or Bulgarian civilians living in the Macedonian villages then there could be no Greek or Bulgarian victims. Brailsford, Dakin and others obtained their information through “politically correct” official channels. Unfortunately, the official channels were quoting biased and unchallenged Greek sources, which supported the Greek interests and the Greek political point of view. There were no official channels to represent Macedonian interests or the Macedonian point of view.

The Macedonian people were exploited by the Ottomans and the Europeans and despised for complaining. They were forcibly Hellenized then profaned for not being model Hellenes. They were punished by the Bulgarians for accepting Hellenism then forcibly Bulgarized. Those Bulgarized were then violated and murdered by the Greeks for switching allegiance. Such was the fate of the Macedonians greeted by the 20th century. But this was only the beginning, for a new force, Serbian chauvinism was about to be unleashed.

It was dawn August 2nd, 1903 and the men could see their breath in the cool, still morning mountain air. Darkness was finally giving way to dawn. Not a soul had slept all night. The fervor and business of the night before had died down. There was only silence now as darkness slowly yielded to dawn and each man reconciled his thoughts and comforted his fears. The stillness was interrupted by what seemed like a thunderbolt, when the Cheta chief soberly announced, “It’s time”. Like Olympic sprinters, the men rose to their feet ignoring the stiffness of the long night’s motionless rest. Hearts pounding, they picked up their gear and rifles and began the descent down the mountain towards the chiflicks (estates) below. It was still dark and there was no one in sight. The men crept up on the barracks in silence. The chief motioned with his hand and the men quickly scattered and took their positions. The barracks were now surrounded. When a guard inside the barracks stepped out, the crackle of rifle fire broke the silence of the new day. Black smoke of gunpowder greeted the first rays of the sun and the cries of the wounded disturbed the serenity of the morning stillness. It was August 2nd, 1903, Ilinden, a new dawn for the Macedonian people.

By mid-day the Western Region of Macedonia was on fire as church bells rang, rifles crackled and bellowing smoke enveloped mountains and valleys alike. Five thousand strong had assembled to show their distaste for Ottoman rule. They had no cavalry and no artillery except for the few cannons made of cherry wood which were more dangerous to them than to the enemy, but they had faith, spirit and trust in each other. They were the Macedonian Kumiti (freedom fighters).

Following Damjan Gruev's orders from Smilevo, the village Cheti combined forces to form the following: the Smilevo and Gjavato Region Cheta of 650, the Krushovo Region Cheta of 400, the Kichevo Region Cheta of 350, the Bitola Region Cheta of 250, the Ohrid Region Cheta of 880, the Resna Region Cheta of 450, the Demir-Hisar Region Cheta of 420, the Prespa Region Cheta of 300, the Kostour Region Cheta of 700 and the Lerin Region Cheta of 450.

I am proud to say that my own great-grandfather Philip at age 53 participated in the Ilinden uprising. He was issued a rifle and a single shell and told to stand guard at Mount Preol at the entrance of Prespa. At the first sight of the Ottoman militia he was required to fire a warning shot to let the Cheta know that the Ottomans were approaching. He survived his bout and lived to the ripe old age of 92 to tell about it.

The Cheti under the command of capable leaders such as Damjan Gruev, Vasil Chakalarov, Petar Pop Arsov, Pitou Gouli, and others fared well and enjoyed considerable success in the few weeks before the Ottoman militia began to amass. The local villagers also joined the movement giving moral support to the fighters. Even men from other regions that had not yet risen left their homes and came to fight.

All in all the Macedonian people possessed the will to fight but lacked the rifles and the ammunition with which to do it.

When the rebellion began, as a precaution, most villages were evacuated. People who left the villages took up residence in

secluded places up in the mountains. They took with them whatever they could carry and set up camp with temporary shelters constructed from tree branches and covered with vegetation. The animals they took with them were fenced out of sight in wooded areas. They even built underground ovens to cook food and bake bread in safety.

Some villages that did not join the rebellion felt it was unnecessary to evacuate because they posed no threat to the Ottomans. One such village was Neokazi near Lerin whose residents stayed home thinking they would be safe. When the Ottoman militia passed by, not only did they raze the village, they also turned on the civilian population. Not being satisfied with just burning the village, the Ottomans summoned about 60 Macedonian men and placed them under arrest. On their way to Lerin the Ottomans, instead of taking the men to jail, tortured and massacred them in cold blood. Eyewitnesses reported observing the Ottomans lining up the men in rows and firing at them to see how many one bullet could kill.

Three days later, it was Armensko's turn. After losing a skirmish to Chakalarov, Haireddin Bimbishi's (the butcher of Smrdesh) troops, defeated, angry and embittered were heading for Lerin when they came across a welcoming committee at Armensko. The priest and other members of the village went out to greet and welcome the Ottomans, but the Ottomans were not pleased and murdered the welcoming committee on the spot. Bimbishi's men then turned on the defenseless village and pillaged, burned and satisfied their brutal lust undisturbed. Sixty-eight of the villagers were massacred and ten women and eight girls were violated. "Several women who managed to crawl out of their burning houses were afterwards caught as they lay dying, and violated repeatedly until they expired". (page 160, Brailsford, Macedonia its Races and their Future, taken from the "Blue Book" P. 319.).

The Ottoman soldiers had orders to burn down all empty villages because it was a sure sign that they belonged to the families of the insurgents, and to spare the rest. As it turned out however, those who didn't join the rebellion and didn't want any trouble not only lost their homes but some even lost their lives. It was a choice between having your village burned or having it burned and being

massacred as well. It was a hard lesson learned but it didn't help the sick and bedridden who were burned alive where they lay.

As battles raged on throughout Western Macedonia, the Cheti put down most of the local Ottoman garrisons. They destroyed bridges, railway lines and communications centers, captured most chifliks and briefly liberated some regions such as Kichevo, Demir-Hisar, Kostour, Lerin, Klisoura and Neveska. The cities of Kostour and Lerin themselves were not liberated. The most successful and highly celebrated of all battles however, was the storming of the town of Krushevo. Nikola Karev led the Cheti in the attack and defeated the local Ottoman garrison with ease. The Macedonians quickly took over the most strategic points like the Post Office, Town Hall and local Police Station and declared Krushevo liberated. True to their democratic commitments, the leaders of the liberating force constituted the Krushevo assembly which appointed a committee of sixty members, twenty from each of the community's Macedonian, Vlach and Albanian population. The committee in turn elected an executive body of six delegates, two from each community, which operated as a provisional government. The government in turn established a financial, judiciary and police force. "At Krushevo, under the rays of temporary liberty, fraternity and equality, national hatreds were dispelled and peace and concord reigned. For eleven whole days Krushevo lived as a little independent state, and although in miniature, clothed with flesh and blood that idea which spurred Macedonians to fight, against tyranny up to the Ilinden rising". (page 193, Vasil Bogov, *Macedonian Revelation, Historical Documents Rock and Shatter Modern Political Ideology*).

True to his socialist ideals, Nikola Karev drew up the famous Krushevo manifesto, a document aimed at eliciting support from all the communities including the Muslim Ottomans and Albanians. (You can read the full text of the Krushevo manifesto in appendix 3B, starting on page 275, in Michael Radin's book *IMRO and the Macedonian Question*. It is most inspiring to learn that in spite of what the Ottomans and Albanians had done to the Macedonian people, the Macedonian leaders still found it within their hearts to show compassion for them.) I also want to add that Brailsford in his book "Macedonia its Races and their Future" has nothing but praise

for the Macedonian Cheti for their more than exemplary conduct during the uprising.

The “Krushevo Republic” unfortunately, lasted only two weeks, but it was a glorious Republic that will forever remind the Macedonian people of their eternal struggle for independence and of their thirst for freedom. The liberation of Krushevo imprinted on the new Macedonian generations the legacy of a timeless and irreversible march towards self-determination. IMRO came a long way from a group of academics deliberating what to do in the face of repression to delivering, in a true revolutionary fashion, a democratic Republic with all the socialist trimmings.

Here again, we see the Macedonian desire for multi-culturalism and for a new multi-ethnic society waiting to re-surface. The Republic was constituted on a multiracial basis in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the Macedonian people.

Next to Krushevo, Kostour, under the command of Lazar Pop Trajkov and my favourite hero, Vasil Chakalarov who faired second best in the tactical mobilization of the Cheti. These brigades staged successful raids and liberated Klisura and Neveska then returned southward and with the support of over three thousand villagers, attacked Kostour but without success. In the meantime other Cheti attacked and liberated Ohrid, which remained free for almost three months. The Ohrid attack was the most successful in terms of advance planning and administering the establishment of medical aid, underground work shops, secret bakeries and securing foodstuffs. Ohrid later became the center for establishing refugee camps for many displaced persons.

Uprisings outside of Western Macedonia were limited to swift guerilla actions consisting mostly of attacks against Ottoman institutions, bombings of railway lines and the occasional skirmish with the Ottoman militia. Many Cheti were successful in capturing important Ottoman officials with aims of constructing dialog for prospective negotiations but in actuality they met with little success. Vrhovist involvement, as expected, was minimal during the uprising and brought to light once again the true nature of Vrhovism (Macedonia for the Bulgarians).

As the Cheti fought gallantly putting down garrison after garrison in the larger towns many of the smaller villages were left unprotected and open to Bashi-bazouk and Ottoman militia attacks. Keeping in mind the Neokrazi and Armensko incidents, many of the Cheta chiefs felt compelled to return home to repel such attacks. Due to this and the fact that the Cheti were overpowered by the numerically superior Ottoman militia, in the short term, a large-scale operation against the Ottomans never materialized. Unfortunately, as time passed so did the opportunities for a decisive strike, as an even larger Ottoman force was amassing.

The initial success of the rebellion was a surprise to the Ottomans especially since the Ottoman forces were numerically superior to those of the rebels. The Cheti however, demonstrated their abilities in battle and more than matched the numbers with will. Turkey unfortunately, was determined to put down the rebellion and amassed additional forces deploying a total of 167,000 infantry, 3,700 cavalry and 440 pieces of artillery (all cannons). Krushevo alone was surrounded by 20,000 Ottoman troops with 18 cannons against an encircled force of no more than 1,200 rebel fighters. The battle to retake Krushevo began on August 12th with the Macedonians crying out “Sloboda ili Smirt” (liberty or death) against the onslaught of Ottoman cannon fire. Pitu Guli and his men fought gallantly and provided stiff opposition to the Ottoman advance but was no match for General Baktiar Pasha. Baktiar was a skilled war veteran who overwhelmed the Cheti by attacking the entire region simultaneously. The region was surrounded by soldiers, encircled by cannon fire, and every Macedonian stronghold inside was attacked simultaneously cutting off all reinforcements and all outside support.

After the mountains lit up with gunfire and smoke filled the skies, no Great Powers came to the rescue. Macedonia was left alone to feel the full fury of the Ottoman Empire’s army and to pay for all of Europe’s sins committed against the Ottomans. Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria were now free, their freedom guaranteed by the Great Powers. When Greece got into trouble, the Great Powers wasted no time to come to her rescue. Where were the Great Powers when Macedonia needed their help? Why did they not

respond to the cries of the burning villagers? Why did they not intervene to stop the killing, razing and pounding? Where was Britain when the European-made Ottoman cannons pounded Krushevo to dust?

Once Krushevo fell, one by one other IMRO strongholds began to yield winding down the ten-week-old rebellion. In Krushevo Baktiar Pasha allowed his troops to kill, pillage and rape for three days, permanently devastating the town. 117 civilians were murdered, 150 women were raped and 159 houses were burned.

In the Ilinden aftermath, according to Radin, in total 4,694 civilians were murdered, 3,122 women were raped, 12,440 houses were burned, 201 villages were razed, 75,835 people were left homeless and about 30,000 people left the country for good becoming permanent refugees (page 105, IMRO and the Macedonian Question). Besides the atrocities committed against the civilian population in Macedonia, the most significant impact of the uprising was the loss of so many great IMRO leaders.

Despite the negative attitudes of the European Governments, there was much press about the Ilinden rebellion. World opinion was generally sympathetic to the Macedonian cause and highly critical of the Ottoman atrocities. Emigrant Macedonians the world over bombarded the Western Press with scathing attacks on the British, French and Austrian governments for supporting Turkey, militarily and financially. Even emigrants as far as the United States, staged large rallies in support of the rebellion. In New York alone more than 100,000 gathered to show support.

A Chicago newspaper reported that a Macedonian regiment had formed in that city and was preparing to take part in the rebellion. Closer to home, south Slav Nations such as Slovenia and Vojvodina held public meetings in support of the Macedonian Revolution. Even the European press featured sympathetic headlines when covering the rebellion. "It was a bitter struggle between the tortured slaves fighting on masse, often without weapons, but on spirit alone, for life and liberty; and the sadistic Pasha and his cohorts, murdering and plundering with rabidity" (Giorgio Nurigiani).

British official policy however, was less than sympathetic. According to the Daily News, September 14, 1903, Prime Minister Balfour told the House of Commons "...the balance of criminality lies not with the Ottomans, but with the rebels". The paper was critical of this attitude and recorded the following editorial: "The balance of criminality is surely here in our own land. Britain had denied Macedonia freedom at Berlin, knowing that (continued) Ottoman rule was synonymous with cruelty and tyranny, and by adopting a laissez-faire attitude at the juncture, Britain is a consenting party to all the ghastly murders and massacres in Macedonia..." (Radin, page 107, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

While there was public outcry in the streets regarding the treatment of Macedonians, the British Government cared less about Macedonia's suffering than about Bulgarian threats to their precious Ottoman Empire. Being weakened by the Macedonian rebellion, the thinking in London was that Turkey was now ripe for a Bulgarian invasion. Balfour used the Macedonian rebellion as a pretext to move Britain's Mediterranean Fleet into the Aegean Sea fearing that war between Bulgaria and Turkey was now inevitable.

At about the same time Greek-Ottoman relations began to warm up. The souring relationship between Turkey and Bulgaria was seen as a new opportunity by Greece to accelerate her Hellenization activities inside Macedonia. Making her way to Turkey, Greece had to first prop up her cool relationship with Germany. Her first attempt was initiated by inviting German help to re-organize the Greek military. After that, Greece began to grant industrial and commercial favours to German businessmen including the re-organization of the Greek telegraph.

The Ottomans on the other hand, were looking for allies. The loss of Ottoman Crete to the Greeks was only a bruise to the Ottoman ego, so the Ottomans were willing to forgive and forget. Losing Macedonia however, was serious business, and bolstering the friendship with Greece was one way of staving off Bulgarian advances.

To preserve whatever they could from a failing rebellion, IMRO turned its attention to diplomacy. In September 1903, Pere Toshev of IMRO took a trip to Tsari Grad (Constantinople) to elicit some guarantees from official representatives of the Great Powers. Toshev's only request was that Macedonia be governed by a Christian governor. Unfortunately, his request was rejected in favour of the status quo. Later however, when statistics of Ottoman atrocities started pouring in, the Great Power attitude softened a little. In October the Great Powers re-considered Toshev's request, but instead of appointing a Christian governor each nation agreed to send a small "peace-keeping" force. This did not help the Macedonian position at all, in fact it hindered IMRO from self-defense initiatives even against Bashi-bazouk attacks.

Ottoman atrocities committed against the Macedonian villages in the eyes of the world created bad publicity for Turkey and for her allies the Western Powers. As a result Ottoman popularity started to decline and so did Turkey's favour with the Great Powers. Being financially strapped and having her hands tied, Turkey turned to her neighbours for assistance. By declaring Macedonia a "multi-interest-zone" and inviting armed propaganda from Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia to counter the IMRO insurgence, Turkey was hoping to turn the tide of the rebellion in her favour. Again, Great Power inaction put Macedonia and the Macedonian people into peril.

At the end of August, after the fall of Krushevo, Nasir Pasha was appointed to take over command from Omar Rushdi Pasha. Rushdi was blamed for the flare-up of the rebellion and Nasir was chosen to put an end to it. Nasir Pasha was a favourite of the Sultan, spoke German and was considered civilized by many who had high hopes for a quick end to the rebellion. Unfortunately, Nasir's plans involved the burning of ALL revolting villages and quickly cornering and rounding up all those doing the revolting. He certainly had the "right men" with the "right courage" to execute such a barbaric plan, unfortunately, Nasir Pasha's plan did not involve pursuing the Cheti. "...the regiments which should have been pursuing the Insurgents found it more agreeable and interesting to pillage the defenseless villagers and make war on the women and children" (page 155 Brailsford, Macedonia its Races and their Future). Nasir Pasha's strategy forced IMRO and the Cheti to

rethink their plans and change their tactics. Henceforth, organized Cheti attacks on the Ottomans subsided and the Cheti regrouped to take up defensive positions. Concerned for their families and villages some of the Cheti broke up and returned to defend their own homes. After that, fighting became disorderly and on November 2nd, 1903, the insurrection was declared at an end.

According to Brailsford, the Cheti fought about 150 battles in total with 746 casualties, which amounted to about 15 % of the total fighting force. In most of these encounters the Cheti were outnumbered by at least 10 Ottomans to 1 Macedonian. (Page 155 Macedonia its Races and their Future). Before it was all over, the Ottomans were attacking everywhere, even in secluded areas that once were beyond militia reach. To save themselves, many civilians resorted to camping among the fighters and even following them in wild battles. Their only safety was to be with the Cheti.

“...sometimes the battle raged about the lair where the women and children lay, the men fighting with all their manhood to defend some shallow trench, knowing that behind them cowered wife and child expecting massacre if their courage failed or their bullets missed the mark”. (page 162, Brailsford, Macedonia its Races and their Future).

Before I finish with the Ilinden uprising I want to mention that even though not much action was seen in Eastern Macedonia, the Endene (Macedonian Dardanelles or Andrianople) region had also risen in 1903 to join the Macedonian rebellion. This forgotten region, that once ruled the world, belonged to Macedonia at one point in time because Macedonians to this day still live there. What the world calls Pomac (converts from Christianity to Islam) Bulgarians are in fact Macedonians that converted to Islam. It is believed that the Christians of Endrene initiated the revolt but could not sustain it for too long due to the numerical superiority of the Muslim militia and the fact that the region was without mountains and there were no places to hide.

There is no good time to wage war in any society let alone inside a self-sufficient agrarian microcosm. The leaders of the Ilinden rebellion knew that. They also knew that they would be risking more than their own lives when they called for a revolt. The crops would not be harvested and people would starve to death. “Fleeing

incessantly, they soon left behind them their stores of food and their herds of beasts. They were now shelterless under cold skies. There were villages which lived for days together on roots and salad grasses. The young children died in large numbers, and men and women graduated for the epidemics which were to decimate those whom the Ottomans had spared". (page 162, Brailsford, Macedonia its Races and their Future). Those who came back from the mountains alive didn't fair well either. People from the burned villages crowded in towns where helpless masses of starving women begged for bread door to door. They lost everything, home, crops, cattle and hand made clothing that were to last them for half a lifetime. It was through the generosity and charity of neighbours that most of them managed to survive. Macedonians possess a unique compassion for all living things. Love and respect for life flourishes from generation to generation and is part of the Macedonian tradition.

IMRO leaders that survived the rebellion responded decisively to the new crisis by establishing temporary centers to distribute urgently needed food and medical supplies to the displaced population. While doing that, they were also fighting a political battle with the Vrhovists for control of IMRO itself. The Bulgarians had dispatched Komitadjis (assassins) to eliminate the "old guard" but the legendary Yane Sandanski and his Cheta remained active and fought back fearlessly. When word got out that Sandanski was still active he gained a large following and was able to successfully repel all the assassination attempts.

History, in a sterile sense, tends to remark on the numbers of casualties directly associated with the conflict but shies away from the true ugliness of a war's aftermath. The real casualties of a conflict are the innocents that through no fault of their own are left to bear the consequences of the war. The most unfortunate are those in whose homes the war is waged. For them, there is no escape. It is easy to show numbers and statistics of the dead, wounded, homeless, raped, orphaned, maimed, etc., but it is hard to imagine their horrific experience. History has a way of separating "us from them" and distancing our feelings from theirs. But that hardly does them justice if we can't even imagine their pain, anguish, frustration, fear, despair, hunger, humiliation and hopelessness. Many innocent

children died a horrible death in the Ilinden aftermath and their sacrifices must not be forgotten.

“The young women fared the worst, for, when the troops (Ottomans) could catch them, they were often carried off to the Ottoman camps and there kept for some days until the last brute who desired them had had his will”. (page 163, Brailsford, Macedonia its Races and their Future). Many of these young girls that survived returned to their village but instead of finding a home they found abandoned ruins and again fell prey to prowling soldiers or marauding Bashi-bazouks.

The story of the Macedonian fallen becomes more tragic when “history books” written by Macedonia’s enemies or by those influenced by “politically correct propaganda”, claim the Macedonian dead to be Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbians. It seems that the injustices committed against the Macedonian people do not end with the living but continue to haunt even the dead. Is it not enough that the living are robbed of their dignity, must the dead also be robbed of theirs? As long as authors neglect to mention the “Macedonians” in the “Macedonian epic struggle for independence” there can be no rest for the living or the dead. Those fallen men and women were Macedonians and died in a courageous struggle to free Macedonia. They were NOT Greeks, they were NOT Bulgarians and they were NOT Serbians. Let’s not allow their enemies who robbed their children of their future to also rob them of their dignity. It is imperative that historians understand that anyone who unwittingly or willingly is alleging Macedonians to be Greek, Bulgarian or Serbian is propagating the “Greek lie” and committing a moral wrong against the Macedonian people.

The Ilinden rebellion had no happy ending for Macedonia. The Macedonian people lost their bid for freedom and paid the ultimate price. Henry Brailsford in his book “Macedonia its Races and their Future” describes the Ilinden aftermath in some detail by providing specific accounts of some of the worst horrors perpetrated. Brailsford was an aid worker inside Macedonia during the conflict and was witness to some of the accounts in his book. The book is worth reading, as long as you keep in mind that when he talks about

Bulgarians and Greeks he means Macedonians who belonged to the Exarchate or Patriarchate Church.

I also ran into an article on the internet by Blagoj Stoicovski, Sixth International Congress on South-East Europe, Sofia, 1989 (MANU, Skopje 1991), "THE POST-ILINDEN EVENTS IN MACEDONIA DURING 1904 ACCORDING TO NORWEGIAN REPORTS" posted at www.makedonika.org/STOICOVSKI1.htm

The author of these reports is Karl Ingvar Nandrup, who wrote on seven separate occasions to His Majesty Oscar II, king of the Norwegian-Swedish union during his stay in Macedonia, from the beginning of 1903 to December 30, 1904. In fact, this Norwegian officer had been sent to Macedonia under the sponsorship of Sweden and Norway to work as an inspector in the Ottoman Gendarmerie (as a result of the "Padar's Reforms" of February 1903).

The author of the above article has succeeded in finding two of Nandrup's reports, one from May 16th, and the other from December 30th, 1904. The original reports were written in Norwegian and sent to the king in dispatches from Skopje.

In addition to being documents of value, the reports are also worth while reading.

"Every village which joined the revolt did so with the knowledge that it might be burned to the ground, pillaged to the last blanket and the last chicken, and its population decimated in the process. That the Macedonians voluntarily faced these dangers is a proof of their desperation." (page 159, Brailsford, Macedonia its Races and their Future).

The Macedonian rebellion did not succeed because there were too many factors working against it. The Macedonian people showed will and determination and rose to the task in spite of all odds. Compared to the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian rebellions, the Macedonians were the most determined, well organized, and most desperate but they were not ready. The Serbians, Greeks and Bulgarian had only one enemy, the Ottomans and received a lot of

help from friends in high places (the Great Powers). In contrast no one, outside of the Macedonians wanted the Macedonians to succeed. The Greeks and especially the Bulgarians went out their way to create obstacles. The Great Powers, believing that they had nothing to gain, also abstained from helping Macedonia. The Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian struggle for independence prepared the Ottomans and made them more determined to deal with the Macedonians. “The Ottomans had made war upon the women and children, and the men dared not prolong the unequal conflict with starvation”. (page 163, Brailsford, Macedonia its Races and their Future).

When the conflict was over, the people that returned to their villages were devastated to find their homes destroyed. On top of all their ills, winter was fast approaching and no food or shelter was to be found. “The villages were mere heaps of charred wood and blackened stone, buried beneath a red dust which the rain converted to mud. A few walls still stood upright, the only hope for the winter”. (page 164, Brailsford, Macedonia its Races and their Future). To make matters worse, a curfew was placed on travel and those away from home found themselves stranded. Those in need of work were no longer allowed to leave their vilayets. This was the first time in Macedonian history that Macedonians ever considered permanent emigration. Many early Macedonian emigrants to Canada, the USA and Australia were refugees from the Ilinden aftermath.

When reports of the uprising could no longer be contained and filtered out to the foreign media, it became clear that the Ottomans were not as successful as they claimed in keeping peace and maintaining the status quo in Macedonia. The Great Powers, Britain in particular, were disturbed by the atrocities committed by Ottoman soldiers. On Britain’s insistence the Great Powers recommended European officers take over command of the Ottoman gendarmerie. Unfortunately, the European officers were Christians and the Ottomans refused to take orders from them. The German officers had some success because they had trained the Ottomans but not enough to make a difference.

To prevent the situation from deteriorating further, Britain pushed for high level reforms which resulted in the appointment of two Ottoman inspectors. One was Hilmi Pasha, former governor of Yemen. Hilmi Pasha was dispatched to Solun as Inspector General with orders to reform the Ottoman administration. But as usual nothing was done. "Hilmi Pasha issued a proclamation in Monastir saying that the law courts had been reformed, that the police and gendarmerie had been reorganized, that Christian village guards had been appointed, that the schools had been reopened and that roads and bridges had been repaired. He went on to announce that if indeed all was not working smoothly it was because evil people endeavoured to impede the Government". (page 112, Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*). No one was deceived by Hilmi Pasha's words.

Before the uprising, Russia and Austria proposed "The Vienna Scheme of Reform" which basically required the Ottomans to appoint an Inspector General to each of the Macedonian Vilayets for a minimum of three years. In short, the reforms proposed local control of troop enlistment, local control of finances and appointment of foreign specialists inside Macedonia. The gendarmes were to enlist from local sources that would reflect the proportion of the population. General amnesty was to be given to all under arrest or exiled and all pending law cases were to be settled without delay. Obviously these reforms did not work and their failure was blamed on Russian and Austrian neglect.

After the uprising, as the situation in Macedonia worsened, Britain, fearing that Bulgaria would imminently declare war on Turkey, pushed for more reforms. As a result on October 2nd 1903, the Murszteg Reform Program was drafted and on October 23rd it was proposed to the Ottomans. The reforms in part read as follows:

Two Civil agents, one from Russia and the other from Austria were to be attached to the Inspector General (of police) Hilmi Pasha for two years to accompany him everywhere and call to his attention the abuses and recommend remedies. They were also expected to report all activities to their respective governments.

The Ottoman gendarmerie was to be reorganized by a “general of foreign nationality” and to him were to be attached military officers from the armies of the Great Powers to lead, supervise, instruct and report on the activities of the Ottomans.

As soon as the rebellion was put down, the Great Powers would demand an administrative reorganization of the Macedonian territory based on “nationalities”.

Administrative and Judicial institutions were to be reorganized allowing Christian employees to run them.

Mixed committees with consular membership from Russia and Austria were to be formed in the vilayets to inquire into political and other crimes.

The Ottoman Government was to allot a special budget to pay for the return of refugees and for re-building the damaged houses, schools, churches, etc. The money was to be distributed under the supervision of the Austrian and Russian consuls.

Christian villages burned down by Ottoman troops and Bashi-bazouks were to be exempt from all taxes for one year.

The Ottoman Government was obliged, without delay to implement the “Vienna Scheme of Reforms” introduced in February of 1903,

The Ottoman second class reservists were to be disbanded and the Bashi-bazouks were to be prohibited from banding together.

The Murzsteg Reform Program, like its predecessor the Vienna Scheme of Reforms clearly did not have the Macedonian people’s interests in mind. The priority here was to keep Turkey out of trouble and in control of Macedonia.

On November 24th 1903, the Ottoman Government accepted the nine point Murszteg Reform Program in principle, reserving the right to negotiate the details later. Noting that there was a two-year limitation on provision 1, the Ottomans haggled over the details, introducing delay after long delay while the Great Powers continued to show indifference. Precious time was wasted as the Ottomans were claiming credit for the relative quietness in Macedonia, which was largely due to winter weather. In time the Murzsteg Reform

Program, like its predecessor the Vienna Reforms entered the “annals of empty promises”.

As I mentioned earlier, determined to eradicate IMRO influence, Turkey turned to her neighbours for help. By declaring Macedonia a “multi-interest-zone” Turkey invited armed propaganda from Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia to counter the insurgents.

The failed uprising, the loss of so many great IMRO leaders, the Ottoman backlash and now the foreign influence was too much for IMRO. The close links with the villages and the ideological differences between isolated IMRO branches widened. Although IMRO continued to live, it lacked direction and was on the verge of an ideological collapse. In time however, it managed to muster two more congresses. With the advent of Krste Missirkov’s book a new tide of opinion was spreading throughout Macedonia. Missirkov warned against falling under the influence of the chauvinistic elements and recommended taking a more nationalistic approach in order to weed out Vrhovist and conservative elements. At the Prilep Congress held in May 1904 IMRO was re-vitalized and its independence reasserted (this time with a socialist character). The most significant developments to emerge from this Congress were IMRO’s ability to shed itself of its conservative elements and to adopt a resolution to decentralize the organization and give more power to the sub-districts. This Congress literally split IMRO into two ideologically polarized halves.

While leftist IMRO adopted a defensive strategy, the right wing conservative Vrhovists pursued a policy of renewed confrontation. The two factions continued to masquerade under the same banner and were headed for a showdown. The showdown materialized in November of 1905 at the Rila Monastery, near the Macedonian-Bulgarian border and took the form of a General Congress. There was a single item of paramount importance on the agenda, to determine the direction of the Organization. Twenty-two elected delegates in total attended the Rila Congress and by secret vote the left came out victorious.

As a result of the Rila Congress, a rulebook was issued proclaiming the aims of the Central Committee, which basically called for:

“creating an autonomous and independent Macedonia, achieving this by means of a united national front, over a long period of revolutionary activity, and resisting all foreign interference”.

There was one more safeguard added that is worth mentioning. IMRO now possessed the capacity to recall a rebellion by a 75% majority vote of its delegates who could only be nominated from regional sub-committees within Macedonia. A safeguard that guaranteed there would be no more interference from Sofia and the Vrhovists.

Defeated at the Rila Congress, the Right wing Vrhovists took up permanent residence in Sofia and continued to wage terrorist war on the IMRO leadership. Both Nikola Karev in 1905 and Dame Gruev in 1906 were indirectly eliminated by terrorist acts of the Vrhovists.

Bulgarian interference in Macedonia did not only damage the revolutionary movement but also put fear in the civilian population, ripening conditions for Balkan intervention.

Greece and later Serbia were quick to take advantage of a weak IMRO and a frightened population. With the assistance of the Ottoman military they were able to step up armed propaganda campaigns inside Macedonia. The aim was to kill two birds with one stone. By being the eyes and ears for the Ottomans, the Greek clergy spied on the Macedonians and disclosed information to the Ottoman authorities. The Ottoman military in turn, stepped up activities to eradicate the remnants of the Cheti and their leaders. At the same time, in the midst of terror, the same Greek spies were offering Macedonians Hellenism as a way to salvation. “No one can deny that the Greeks owed much to the Ottomans. Indeed the victory of the Ottomans in 1903 was the salvation of Hellenism in Macedonia. From the outset the Greek clergy and notables devised means of passing information to the Ottomans. The Ottoman authorities on their side welcomed this support.” (pages 118,119, Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*).

The most notorious of the Greek clergy was the Metropolitan of Kostur, Archbishop Germanos Karavangelis. Karavangelis was sent to Macedonia by the Patriarch Constantine V who favoured the Athenian (the most nationalist) style of Hellenism and selected Karavangelis as the right man to do the job. Dakin portrays Karavangelis as a charismatic and capable figure of a man that is a credit to the human race (pages 119-127, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*). That however, is far from the truth. Karavangelis was a ruthless killer and a disgrace to the Christian religion. Karavangelis was personally responsible for the assassination of hundreds of Macedonian patriots including priests, notables, teachers and IMRO leaders. He was also personally responsible for Hellenizing by force and by sheer terror hundreds of Macedonian villages. If you wish to know more about Karavangelis' terrorist actions in Macedonia read his biography (the original version) "Arheio Makedonikou Agona, Pinelopis Delta, Apomnimonemata, Germanou Karavaggeli, Georgiou Dikonymou Makri, Panagioti Papatzanetea". Karavangelis' first priority after accepting the post as Metropolitan of Kostur was to raise an army. He couldn't import one, the Great Powers were watching so he resorted to purchasing one. The most pliable and feeble-minded man who would sell his soul for gold was the self styled brigand Kote of Rula ("the darling of Athens"). Kote sold out his own people for Greek gold. From being the most revered Cheta leader Kote became the most hated man in Macedonia. When Karavangelis decided who was to die, Kote became the executioner. In addition to regular pay for murder, Kote and his band of no-goods received additional rewards of gold coins for turning in desired body parts from their victims.

While Kote was doing the murdering in the Macedonian villages, Karavangelis, in person with Ottoman escorts, was doing the Hellenizing. Nothing and no one could stand in his way. Those who Karavangelis couldn't buy or bribe he had killed.

"By containing and fragmenting the Internal Organization in Western Macedonia, Kota (Kote) and Karavangelis not only caused the projected rising to be continually postponed but they also caused it to be undertaken prematurely; and eventually they both contributed towards its defeat and failure. True, most of the recorded

action (the arrests, searches and attacks on villages and bands) were carried out by the Ottomans, but the Ottomans nearly always acted on information supplied by Karavangelis or his agents. It was Karavangelis again who prevailed upon the Ottomans to attack Smardeshi (Smurdersh) on 9/22 May 1903". (Page 132, Dakin, The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913)

"After the Ilinden rising of August 1903, it was Karavangelis who, escorted by 600 Ottoman soldiers, visited the villages, celebrating mass, speaking to the villagers and calling upon them to surrender arms. The result was that even such strongholds as Aposkepos (Aposkep), Zaroritsani (Zagoricheni) and Gabresi (Gabresh), which only a few months before had declared themselves Exarchist, now returned to the Patriarchist fold. Without the support of the Ottomans, it is doubtful whether Karavangelis's work would have been successful. It is equally doubtful, however, whether but for the activities of the Patriarchist counter-movement, the Ottoman authorities could have dealt such a decisive blow to the Internal Organization (IMRO)". (Page 135, Dakin, The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913)

Even my own small village didn't escape the hand of Karavangelis. It was a Sunday morning when Georgios Tsantos (Varda) and his gang came to Oshchima looking to murder Pop Giorgi Popov. On the way they ran into a young man named Yane Zhigerov who was taking his mule to pasture. It is unknown what transpired but the young man was found dead with his throat cut. After killing Yane, Varda broke into Oshchima's Church of Svety Nikola and killed Pop Giorgi, by stabbing him multiple times. He then skinned the beard off his face and cut off his blessing finger. Varda was prepared to kill many more had it not been for the Oshchimian Cheta lead by Bozhin Temov who drove Varda and his hoodlums out of Oshchima at gunpoint.

Pop Giorgi Popov's beard and finger were delivered to Karavangelis in exchange for gold.

With regards to Kote from Rula, greed was stronger than loyalty. Lazo Papatraikov, an usher at Kote's wedding and a man who twice saved Kote's life, was on Karavangelis's hit list. After a skirmish

with the Ottomans in Mariovo, word was out that IMRO leader Lazo Papatraikov had received a wound on the head and was on the run. Kote caught up to him at Turtska Polena in Oshchima and after a long chat the two men said their good byes and Kote left. On his way to Zhelevo, Kote sent some Zhelevtsi to kill and decapitate Lazo. Lazo's head was taken to Karavangelis to collect the reward. Lazo's headless body was buried behind the altar of the Sveti Nikola Church in Oshchima.

The ultimate disgrace for Karavangelis came after the massacre of the village Zagoricheni. Refusing to bend to Hellenism, Zagoricheni on direct orders from Karavangelis, was massacred to the last person the Greeks could lay their hands on, including the unborn children inside the wombs of pregnant women. Witnesses reported finding bodies of pregnant women with their abdomen cut open. The survivors that escaped the atrocity refused to bury the dead bodies of their neighbours. For days the dead were guarded until the European consuls in Bitola came to witness the atrocities for themselves. Here is what Brailsford had to say. "The chef d'oeuvre of this Hellenic campaign was achieved at Zagoritchani, a large Bulgarian village (author's note: Macedonian village, there were no Bulgarian villages inside Macedonia) near Klissoura, which, like Mokreni, took a leading part in the uprising of 1903, and like Mokreni was burned by the Ottomans. A Greek band, which is said to have numbered over two hundred men under three Greek officers in uniform, surprised it by night (April 6-7, 1905) by using bugle calls which led the villagers to suppose that Ottoman regulars were manoeuvring in the neighbourhood. They burned ten houses, and twenty-eight of the temporary homes erected amid the ruins of the last conflagration. They wounded seven persons and killed no less than sixty, among them seven women, twenty-two persons over sixty years of age, and five children under fifteen. There was a good deal of evidence to show that the local Ottoman authorities were privy to this massacre, and some circumstances seemed to include the Archbishop of Castoria (Kostur). It is quite clear that no conflict or provocation preceded what was simply a deliberate massacre, and the only reason for choosing Zagoritchani was that it was an eager and patriotic Bulgarian center, and that it disobeyed the summons of the Greek Archbishop to return to the Patriarch fold". (pages 216-217, Macedonia its Races and their Future).

After the massacre when it was discovered that Karavangelis was implicated, to escape punishment, the cowardly Archbishop of Kostur fled to Sveta Gora (Holy Mountain) where he spent two years in hiding before fleeing to Austria. Today, there is a statue of Karavangelis in Kostur to commemorate his great contributions to Hellenism.

The Roumanie of Bucharest has published the text of a circular found by the Ottomans in some documents seized on the person of a Greek prisoner. It reads like a genuine Greek document, and its authenticity has not been questioned by the Greek organs. It is said to bear the seal of the Greek Committee. (Remember there were no Bulgarians or “Bulgars” in Macedonia). It read like this;

“Brave defenders of Hellenism, I address you today in order to express the gratitude which the entire nation feels for all you have done and will yet do on behalf of the Fatherland. Continue the struggle against the Bulgarian assassins, and neglect no means of proving to the whole world that Macedonia is purely Greek. Exterminate the priests, the teachers, and the notables who compose the Bulgarian Committees. It is at length time to put in practice the saying: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. When it is a question of taking vengeance we must not spare the Bulgarians, even when they hide under the robes of a priest. Burn, shoot, assassinate, and purify the soil of Macedonia from all that is Exarchist. The Supreme Panhellenic Committee has decided to intensify the struggle by making use of your arms, O valiant combatants, and if for some time past the Committee has hardly seemed equal to the occasion, the reason is that official Greece hesitates. But what is official Greece to us, when we have the approbation of the whole Hellenic world? Forward, then, until you have wiped out the last Bulgarian in our Macedonia. Your names will be inscribed in letters of fire in the annals of the race. May Heaven grant that the day be near when the sun of Hellenism will shine on Macedonia; then there will be peace for us and for the Ottomans, with whom we stand on the best of terms. Let our motto be: Purge Macedonia of the Bulgars.”I quote from M. Gaulis’ admirable paper, *La Macedoine*. (page 217, Brailsford, *Macedonia its Races and their Future*).

Macedonians were well acquainted with the murderous activities of the Bulgarian Vrhovists whose new waves of terrorist bands began to penetrate the Eastern borders of Macedonia in March of 1904. Fortunately, Yane Sandanski's forces were still in control of the Pirin district and more often than not, successfully repelled Bulgarian advances. In the West, bands of young Ottomans who deserted the army during the Ilinden rebellion, joined Albanian gangs and were looting and killing indiscriminately. From the north Serbian bands began to penetrate Macedonian territory. By mid 1905, there were eleven bands numbering almost 100 men pillaging, murdering, even razing entire villages, wreaking their own special brand of terror.

The most violent campaign was waged by the Greek terrorists who penetrated the south-central regions of Macedonia. By 1905 the Greeks imported a contingent of Cretans, a thousand-strong, reinforced by Ottoman deserters who roamed unhindered razing and slaughtering entire villages. By 1906, eight bands numbering over 400 men were operating in the Solun district alone and another twelve bands (600 men) around Bitola.

Along with the intrusions of armed bands in Macedonia there reappeared the foreign schools and propaganda institutions directed by non-other than the Greek and Bulgarian churches. The terrorist bands instilled fear in the Macedonian population and the Churches were quick to take the role of protectors setting the stage for the partitioning of Macedonia. Unfortunately for them, something else was brewing within Turkey, liberalism, headed by a small group of European educated young Ottomans.

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Rock and Shatter Modern Political Ideology

Part V - 1908 - 1913

In the previous article (part IV) I covered the 1903 Ilinden uprising aftermath and the interference IMRO received from Greece and Bulgaria.

In this article (part V) I will cover the Young Ottoman uprising and finish with the Balkan wars of 1912-1913.

The Murszteg Reform Program was the last hope for the Great Powers to salvage the Ottoman Empire in Macedonia. While the Murszteg Reform Program proved fruitless for the Macedonians, it raised hopes for Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia.

Item 3 of the Murszteg Reform Program, which stated “as soon as the rebellion is put down, the Great Powers would demand an administrative reorganization of the Macedonian territory based on nationalities”, caught the eye of the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian protagonists.

It was well known that there were no Greek, Bulgarian or Serbian nationalities living in Macedonia but that did not stop the new Balkan States from inventing some. The wheels of the protagonists were turning when they attempted to kill two birds with one stone by cleverly substituting “nationality” for “religious affiliation”. By the end of the 19th century, the Christian Millet of Ottoman Macedonia was already divided into two millets (the Greek Patriarchist Millet and the Bulgarian Exarchist Millet). First, since there was no Macedonian Millet there was no “governing body” to represent a Macedonian religious denomination. Second, since all Christians in Macedonia already belonged to one millet or another, it was easy to make “nationality” claims on behalf of “religious affiliation”. In modern terms, all Macedonians that belonged to the Patriarchist fold were considered to be Greek by nationality. Similarly, all those Macedonians that belonged to the Exarchist fold were considered to be Bulgarian by nationality. By introducing Serbian Churches and Schools, Serbia later used similar tactics to claim the existence of a Serbian nationality inside Macedonia.

All Macedonians that belonged to the Patriarchist church were given Greek or “Hellenized” names. Similarly, all Macedonians that belonged to the Exarchist church were given Bulgarian names. In many instances brothers born from the same mother and father were given different last names because they happened to go to different churches. Their choice of church had nothing to do with loyalty to one faction or the other, but rather with the church’s location relative to home. Each brother attended the church nearest to his house as he had always done for many years before. The sad part was that now with every spoonful of religion came a dose of venomous propaganda. Brother was pitted against brother, one fighting for “Hellenism” and the other for “Bulgarism”.

At the beginning of the Ilinden rebellion most Macedonian villages belonged to the Exarchate Church. With increased Greek activities through Karavangelis and others like him however, the tide was turning. The Greek success was mainly due to the Ottoman-Greek alliance and the Ottoman militia’s assistance. The Macedonian people were frightened to a point where they were willing to do anything to escape further punishment.

The alliance, which gave the Greeks the upper hand, did not go unnoticed by the Bulgarians. British fears of a Ottoman-Bulgarian war were alleviated when Bulgaria on April 8th, 1904 signed a peace agreement with Turkey. Bulgaria promised to reduce subversive actions in Macedonia in exchange for Ottoman promises to implement the Murzsteg Reform Program and to extend it to the Endrene (Macedonian Dardanelles) region. Russia was not too happy about the agreement especially since Bulgaria herself was beginning to make moves towards Endrene. Being of strategic importance, Russia was hoping to eventually annex Endrene for herself.

The prospect of declining Bulgarian intrusions inside Macedonia was welcome news for Karavangelis. The Greeks could now import fighters from Crete to fight the Macedonian Cheti side by side with their Ottoman allies, without Bulgarian interference. Unfortunately, while they reduced military intrusions, the Bulgarians stepped up Exarchist activities creating stiff competition for the Greeks. The clergy on both sides were going after the same flock as both sides

appointed themselves protectors and guardians of the people. In the eyes of the world, they became ambassadors of the Christian flock in Macedonia. This competition to attract parishioners created friction between the opposing factions. Friction turned to violence in villages where both groups existed and fought for control over the village church. The Ottomans were indifferent to the squabbling due to its religious nature, and remained neutral in church disputes. When fights erupted, the Ottomans padlocked the Church so neither group could use it. As competition for control of the village churches intensified so did brigand warfare.

Local squabbling never went unnoticed and both Patriarchists and Exarchists sent their hatchet men to eliminate the so-called “troublemakers”. Many priests, teachers, notables and community leaders lost their lives this way.

The Western Powers had little faith in the Ottomans and their old Ottoman conservative Islamic values but preferred the status quo maintained in Macedonia. There were two factors at play that hindered the Powers from taking action. The first was the lucrative Ottoman import-export markets upon which the Ottoman consumer was dependent for a variety of goods, and a moneymaking venture for the Western Capitalists which they did not want to lose. The second was the power struggle between the Great Powers themselves over Balkan domination. The Powers were locked in a diplomatic embrace where none could freely maneuver without upsetting the others. Each of the Great Powers knew that a sudden or massive shift in any one’s policies would result in an engagement that would involve all of them. No one wanted a “world war” on their hands.

Britain at one point contemplated creating an Autonomous Macedonia but knew that Russia and Austria would be against it. “It was fortunate for Greece at this juncture that Lansdowne’s plans foundered in a sea of European politics and that both Russia and Austria opposed Macedonian autonomy”. (page 152, Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*). This is an important fact for ALL to know which goes contrary to “Greek propaganda” that no Macedonians existed before 1945. Here is documented proof that a Macedonian nation did exist prior to the 19th century and came

very close to achieving independence. The Ilinden rebellion was ALL about Macedonia and about Macedonians asserting their desire to live as equals in the world. The Great Powers, especially Britain and Russia, owe it to the Macedonian people to come clean and put an end to the incessant “Greek propaganda”. It no longer makes any sense to keep the Macedonian people from taking their rightful place in the world. They are certainly not a threat to anyone. Those that committed crimes against the Macedonian people and continue to deny their existence obviously have a problem. But why punish the victims for being victims?

The Western powers were not happy with the way Turkey was dealing with the reforms in Macedonia but at the same time they could not agree among themselves about finding a viable solution. The Ilinden uprising was a wakeup call of how urgently reforms were needed.

“During the later part of the C19th new social forces had emerged within Turkey. Given the conditions of absolutism within the Empire, the emergence of liberalism seemed inevitable. This new creed took the form of political agitation, calling for a broad spectrum of reforms. It was headed by an embryonic Ottoman bourgeoisie, and supported by an European-educated intelligentsia”. (page 125, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

The Young Ottoman movement had been active for at least thirty years, ever since Ottoman students were allowed to attend European schools on mass. Among other things, the Young Ottomans were in favour of granting self-government to Macedonia, Thrace and Albania and believed that the Ottoman Empire could be salvaged via reforms. When the 1903 Ilinden rebellion started many of these European educated students had already joined the ranks of the Ottoman military as junior officers. The atrocities committed and the methods used in dealing with the rebels during the Ilinden aftermath however, went against these young men’s principles and many deserted the Ottoman army. Some joined Albanian roving bands in hopes of eliciting their assistance to form opposition against the Sultan. Some attempted to establish contacts with IMRO in hopes that IMRO too would join them to rise against the Sultan.

By 1905, the Young Ottomans organized under the banner of “Union and Progress” and established themselves in Solun away from the grasp of the Sultan in Tsari Grad (Constantinople). It was not too long before they gained some measure of control over the local Ottoman army, especially in Macedonia. It was not difficult to convince soldiers serving in Macedonia that anything was better than killing and murdering women and children.

After observing the actions of the Young Ottomans, the IMRO leadership was convinced that it was better to work with them than against them. The Young Ottomans also offered self-government and significant agrarian reforms, if they gained power, which was attractive to most IMRO leaders. Dame Gruev and Nikola Karev were already dead which left the IMRO helm in the hands of Gjorce Petrov who favoured a policy of urban-led insurrection. Popularity and the strength of the rebellion however, lay in the hands of the legendary Yane Sandanski who was in favour of supporting the Young Ottoman regime, especially their prospective agrarian reform programs.

The actions of the Young Ottomans did not go unnoticed by the Sultan who complained to the Great Powers but did not receive an immediate reaction. The coup d’etat did not materialize until “rising star” Enver Beg from Albania was summoned to Tsari Grad to receive a military promotion from the Sultan. Fearing it was an assassination attempt, Enver Beg and his followers fled to the mountains and called for the revolution to begin.

The rebellion first materialized in the larger cities in the form of demonstrations. On June 22nd, 1908, Solun alone drew over 20,000 protesters. By July 3rd, the Young Ottoman officers took control over most of the Sultan’s forces and by July 22nd all of Macedonia was free.

True to their word, the Young Ottomans released all political prisoners and began to work on reforms. Their first act was to send the Sultan an ultimatum to re-instate the 1876 Constitution. Being in no position to resist, Sultan Abdul Hamid II reluctantly obliged. As soon as the constitution was re-instated, amnesty was proclaimed for all those under arms including the Cheti and all foreign bands. The Macedonians, Serbians and Bulgarians took advantage of the

amnesty and came down from the mountains and surrendered their arms. The Greeks who had the most to lose were at first hesitant but warmed up to the idea. They had dreams that they might re-claim their former glory in the Phanar.

As it turned out however, the Young Ottomans were very suspicious of the Greeks and watched them with caution. The Greek dream to rule from the Phanar did not materialize.

In time, by deactivating and expelling armed bands, the Young Ottoman regime brought some stability to Macedonia.

The Young Ottoman regime, headquartered in Solun, survived unobstructed for over six months. Then, with support from Yane Sandanski's Cheta, the Young Ottomans attacked and successfully took Tsari Grad. Unfortunately, by now it was becoming evident that the Young Ottoman regime was too dependent on the Ottoman establishment and bureaucracy for its survival. As a result, it had to subordinate most of its reform programs to safeguard its own power. In actual fact after all this time in power, the Young Ottoman regime did very little to alleviate the social and economic problems in the Macedonian villages.

To prompt the Young Ottomans to deliver on their promises, Sandanski had a plan of his own. He proposed that in exchange for IMRO's help, the Young Ottomans were required to redistribute much needed land in favour of the poor (landless) Macedonians. Additionally, to ensure the land reforms were put in place according to agreements, Sandanski requested that he personally be given the task of organizing a peasant militia to supervise the implementation. Unfortunately, while Sandanski's proposals were widely accepted by the Macedonian peasants, they attracted negative attention abroad. The first to complain were the Greeks as follows; "The consequences of Sandanski's plan, as unfortunately confirmed by events, would be terrible (for us). Unless something else, like a war, or an agreement between the European Powers, settles the Macedonian question in our favour, it is my opinion that there can be no doubt that settlement of the agrarian question would create possibilities for the final settlement of the Macedonian question...". (page 127, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

Sandanski's move for cooperation with the Young Ottomans was a radical departure from IMRO's policies (seizure of power by revolutionary means). To take advantage of the new situation and stay on course, IMRO created an offshoot branch dubbed the "National (or Peoples') Federative Party"(NFP). The NFP was officially launched in early 1909 and worked with (pressured) the Young Ottoman regime to develop a quasi-parliamentary system and to preserve the national and territorial integrity of Macedonia within an Ottoman Federation.

By the time the NFP was organized and ready to deal with the issues at hand, the Young Ottoman regime was losing momentum and stagnating. By now it was obvious to IMRO that without "grass roots" support from the Ottoman establishment, the regime was fighting a losing battle. Its rise to power resulted from a coup and the regime itself was no more than a "dictatorship".

The Young Ottoman regime was a "Western backed idea", an "alternate solution" to a problem with no end. The majority of IMRO leaders could no longer agree to provide continued support and were contemplating breaking off relations with the Young Ottomans. To make matters worse, a class struggle (socialism) was brewing in Europe causing unrest between the rich and the poor and dividing people along class lines. The so-called "religious wars" between the Patriarchists and Exarchists were also having their effects, further dividing IMRO and the Macedonian people.

By 1910, armed propaganda in Macedonia was replaced by Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian "Political Clubs" which continually worked against NFP agendas and the NFP leaders.

While Russia was having mixed feelings about the Young Ottoman regime, the European powers, especially Britain who through intrigue created the regime, were relieved to be rid of the old reform programs. Britain approved of the cooperation between NFP and the Young Ottomans which caused further fracturing between the NFP (who wanted to create an autonomous Macedonia inside an Ottoman Federation), and "grass roots" IMRO (who wanted independence by armed rebellion). Unfortunately, the Young Ottoman regime with all

its promises did not meet expectations and reverted to the old Ottoman way of rule. To stave off coup attempts by extremist factions, the Young Ottoman regime resorted to dictatorial rule in place of fostering liberal programs. This clampdown manifested itself in a number of repressive laws in Macedonia including the laws on strikes, political associations and armed bands. This policy reversal again destabilized Macedonian society by bringing back the old oppressive political climate. The NFP and all other political, cultural and professional organizations were effectively banned, forcing IMRO to go underground. The Macedonian people in the meantime were thrown back into anarchy and things went downhill from there on.

The Young Ottoman regime predicted its own demise and to save itself, between 1910 and 1911, it re-settled almost a quarter of a million Ottomans in Macedonia as it hoped to maintain control of Macedonia if it was ejected from Tsari Grad. Faced with several fronts however, including the Albanian revolution in 1909-1912, the Italian-Ottoman war in Libya in 1911, domestic opposition, the resurgence of armed bands, and finally the Sultan's new loyal army. The Young Ottoman regime could no longer maintain a hold on power and on July 13, 1912, capitulated to the Sultan.

In the meantime the Great Powers were locked in a struggle of their own where none could maneuver without upsetting the delicate balance of the status quo. While the Great Powers were held in balance by their own political vices, the new Balkan nations were flexing their economic and military muscles. Alliances like the Serbian-Bulgarian league against Greek-Ottoman collusion or the Greek-Rumanian league against Bulgarian aims at Macedonia came and went. On the surface it seemed that everything was normal but deep inside a rift was starting to develop.

The rift became apparent when Russian-Austrian relations began to seriously cool. Dividing lines were drawn as Russia began to warm up to Britain and France while Austria began to warm up to Germany. Italy remained neutral for a while and took a few shots at Turkey but was prohibited (by the other powers) from attacking the centers of Ottoman power. (It was through these campaigns that Italy occupied the Dodecanese).

Even though Italy was restrained from further campaigns, it weakened Turkey enough for the three new Balkan States to consider campaigns of their own.

Italy's actions were also a sign of things to come and created an atmosphere of urgency for the new states to expedite their own plans for territorial annexation.

Everyone wanted a piece of Macedonia but no one alone dared stick out his neck to get it. The three wolves of the Balkans with Russian help, realized that each alone could not accomplish what the three could do together. They swallowed their pride, put their differences aside and by the end of 1911 they started negotiations.

As a way of preventing Austrian aspirations in the Balkans, Russia invited the idea of a Serbian-Bulgarian league. Russia had hopes that jointly Serbia and Bulgaria would be able to withstand Austrian advances in Macedonia without her involvement. After getting them to agree to talk, Serbia and Bulgaria listed their terms but could not reach an agreement. Autonomy for Macedonia was one major issue of contention that they could not agree upon. While Sofia supported the idea of autonomy Belgrade opposed it. Finally, for the sake of expediting the negotiations, all parties agreed that the "autonomy question" would be left separate and would be dealt with after the annexation of Macedonia.

Russia made it clear to both parties that they couldn't invade Macedonia without Russia's permission and only if Turkey became a threat to the Christian population. In the meantime, Serbia was encouraged to take steps to annex Albania and Kosovo.

A draft Serbian-Bulgarian agreement was reached and signed on March 13th, 1912. Included in the agreement was a crude delineation of prospective boundaries and suggestions that the final boundaries might be settled by force of arms. The Russians also insisted that Tsar Nikolai II would arbitrate any disputes regarding the exact territorial limits.

Even before the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement was finalized, Greece was already having discussions with Bulgaria about negotiating a

Greek-Bulgarian agreement. The Greek-Bulgarian negotiations, like the Serbian-Bulgarian negotiations, were conducted in secret known only to the Greek King, Prime Minister Venizelos and their negotiator “The Times” correspondent J. D. Bourchier, an old friend of Venizelos. Like the Serbs, the Greeks had always opposed the idea of Macedonian autonomy but the Bulgarians were unwilling to proceed until Greece agreed to the autonomy. The Greek-Bulgarian treaty was signed on May 30th 1912, both parties promising not to attack one another and to come to each other’s defense should Turkey attack them.

The “Balkan League of Nations” was spawned in June 1912 and shortly after Turkey was given a signed ultimatum bearing the League’s signature, which in short, read “deliver the promised reforms in Macedonia or prepare to be invaded”.

There was much intrigue, agreements, counter agreements and secret deals between the League of Nations (Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia) but from the outset each was determined to exploit any situation that developed, purely for its own gain. “The League of Nations in fact was simply a device for synchronizing a military effort upon the part of the four powers (Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro) who had come to realize that the simplest way to settle the Ottoman question, before it was too late and while circumstances were favourable, was to attack Turkey simultaneously and present the European powers with a *fait accompli*”. (page 440, Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*). All that remained now was to provoke Turkey into committing an offence against the Christian population and the invasion would become a reality.

Using proven techniques of terrorism to prepare the battleground, Vrhovists, masquerading as IMRO agents, conducted many raids inside Macedonia murdering, raping and plundering villages in hopes that the Macedonian bands would be blamed. When the Ottomans investigated the disturbances, both Patriarchist and Exarchist authorities corroborated their stories and pinned these acts on the Macedonians.

As expected, the Ottomans responded swiftly and dealt with the situation in the usual manner. Unfortunately for the Ottomans, their

actions were welcome news to the League's spies who dispatched them to the European press.

The Ottomans, in the eyes of the world, committed atrocities against the Christians in Macedonia and something had to be done. It was now up to the Great Powers to decide the course of action.

Along with documents of Ottoman atrocities, the foreign press was also receiving well-camouflaged League propaganda. The League had commenced extensive propaganda campaigns against the Ottomans, detailing every Ottoman act for European consumption.

A war was imminent but according to the League's propaganda, it was a necessary war to "liberate" the enslaved Christians from Ottoman oppression. The League, through extensive media campaigns, called on all Christians in Macedonia to join the League and oust the oppressive Ottoman.

Here is what Yane Sandanski had to say; "We ought to work on the awakening of the consciousness of the Macedonian masses that they are an independent nation...because those who seek to 'liberate them'... will actually be coming to enslave them..." (page 134, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

As I mentioned earlier, the Western Powers had not exhausted the full potential of the Ottoman markets and were unwilling to let the Ottoman regime in Macedonia collapse. At the same time Britain, France, Italy and Russia were greatly concerned about the aggressive attitudes of Germany outside of the Balkans. More importantly, they were concerned with the Ottoman regime's leaning towards a Ottoman-German alliance.

When Russia proposed the idea of a "Balkan League of Nations" it was welcome news for Britain, France and Italy. The League was viewed as an anti-German front, a way of ejecting the Ottoman regime from Europe and at the same time, safeguarding (British, French and Italian) interests and expansionary ambitions. The not so obvious Russian motive for sponsoring the League, was to guarantee its own influence in the Balkans perhaps through Serbia, or Bulgaria or both.

On October 18th, 1912 Montenegro declared war on Turkey with the League following suit. The battles that ensued were fought almost entirely on Macedonian soil, once again causing the Macedonians to suffer from someone else's war.

Russia, the architect of the Balkan League was against a war in 1912 and so were France and Britain. A war at this point might throw off the delicate diplomatic balance and escalate into a "world war". Russia feared that the half-millennium old Ottoman Empire might not be as easy a target as the League had estimated. Britain and France feared a backlash from Germany and Austria now that Turkey was warming up to them as a prospective ally. To stop the League's aggressive actions, both Britain and France threatened them with economic sanctions but that was not enough to suppress the appetites of the three hungry Balkan wolves.

The League's plan was to surround the Ottoman army in Macedonia and force it out to Tsari Grad. To everyone's surprise however, the League won a crushing and unexpected victory in just six weeks. Five Ottoman divisions were surrounded and defeated in two battles in Bitola and Kumanovo. With the exception of Sandanski and a force of 400 Macedonians who fought back and liberated Melnik and Nevrokop, the League received no opposition from the Macedonians. In fact the enthusiasm created by the "liberators" not only helped the League fight harder but also encouraged thousands of Macedonians to enlist in the League's armies. "A Macedonian Militia force of 14,000 fought under the Bulgarian command in the East. The 'Volunteer regiment', directed by IMRO veterans, consisted of a thousand Macedonians, Ottomans and Albanians. In the Serbian and Greek armies, Macedonian detachments such as the 'National Guard' and the 'Holy Band', were given the task of encircling the Ottomans to fight their retreat." (page 143, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question). Even Chakalarov, the protector of the Lerin and Kostur regions, joined the fight to help the League get rid of the Ottomans. The League's victories and intense propaganda were so convincing that the entire Macedonian nation welcomed the "liberators" with open arms.

The moment the three wolves evicted the Ottoman army from Macedonia, they quickly worked out a partitioning strategy along the following lines;

Serbia was to receive the northwestern portion of Macedonia, which included Skopje, Bitola, south to the west of Lerin, east to Gevgelija and west to the Albanian Mountains.

Bulgaria was to receive all of Thrace, west to Gevgelija, south to the Aegean Sea, and east from Solun.

Greece was to receive north to Lerin, west to the Albanian Mountains, all of Epirus and east to Solun. "To ensure their hegemony and quell any dissent, the occupying forces set up the apparatus of government and, by legislative decrees, extended their own constitutions to these new bodies, from which Macedonians were absent. Indeed, in many provincial centres, such as Gevgelija, a double or triple condominium was established, much to the detriment of the Macedonian citizens" (page 143, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

In view of the Macedonian contribution to the League's success in evicting the Ottomans, in December 12th, 1912, Sandanski called for Macedonian autonomy. The League's occupying armies however, refused to budge and initiated a violent assimilation program. The Macedonian fighters that fought side by side with the League's armies found themselves policed by a joint League command ensuring that no resistance or independent action would arise. The League also pursued Sandanski and his men but Sandanski resisted and stayed active in the Pirin Region until his assassination in 1915 by Bulgarian agents.

The changing conditions inside Macedonia forced the IMRO leadership to seek refuge in foreign cities away from home. Some of the more prominent leaders moved to St. Petersburg and joined the Macedonian community living there. This small group of Macedonians consistently lobbied for Macedonian Statehood and in the war's aftermath, acted as a government in exile. The most outspoken advocate of the Macedonian leaders was Dimitar Chupovski who published the "Macedonian Voice" and

continuously protested to the Great Powers against Macedonia's partition. In June 1913 he wrote; "The division of Macedonia among the brother nations is the most unjust act in the history of these nations – it is trampling on the rights of man, and a disgrace for the entire Slav race." (page 145, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question). In total, eleven issues of "Macedonian Voice" were published and distributed all over Europe.

"A great terror reigns in Macedonia now. The 'freedom' of the allies has no frontiers, no-one from Macedonia has the right to travel outside, to protest or complain before the European states. Whoever disturbs this order is either killed or imprisoned. The allies surround Macedonia with a Chinese Wall..." (page 145, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

The Macedonian people must not stand idly by and accept the unworthy fate of being divided so that others may profit from it. "In the name of the Macedonian people, we demand that Macedonia remain a single, indivisible, independent Balkan state within its geographical, ethnographic, historical, economic and cultural frontiers...Macedonia represents a unified body both from the historical and natural viewpoints, and cannot voluntarily end its many centuries of existence by agreeing to be broken up...Can we allow a people to be, at one and the same time, Bulgarian, Serb and Greek? Is it not simpler to assume that the nationality attributed to us is dictated by the big power politics of the interested parties who wish to take over Macedonia?". (page 145, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

By November it was becoming apparent that Turkey was running out of options and on November 12th, 1912, called on the Great Powers to bring about an armistice. To deal with the situations, a peace conference was scheduled for December 16th, 1912, to take place in London. Having some time to adjust to the new situation, the Great Powers, for the first time, opted from the usual "status quo" recommendations and considered making concessions to the victors. Austria however, was not too happy at the prospect of a "large Serbia" let alone allowing Serbia access to the Adriatic Sea. Austria was eyeing the Adriatic region as a prospective sphere of influence for herself. Being unable to make concessions by herself however, Austria did the next best thing and agreed with Britain to

the idea of “creating” a new State (Albania). Another reason why Austria did not want Serbia to have access to the Adriatic Sea was because a “Serbian port might become a Russian port”.

This attempt to deny Serbia access to the Adriatic not only left Serbia landlocked but upset Russia causing her to break relations with Austria. Italy too was affected by this diplomatic power play which pushed her to improve her relations with Austria.

This, as it turned out was the crucial historic moment that gave birth to the “Triple Alliance” (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) and the “Triple Entente” (Britain, France and Russia), a division that would have future consequences.

As a result of this sudden change of events, Austria began to amass troops along the Serbian border. At the same time, fearing German intervention, Russia ordered a halt to Bulgarian and Serbian advances towards Tsari Grad.

To fully curb Serbian and Russian expansionism, France, Britain and Italy voted to grant the newly created Albanian State, full independence. This did not only save Albania from partitioning by the Greeks and Serbians, it also made her a Great Power protectorate, which Albanians enjoy to this day.

I want to emphasize that by 1912, it was well known that a Macedonian Nation with a Macedonian consciousness existed and demonstrated its desire for independence. These actions were well documented and familiar to the Great Powers, yet even after pleading their case, the Macedonians were NOT ALLOWED to attend the London Peace Conference of December 16th, 1912. Numerous petitions were made by IMRO affiliates from St. Petersburg, all ignored. Also, Chupovski’s memo, to the British delegation, was not tabled. Here is what Chupovski (in part) had to say; “In the name of natural law, of history, of practical expediency, for the Macedonian people, we ask that Macedonia’s right to self-determination be admitted, and that Macedonia be constituted within its ethnic, geographical and cultural borders as a self-governing state with a government responsible to a national assembly.” (page 147, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

The London Conference adjourned on August 11, 1913 officially declaring an end to the First Balkan War. In spite of all the wheeling and dealing that went on during the conference the resolutions left all parties dissatisfied. Serbia was dissatisfied with losing the Albanian territory. Serbia appealed to Bulgaria to grant her access to the Aegean Sea via Solun and the Vardar valley, but her appeals fell on deaf ears.

Greece also was not happy with Bulgaria's invasion and annexation of Endrene (Macedonian Dardanelles). So to balance her share Greece wanted Serres, Drama and Kavala as compensation. That too fell on Bulgarian deaf ears.

Bulgaria, frustrated with not achieving her "San Stefano Dream" (fiction), was bitter about Russia deserting her during the London Conference negotiations.

Seeing that Bulgaria was not going to budge and the fact that neither Greece nor Serbia alone could take on Bulgaria, should a conflict arise, Greece and Serbia concluded a secret pact of their own to jointly act against Bulgaria. In short, the objective was to take territory from Bulgaria west of the Vardar River, divide it and have a common frontier.

After stumbling upon this Greek-Serbian pact, despite Russian attempts to appease her by offering her Solun, Bulgaria remained bitter and in a moment of weakness, was lured away by Austria. By going over to Austria, Bulgaria in effect broke off all relations with the Balkan League.

The Bulgarian shift in loyalties disappointed Russia who made it clear to Bulgaria that it could no longer expect any help.

In what was to be termed the "Second Balkan War", the Bulgarian army, unprovoked, attacked its former allies on June 30th, 1913, again on Macedonian soil. Preferring the element of surprise, Bulgaria turned on her former allies and renewed the conflict, officially turning the Macedonian mission from "liberation" to "occupation". There were two things that Bulgaria didn't count on, Romanian involvement and Austrian treachery. The bloody fight

was short lived as Rumania, Montenegro and Turkey joined Greece and Serbia and dealt Bulgaria a catastrophic blow. The promised Austrian support did not materialize as the risks for Austrian involvement outweighed any benefits. The real surprise however, was Rumania's break with neutrality. Up to now Rumania had remained neutral and refused to get involved. No one, not even Bulgaria anticipated this attack from the north. On the other hand however, this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for Rumania to regain lost territory.

Even Turkey was able to re-gain some of what she recently lost to Bulgaria. Being involved in too many fronts at the same time Bulgaria was unable to repel Turkey and prevent her from taking back the Endrene region.

The biggest winners however, were Greece and Serbia, both of whom got exactly what they wanted, virtually unabated.

The Macedonians fared worst in the conflict mainly due to their own enthusiasm. One faction misinterpreted Macedonian assistance to another, as disloyalty. As frontlines shifted positions, Macedonian citizens were exposed to the various factions. Those Macedonians that assisted one faction were butchered by another faction for showing sympathy to the enemy. "The Carnegie Relief Commission, dispatched to the Balkans in late 1913, reported the incredible story of human suffering. In Macedonia alone, 160 villages were razed leaving 16,000 homeless, several thousand civilians murdered, and over 100,000 forced to emigrate as refugees." (page 149, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question). This genocidal tragedy was committed in a relatively short time and by those who marched in and were welcomed as "liberators". Worst and most unexpected was that "Christians" committed this genocide against "Christians" reminiscent of the 1204 tragedy committed by the Western Crusaders.

After a great deal of jockeying for position, deliberating and negotiating, the warring factions agreed to an armistice and peace between Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia was negotiated in August, 1913 in Bucharest. The map of Macedonia was again redrafted without Macedonian participation. The new boundaries

ignored previously agreed upon considerations such as lines of “nationalities” (not that any existed), the Macedonian people’s democratic desires, etc., as the Bucharest delegates imposed their artificial sovereignty upon the Macedonian people. With the exception of one minor change in 1920 in Albania’s favour, these dividing lines have remained in place to this day. 50% of the total Macedonian territory went to Greece, 40% to Serbia and 10% to Bulgaria. August 10th, 1913 became the darkest day in Macedonian history.

Not since Roman times has Macedonia been partitioned in a way where three brothers were forced to assume three different (imposed) identities, forced to speak three different foreign languages in their own homes and treated as strangers in their own lands. The future will show that where half a millenium of Ottoman suppression and a century of forced Hellenization/ Bulgarization couldn’t erode Macedonian consciousness, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian aggression, in less than a decade, will. The once proud Macedonian nation that long ago conquered the world, bridged the gap between East and West, introduced Christianity to Europe, safeguarded all ancient knowledge and protected the West from Eastern Invaders has now been beaten and reduced to a shadow of its former self. The force of this latest intrusion transformed the Macedonian Nation into a shy creature seeking homes in foreign lands and hiding in the twilight while its enemies dance on the heads of its dead and to the world, proclaimed them as their own. It was not enough that they consumed the Macedonian lands, these new depraved creatures spawned by Western greed, have consumed all Macedonian treasures such as history, culture, religion, literature, folklore, ancient knowledge stolen from Holy Mountain (Athos), etc., and regurgitated them as their own. Without hesitation, they would lie to the world, even to their own people about “their true identities” and blame their ills on the innocent. Their propaganda will turn “lies to truths” and “truths to lies” until all people are poisoned with hatred, an artificially created hatred, which will haunt Macedonians for all time and render them mute. Silence will fill the air and children will not dare cry, for if they utter anything Macedonian a terrible curse will befall them which can only be partially lifted if they leave their lands or submit to the will of their new masters. The proud name “Macedonia” which echoed through

the centuries and outlasted time itself, will become a “dirty word” never to be spoken. The Macedonian language, the mother of all Slav languages, the “Voice of Eastern Christianity” will be “muted” to be spoken only in the shadows, in fear that “enemy ears” may be lurking. In time it will become known as “our language” spoken by “our people” a mute language spoken by a nameless nation. In time the Macedonian nation, the Macedonian people and the Macedonian language will become “an anomaly” in its ancestral land. This is the fate that awaits the Macedonian people in the 20th century all with the blessings of the Great Powers (Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy).

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Part VI - 1912- 1939

In the previous article (part V) I covered the period 1903 to 1913 including the Young Ottoman uprising and the first and second Balkan wars.

In this article (part VI) I will cover the effects of Macedonia's partition and the practices and policies of its subjugators.

The jubilation of liberation died down quickly as the fires of burning villages lit the night skies. Macedonia was in flames again, liberators turned to occupiers and rained havoc on the Macedonian population. The political, economic and ethnic unity of Macedonia was no more. Greek soldiers who came to liberate their Christian brothers from the oppressive Ottomans and terrible Bulgarians were now burning, torturing, and murdering people. In the words of Sir Edmond Grey, "the Balkan war began as a war of liberation, became rapidly a war of annexation, and has ended as a war of extermination"(Page 294, Vasil Bogov, Macedonian Revelation, Historical Documents Rock and Shatter Modern Political Ideology).

The Greek atrocities were revealed to the world when a lost mailbag was discovered containing letters from Greek soldiers in Macedonia to their families in Greece. The mailbag was turned in to the Carnegie Relief Commission and the contents of the letters were made public. Expecting to fight for the glory of the fatherland, the soldiers instead, found themselves torturing, murdering, burning houses and evicting women and children from their homes in a most vile way. The letters revealed that the soldiers were acting on direct orders from the Greek authorities and the Greek king himself. Macedonian families of known Exarchists (Macedonians belonging to the Bulgarian Church) were ordered by force to "take with them what they could carry and get out". "This is Greece now and there is no place for Bulgarians here". Those that remained were forced to swear loyalty to the Greek State. Anyone who refused to take the loyalty oath was either executed as an example of what would happen to those disloyal, or was evicted from the country. To explain the mass evacuations, Greek officials were claiming that the inhabitants of Macedonia were leaving by choice or becoming Greek by choice. The truth is, no one was given any choice at all.

“A thousand Greek and Serbian publicists began to fill the world with their shouting about the essentially Greek or Serbian character of the populations of their different spheres. The Serbs gave the unhappy Macedonians twenty four hours to renounce their nationality and proclaim themselves Serbs, and the Greeks did the same. Refusal meant murder or expulsion. Greek and Serbian colonists were poured into the occupied country... The Greek newspapers began to talk about a Macedonia peopled entirely with Greeks-and they explained the fact that no one spoke Greek by calling the people ‘Bulgaro-phone Greeks’... the Greek army entered villages where no one spoke their language. ‘What do you mean by speaking Bulgarian?’ cried the officers. ‘This is Greece and you must speak Greek’” (Page 104, John Shea, Macedonia and Greece, The Struggle to define a new Balkan Nation).

In 1913, professor R.A. Reiss reports to the Greek government: "Those whom you would call Bulgarian speakers I would simply call Macedonians...Macedonian is not the language they speak in Sofia...I repeat the mass of inhabitants there (Macedonia) remain simply Macedonians."

“The Carnegie Relief Commission, dispatched to the Balkans in late 1913, reported the incredible story of human suffering. In Macedonia alone, 160 villages were razed leaving 16,000 homeless, several thousand civilians murdered, and over 100,000 forced to emigrate as refugees.” (Page 149, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

History again turned its eyes away from the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian atrocities in Macedonia to focus on new events that were about to unfold and engulf the entire world.

After losing Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria in 1908 and the Albanian territories in 1912 (again because of Austria), Serbia became bitter and resentful. “To the nationalist Serbs the Habsburg monarchy (Austria-Hungary) was an old evil monster which prevented their nation from becoming a great and powerful state. On June 28, 1914, a young Serbian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, assassinated the heir of the Habsburg monarchy, the Archduke

Francis Ferdinand, and his wife at Sarjevo” (Page 104, Felix Gilbert, The End of the European Era, 1890 to the Present).

Within two weeks of the assassination the First World War broke out engulfing all of Europe. It was inevitable and a matter of time before a “world war” would break out in the Balkans. The Great Powers were incapable of exercising diplomacy either between themselves or with the new Balkan States they helped create. Macedonia was sacrificed in order to appease the new Balkan states but that did little to satisfy their ferocious appetites for lands and loot.

While World War I raged on consuming the lives of millions of young men and women, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia were serving their own brand of chauvinism in Macedonia. For the next five years, with the world busy with its own problems there was no one to hear the cries of the Macedonian people at the hands of the new tyrants. If the gravestones of the dead Macedonians could speak they would tell tales of torture and executions, deception and lies. They would say, “our Christian brothers came to liberate us but instead they killed us because we were in their way of achieving greatness. We were labeled ‘criminals’ because we would not yield to their demands. I ask you is it a crime to want to live as free men? Is it a crime to want to be Macedonian? Is it a crime to want to exercise free will? It is they who are the criminals for befouling everything that is Christian, for their lies and deception, and for murdering us to possess our lands. History will record August 10th, 1913 as the darkest day in Macedonia, the day our future died”.

The triple occupation worsened living conditions in Macedonia but the fighting spirit of the Macedonian people continued to live underground and abroad. Three generations of fighting for liberty, freedom and an independent Macedonia came to a close. The Ilinden generation and IMRO were defeated, not by the Ottomans, not by Muslim oppression but by Christian cruelty and deception.

Soon after the occupation, underground societies sprang up everywhere urging the Macedonian people to refuse their new fate and oppose the partition. Accordingly, many Macedonians did so by refusing to obey the new officialdom and by not participating in the

new institutions. This however, did not phase the military regimes occupying Macedonia from systematic denationalization and violent assimilation.

The battle for “dominion of the world” which started over Balkan affairs, soon took a sinister turn to again involve Macedonia. As the Entente Powers (Britain, France, Russia and Italy) were ‘fighting it out’ with the Central Powers (Germany and Austro-Hungary), Bulgaria, smarting from her losses at Bucharest, remained neutral. In a turn of events and to the amazement of the Greeks, the Entente Powers approached Bulgaria with an offer of a substantial portion of Macedonian territory in exchange for her alliance. Bulgaria however, seemed to prefer the company of the Central Powers, perhaps they offered her a bigger portion, because by late 1915, her armies marched in and invaded Macedonia. To quote the Bulgarian War Minister General Nikolaev “ we care little about the British, Germans, French, Russians, Italians, Austrians or Hungarians; our only thought is Macedonia. Whichever of the two groups of Powers will enable us to conquer it will have our alliance!” (Page 154, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

While the Serbs were being engaged on their northern border, the Greeks were debating which side to take. Their hesitation or “National Schism”, as it was later called, lay in the differences that emerged between the Greek Prime Minister Venizelos and the Greek King Constantine I, over which side to join. Venizelos was a strong supporter of the Entente and within days of the outbreak of hostilities, was ready to offer Greek troops to fight alongside the Entente. King Constantine on the other hand, did not share Venizelo’s zeal and believed that Greek policies would be served best by staying neutral. Being married to Sofia, the sister of Kaiser Wilhelm II however, predisposed Constantine towards the Central Powers. The tug of war between Prime Minister and king divided the people of Greece into two camps and the country slid towards a state of virtual civil war. Having the authority to do so, Constantine replaced Venizelos with a pro-German Prime Minister and to end the impasse, called for an election. Unfortunately for the King, Venizelos once again came out victorious with a clear majority. Bulgaria’s attack on Serbia however, due to a Greek-Serbian treaty, predisposed Greece to offer Serbia assistance, but the King’s camp

refused to comply on the grounds that it was not Bulgaria alone who was committing the aggression and insisted on remaining neutral. Venizelos on the other hand, called on parliament and won support to send Greek troops to fight alongside the Serbs and to allow landings of Entente troops in the Solun region. Venizelos was again forced to resign. “But whatever the constitutional rights and wrongs of the situation Venizelos’s second resignation on 5 October 1915 signified a total breakdown in relations between the king and his elected prime minister. Britain and France, however, had not yet given up Greece for lost and held out to Venizelos’s successor, Alexander Zaimis, the prospect of the cession of Cyprus to Greece in return for aid to Serbia, whose forces were now under severe pressure” (Page 109, Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*).

Soon afterwards, Zaimis too was forced to resign. New elections were held in December but were boycotted by the Venizelos camp. Events came to a head when the Royalists refused to allow evacuated Serbian troops to cross over from Corfu and join the Entente forces on the Solun front. Backed by the Entente, a group of pro-Venizelos officers launched a coup in Solun against the official government and created a provisional pro-Entente government with its own army. Once again many Macedonians, deceived by Balkan propaganda, joined the war with hopes of being liberated only to end up as “cannon fodder” used by both sides at the front. Macedonian casualties mounted and towns and villages only recently reconstructed were again bombarded to dust.

Soon after establishing the Solun front, the occupation of Greece was complete. France had dispatched 60,000 troops in the Balkans with hopes of safeguarding the Skopje to Solun rail links. By late 1917, Entente troops were emerging victorious over the Bulgarians and Germans in Macedonia. No sooner was the battle over than a problem developed between British and French commands in Macedonia. While the British General Milne supported Venizelos and his attempts to constitute a pro-British provisional government in Greece, the pro-Macedonian French General Sarrail opposed Venizelos and sought to drive the Greek army out of Macedonia. “The ambitious plan for Macedonian autonomy drafted by the French command in 1915 and 1916 were but mere progressive steps

to ensure France a strategic outpost for capital expansion” (Page 155, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

Once again, Macedonians were caught in the middle of someone else’s war. To save face, France recalled Sarraill and replaced him with a pro-Greek commander, thus avoiding a diplomatic disaster.

After establishing a government in Athens and consolidating his power in Greece, Venizelos committed a total of nine divisions to the Macedonian front to assist the Entente forces on the Solun front. To further prove his devotion to the Entente, Venizelos committed two more divisions to fight the Bolsheviks in Russia.

When the war was over, on November 11, 1918, a general armistice was signed and a Peace Conference was convened in Versailles France. Venizelos arrived in Paris as the principle negotiator for Greece, determined to reap his reward for his solid support to his victorious allies. One of Venizelos’s objectives was to resurrect the “Megaly Idea” by annexing parts of Asia Minor, Smyrna (Ismir) in particular. He convinced the world that the Christians living in Asia Minor were Greek and should be part of Greece. Unfortunately for Venizelos, Italy had prior claims in Asia Minor (Anatolia) which created a problem for the peacemakers. Greek ambition was viewed with suspicion by Italy so to strengthen her claims, in March 1919, she began to build up troops in the region. The Greeks viewed this as a threat to their own claim and before a final territorial solution was reached, they demanded concessions. The reasons given were that the Greek people in Asia Minor were endangered by Ottoman aggression and needed protection. After much protest on the Greek side, Britain, France and the Americans finally gave them permission to send a small defense force. Under the protection of allied warships, on May 15, 1919, Greek troops began their landing in Smyrna. Instead of staying put however, as per prior agreements, they began to occupy Western Asia Minor (more on this later).

No sooner were the Central Powers driven out of Greek territories than the Greek Government, by passing LAW 1051, inaugurated a new administrative jurisdiction for governing the newly acquired lands in Macedonia.

When it started to become clear that the Entente Powers were winning the war, encouraged by Woodrow Wilson's principles of nationality, many Macedonian lobby groups placed their faith in the Peace Conference in Versailles. Wilson's fourteen principles of nationality implicitly asserted the right of all nations to self-determination.

In his address to the Pan Slavic Assembly in Odessa in August 1914, Krste Misirkov called for achieving autonomy by diplomatic means. An article was written and extensively circulated in May 1915, which specifically dealt with the autonomy call.

The student organization "Independent Society", in Geneva Switzerland under the slogan of "Macedonia for the Macedonians", demanded the application of Wilson's principles to create an autonomous Macedonia based on the principles of the Swiss Federative model.

Remnants of the IMRO also took action in the rally for an Autonomous Macedonia. After the Bulgarians murdered Yane Sandanski in 1915, his supporters fled the Pirin region to save their own lives and later regrouped in Serres to form the "Serres Revolutionary Council". "Having noted the impetus for unification of the Southern Slavs against the Central Powers, the Council issued a 'Declaration of Autonomy' in October 1918, in which it appealed for membership of a Balkan Federation on the basis of Macedonian territorial integrity. This plea was ultimately rejected by the ruling cliques of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which later became known as Yugoslavia". "By striving for political and economic hegemony over the Balkans, Balkan nationalism has thrown the Balkan peoples and states into deep contradictions and conflicts which must be begun by war, and finished by war and always war". (Page 158-159, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

Once again the Macedonian people came to the forefront to plead their case and once again they were shut out. How many more wars must be fought and how much more blood must be spilled for the world to realize that there is no end to Balkan conflicts without

involving the Macedonian people in resolving the Macedonian question?

The Peace Conference, which was supposedly “the tribunal of international conscience”, had no place for “Wilsonian Justice” or the opportunity for self-determination. Instead of practicing what they preached, the so called “peace makers of Versailles” rewarded aggression in exchange for self-interest.

With the stroke of a pen, in 1919 at the Treaty of Versailles (Paris), England and France sealed Macedonia’s fate by ratifying the principles of the Bucharest Treaty and officially endorsing the partitioning of Macedonia.

This gave Greece the license she needed to pursue forced expulsion and denationalization of Macedonians and to begin a mass colonization by transplanting “potential Greeks” into the annexed territories of Macedonia. The Neuilly Convention allowed for forced exchanges of populations. About 70,000 Macedonians were expelled from the Greek occupied part of Macedonia to Bulgaria and 25,000 “so called Greeks” were transplanted from Bulgaria to Greek occupied Macedonia.

“Macedonia’s fate has been the subject of every kind of political combination, negotiation and treaty since 1912, each more immoral than the last, each ignoring completely the local interests and desires of a population which, with the stroke of the statesman’s pen, can be condemned to national dissolution, and denied the right to a free national life while Armenians, Albanians and Jews receive political freedom” (Page 160, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

The Great Powers did not dare lose the strategic importance and untapped wealth in Macedonia or dare disappoint their trusted allies in the Balkans. Think of the endless bickering and complaining!

What was surprising, especially to the Balkan delegation, was the raising of the Macedonian question by Italy. On July 10, 1919, Italy along with the USA made a proposal to the “Committee for the Formation of New States” for Macedonian autonomy. France flatly opposed the motion while Britain proposed establishing a five-year

Macedonian Commissary under the auspices of the League of Nations. Greece and Serbia, by refusing to acknowledge the existence of a Macedonian question, literally killed the motion.

Another item that came out of Versailles was Article 51, the League of Nations' code to "protect national minorities". Article 51 of the Treaty of Versailles espouses equality of civil rights, education, language, and religion for all national minorities. Unfortunately, article 51 was never implemented by the Balkan States or enforced by the League of Nations which Greece and Bulgaria to this day, violate and ignore. Why is this? Because to this day, Greece and Bulgaria claim that "the Macedonian nationality" does not exist and has never existed. So, what minorities should they be protecting? In response to the Greek claim I would like to ask the Greeks the following questions;

To what minorities were you referring when on September 29, 1924 your Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolaos Mihalakopoulou signed an agreement with the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Kalkoff?

To what minorities were you referring when on August 17, 1926 you made an agreement with Yugoslavia regarding the nationality of the "Slavophones in Greece?"

(Pages 159-161 G.A.L. I Kata Tis Makedonias Epivouli, (Ekdosis Deftera Sympleiromeni), Athinai 1966).

On September 29, 1924, Greece signed an agreement with Bulgaria declaring that the Macedonians in Greece were Bulgarians. Not to disappoint the Serbians, when they found out about the Greek-Bulgarian agreement, the Greeks changed their mind and on August 17, 1926, declared that the Macedonians in Greece were in reality, Serbs.

As it turned out, the loudly proclaimed "Wilson principles" at the Paris Conference were only for show. The real winners at the end of the conference were the "players", the biggest one of all being Venizelos of Greece. "The entire forum was a farce, and its offspring the Versailles Treaty, the ultimate insult to the dignity and self-esteem (what remained of it after continuous war and

bloodshed) of the long-tormented Macedonian people. Those Macedonians prodded by conscience, by the mistrust gained after generations of suffering, and by the desire for freedom, thereafter treated the Versailles Treaty, and all political treaties, with the contempt they deserve” (Page 166, Radin, IMRO and the Macedonian Question).

At the conclusion of the Treaty not only did Greece get back what she had previously annexed but additionally she received a large portion of Epirus, Western Thrace, Crete and the Aegean Islands. It is important to mention here that when Albania’s affirmation for independence was signed at the London Conference in February 1920 more of Macedonia’s territory was partitioned. A narrow strip of land running through Lake Ohrid and southward along Macedonia’s western boundary was awarded to Albania.

Soon after arriving victorious in Greece, Venizelos in a speech in Solun, announced his plans for a “Greater Greece” (Megali Idea) and for the bringing of all “Greek peoples” together under a single Greater Greek State.

I remember as a child listening to old men in my village, sitting on the porch telling tales of bygone wars when as young soldiers they chased the Ottomans to Ankara yelling “two Ottomans to a bayonet”. They also told stories of how it took them sixty days to gain sixty miles and how they lost them in one day of retreat. I didn’t understand what they were talking about then but they were talking about the Greek exploits in Asia Minor. As I mentioned earlier, after building up a large military presence in Asia Minor, a major offensive was launched in March 1921, and by the end of the summer, the Greek armies reached the Sakarya River about forty miles from Ankara.

The assault on Asia Minor was an “exclusively Greek initiative” without the blessing of the Entente Powers and as a result they found themselves alone and running out of ammunition. They knew they couldn’t count on Italy or France for help but the realization of their predicament sunk in when Britain too refused to help them. By early autumn the Greeks were pushed back beyond the halfway point between Smyrna and Ankara, reaching an uneasy military

stalemate. Realizing that they couldn't possibly win militarily or politically, the Greeks turned to the Paris Conference of March 1922 looking for a compromise. The compromise called for the withdrawal of the Greek armies and placing the Christian population under the protection of the League of Nations. Sensing a victory, Mustafa Kemal of Turkey insisted on an unconditional evacuation of the Greek forces, a demand unacceptable to the Greeks. Still counting on British kindness, in July 1922 the Greeks unsuccessfully attempted to get permission from their allies to enter Tsari Grad (Istanbul).

Turkey launched a full-scale offensive on August 26, 1922 (a dark day for Greece and her Megali Idea), near Afyonkarahisar and forced the Greeks into a hasty retreat back to Smyrna. On September 8, the Greek army was evacuated and the next day, the Ottoman army invaded Smyrna. The worst came on the evening of the 9th when outbreaks of killing and looting began followed by a massacre of the Christian population, in which 30,000 Christians, mostly Armenians, perished. As a result of the violence 250,000 people fled to the waterfront to escape the catastrophic disaster.

The Asia Minor campaign was over along with the "Megali Idea" of a Greater Greece. Worse yet, as a result of this "catastrophic Greek fiasco, over one million Ottoman Christians were displaced, most of them into Macedonia. Their settlement affected the demography of the Macedonian landscape as well as the morale of the Macedonian population.

An entire generation of Macedonian young men that were drafted into the Greek military, were sent to the Asia Minor campaigns and many lost their lives. The Greek authorities never acknowledged their services and no compensation was ever paid to the families of those "breadwinners" who lost their lives. The reason for the omission, according to the Greek authorities, "they were Bulgarian".

It is, I am told, noble to die for your country. Would it not be "nobler" to die for someone else's country? And how did the Greeks repay those nobler enough to die for Greece? They let their widows and children live in poverty. This is how Greece treated its noblest citizens!

By the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, the Greco-Turkish war came to an end. Greece and Turkey signed a population exchange agreement using “religion as the basic criterion for nationality”. (page 120, Richard Clogg, A Short History of Modern Greece).

The November 1925 issue of National Geographic Magazine best illustrates the magnitude of the human wave, the audacity of the Greek and Ottoman authorities and the total disregard for human life. “History’s Greatest Trek, Tragedy Stalks the Near East as Greece and Turkey Exchange Two Million of their People. ...1922 began what may fairly be called history’s greatest, most spectacular trek—the compulsory intermigration of two million Christians and Muslims across the Aegean Sea.” “...the initial episodes of the exchange drama were enacted to the accompaniment of the boom of cannon and the rattle of machine gun and with the settings pointed by the flames of the Smyrna holocaust.” (page 533, Melville Chater, National Geographic, November 1925).

“Stroke of the Pen Exiles 3,000,000 People. It is safe to say that history does not contain a more extraordinary document. Never before in the world’s long pageant of folk-wanderings have 2,000,000 people—and certainly no less than 3,000,000 if the retroactive clause is possible of complete application—been exiled and re-adopted by the stroke of the pen.” (page 569, National Geographic, November 1925). “Even if regarded as a voluntary trek instead of a compulsory exchange, the movement would be without parallel in the history of emigration.” “One might just add that history has never produced a document more difficult of execution. It was to lessen these difficulties that exchangeability was based in religion and not race. Due to five centuries of Ottoman domination in Greece, the complexities in determining an individual’s racial status are often such as would make a census taker weep.” (page 570, National Geographic, November 1925).

“Greece with one-fifth Turkey’s area has 1,500,000 more people. Turkey with a population of 5,000,000 and naturally rich territory contains only 15 people to the square mile...Greece, with less than one fifth of Turkey’s area, emerges with a population exceeding the latter’s for the first time by 1,500,000 people averaging 123 to the square mile.” (page 584, National Geographic, November 1925).

“History’s Greatest Trek has cost 300,000 lives. Conservative estimates place it at 300,000 lives lost by disease and exposure.” (page 584, National Geographic, November 1925).

“The actual exchange was weighted very heavily in Turkey’s favour, for some 380,000 Muslims were exchanged for something like 1,100,000 Christians.” “The total population in Greece rose between 1907 and 1928 from 2,600,000 to 6,200,000.” “After the Greek advances of 1912, for instance, the Greek elements in Greek Macedonia had constituted 43 percent of the population. By 1926, with the resettlement of the refugees, the Greek element has risen to 89 percent.” (page 121, Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*).

After all this, surprisingly (and shamefully) Greece still claims her population to be homogeneous and direct descendents of the peoples of the ancient City States.

“If Greece exists today as a homogeneous ethnos, she owes this to [the Asia Minor Catastrophe]. If the hundreds of thousands of refugees had not come to Greece, Greek Macedonia would not exist today. The refugees created the national homogeneity of our country. (Antonios Kandiotis, *Metropole of Florina*, page 141, Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*).

According to Karakasidou, almost half of the refugees were settled in urban centers and rural areas in Macedonia. “Searching for locations in which to settle this mass of humanity, the Greek government looked north to the newly incorporated land in Macedonia...” “...by 1930, 90 percent of the 578,844 refugees settled in rural Greece were concentrated in the regions of Macedonia and western Thrace. Thus Macedonia, Greece’s newly acquired second ‘breadbasket’ (after Thessaly), became the depository for East Thracian, Pontic, and Asia Minor refugees.” (page 145, Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*).

While Greece was contemplating re-populating Macedonia with alien refugees, new developments were boiling to the surface in Macedonia.

“A book of great importance to Macedonian linguistics and historiography was published in Athens; that was the primer entitled ABECEDAR (A B C), printed in the Latin alphabet, and intended for the children of the Macedonian national minority in Greece — the ‘Slav speaking minority’ as Sir Austin Chamberlain, British diplomat and delegate to the League of Nations, and Sir James Erick Drumond, General Secretary to the League of Nations, referred to the Macedonians in Greece”. (Voislav Kushevski, ‘On the Appearance of the Abecedar’ in Istorija magazine, 1983, No. 2, p. 184).

“In 1920 Greece signed before the League of Nations a treaty obliging it to grant certain rights to the minorities of non-Greek origin in Greece. Four years later, in 1924, at the suggestion of the League of Nations, Greece and Bulgaria signed the well-known Kalfov-Politis Protocol under which Bulgaria was obliged to grant the Greek minority in Bulgaria their minority rights (language, schools and other rights), while Greece, recognizing the Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia as a ‘Bulgarian’ minority, was to grant them their minority rights. This agreement was seemingly very much in favour of Bulgaria, but when in 1925 the Greek government undertook certain concrete steps towards the publication of the first primer made for the specific needs of that minority, it made it clear that there were no grounds on which Bulgaria could be officially interested in any ‘Bulgarian minority’ or expect the primer to be in Bulgarian, for that minority — though speaking a Slav language — was neither Bulgarian nor Serbian.

The very fact that official Greece did not, either de jure or do facto, see the Macedonians as a Bulgarian minority, but rather as a separate Slav group (‘Slav speaking minority’), is of particular significance. The primer, published in the Latin alphabet, was based on the Lerin — Bilola dialect. After Gianelli's Dictionary dating from the 16th Century, and the Daniloviot Cetirijazicnik written in the 19th century, this was yet another book written in the Macedonian vernacular. The primer was mailed to some regions in Western Aegean-Macedonia (Kostur, Lerin and Voden), and the school authorities prepared to give Macedonian children, from the first to the fourth grade of the elementary school, instruction in their

own mother tongue (Grigorios Dafnis, 'Greece between the two world wars', 'Elefteria' newspaper, March 15, 1953, Dionisios Romas in 'Elefteria' newspaper of October 9 and 12, 1954 and Dimitrios Vazuglis in Racial and religious minorities in Greece and Bulgaria, 1954).

The Greek governments, however, have never made a sincere attempt to solve the question of the Macedonians and their ethnic rights in Greece. Thus, while measures were being undertaken for the opening of Macedonian schools, a clash between the Greek and the Bulgarian armies at Petrich was concocted, which was then followed by a massacre of the innocent Macedonian population in the village of Trlis near Serres, all this with the aim of creating an attitude of insecurity within the Macedonians, so that they would themselves give up the recognition of their minority rights, and eventually seek safety by moving to Bulgaria. The Greek governments also skillfully used the Yugoslav-Bulgarian disagreements on the question of the Macedonians in Greece, and with organized pressure on the Macedonian population, as was the case in the village of Trlis, tried to dismiss the Macedonian ethnic question from the agenda through forced resettlement of the Macedonian population outside of Greece.

The ABECEDAR, which actually never reached the Macedonian children, is in itself a powerful testimony not only of the existence of the large Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece, but also of the fact that Greece was under an obligation before the League of Nations to undertake certain measures in order to grant this particular minority their rights" (HRISTO ANDONOVSKI).

Even before Greece had secured her grip on Macedonia, officials were sent to administer "the new lands". The first official Greek administrator arrived in Solun near the end of October 1912 accompanied by two judges, five customs officials, ten consulate clerks, a contingent of reporters and journalists and 168 Cretan soldiers. Among other things, the first order of business was to "Hellenize the New Lands". "After the Greeks occupied Aegean Macedonia, they closed the Slavic language schools and churches and expelled the priests. The Macedonian language and names were forbidden, and the Macedonians were referred to as Bulgarians,

Serbian or native. By law promulgated on November 21, 1926, all place names (toponymia) were Hellenized; that is the names of cities, villages, rivers and mountains were discarded and Greek names put in their place. At the same time the Macedonians were forced to change their first and surnames; every Macedonian surname had to end in 'os', 'es', or 'poulos'. The news of these acts and the new, official Greek names were published in the Greek government daily 'Efimeris tis Kiverniseos no. 322 and 324 of November 21 and 23, 1926. The requirements to use these Greek names is officially binding to this day. All evidence of the Macedonian language was compulsorily removed from churches, monuments, archeological finds and cemeteries. Slavonic church or secular literature was seized and burned. The use of the Macedonian language was strictly forbidden also in personal communication between parents and children, among villagers, at weddings and work parties, and in burial rituals." (page 109, John Shea, Macedonia and Greece, The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation).

The act of forbidding the use of the Macedonian language in Greece is best illustrated by an example of how it was implemented in the Township of Assirios (Giuevezna). Here is a quote from Karakasidou's book *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*.

"[We] listened to the president articulate to the council that in accordance with the decision [#122770] of Mr. Minister, General Governor of Macedonia, all municipal and township councils would forbid, through [administrative] decisions, the speaking of other idioms of obsolete languages within the area of their jurisdiction for the reconstitution of a universal language and our national glory. [The president] suggested that [the] speaking of different idioms, foreign [languages] and our language in an impure or obsolete manner in the area of the township of Assirios would be forbidden.

Assirios Township Decision No. 134, 13 December 1936". (page 162, Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*).

By 1928, 1,497 Macedonian place-names in the Greek occupied Macedonia were Hellenized (LAW 4096) and all Cyrillic inscriptions found in churches, on tombstones, and on icons were

destroyed (or overwritten) prompting English Journalist V. Hild to say “The Greeks do not only persecute living Slavs (Macedonians)..., but they even persecute dead ones. They do not leave them in peace even in the graves. They erase the Slavonic inscriptions on the headstones, remove the bones and burn them.”

The years following World War I (The Great War), the Macedonian people underwent extensive measures of systematic denationalization. The application of these “denationalization schemes” were so extensive and aggressively pursued that in the long term, they eroded the will of the Macedonian people to resist.

“In Greece, in 1929 during the rule of Elepeterios Venizelos, a legal act was issued ‘On the protection of public order’. In line with this Act each demand for nationality rights is regarded as high treason. This law is still in force.

On December 18, 1936, Metaksas’ dictatorial government issued a legal Act ‘On the activity against state security’ on the strength of which thousands of Macedonians were arrested, imprisoned, expelled or exiled (EXORIA) on arid, inhospitable Greek islands, where many perished. Their crime? Being ethnic Macedonian by birth.

On September 7, 1938 legal Act No. 2366 was issued banning the use of the Macedonian language. All Macedonian localities were flooded with posters: ‘Speak Greek’. Evening schools were opened in which adult Macedonians were taught Greek. Not a single Macedonian school functioned at the time.” (page 8, What Europe has Forgotten: The Struggle of the Aegean Macedonians, A Report by the Association of the Macedonians in Poland).

Many Macedonians were fined, beaten and jailed for speaking Macedonian. Adults and school children alike were further humiliated by being forced to drink castor oil when caught speaking Macedonian.

In Vardar Macedonia, the Yugoslav government attacked the problem of denationalization and assimilation by enacting Laws such as the September 24, 1920 “Resolution for the Settlement of

the New Southern Regions” designed to effectively exclude Macedonians from owning any property. The Macedonian language was banned along with cultural institutions through a uniform code known as the December 30th, 1920 EDICT which was aimed at persecuting all political and trade union associations.

The bulk and most arable Macedonian land was awarded to Serbian army officers who survived the World War I Solun front. Land was also awarded to the Serbian administrators of Macedonia including government bureaucrats, judges and the police.

The denationalization measures were complemented with aggressive re-education programs producing “little Serbs” out of the Macedonian children. As for the unwilling adults, they were given two options – “live as a Serb” or “die as a Macedonian”!

In Pirin Macedonia, the Bulgarian government enforced compulsory name changes and through repressive political and economic means, stepped up the assimilation process. Initially, land reforms favoured the poor, including the Macedonian peasants, later however, that too changed and exposed the Macedonians to a similar fate as the Macedonians in Aegea and Vardar.

The Macedonians in Albania, posing little threat to Albania’s authority, fared relatively better than their kin in Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The village inhabitants were not persecuted or subjected to any comprehensive denationalization programs. As a result, the Macedonian culture flourished, original names remained and the people spoke Macedonian uninhibited.

As I mentioned earlier, many of the IMRO regional leaders, fooled by the Balkan League’s propaganda, voluntarily joined the Leagues armies in 1912 to help oust the Ottomans and liberate Macedonia. When it was over and the so-called “liberation” turned into an “occupation”, they found themselves as prisoners of the Leagues soldiers. The ones fortunate enough to have escaped fled to the Pirin region and joined up with Yane Sandanski’s Cheta which was still active at the time. After Sandanski’s assassination in 1915 however, many of his followers went underground and later re-emerged in Serres to form the “Serres Revolutionary Council”. The left wing of

IMRO re-emerged prior to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference with high hopes of settling the Macedonian question by lobbying the peace delegates. After realizing that their efforts were futile, they gave up and merged together with the Provisional Mission of Western Macedonia to form IMRO (United). Macedonia is alive, “United” in spirit if not in substance. Unfortunately, because of Macedonia’s division and the impenetrable barriers erected, putting up a “united” national front was difficult if not impossible. Even though there was much desire to achieve a ‘united autonomous Macedonia’, no form of mobilization was practical. So how was IMRO going to achieve its objectives? Some leaders believed that by internationalizing the Macedonian question and by working with the supportive political elements of each Balkan State, the denationalization process could be slowed down, even reversed, and a climate for reunification created. The barriers erected in Macedonia, IMRO believed, could be penetrated by employing new, revolutionary, and non-nationalistic tactics. By joining the “international class struggle against a common oppressor”, IMRO believed self-determination could be achieved. The only political elements that sympathized with IMRO’s objectives at the time were the Communist Parties of the respective Balkan States. IMRO called on the Macedonian people to join the class struggle and support those sympathetic to the Macedonian cause. Many Macedonians did rise to the task but found they had very little in common with the exploited working class in their respective new countries. Macedonians felt they were exploited first because they were Macedonians and second because they were a working class. To win them over, the Communist International (Comintern) was obliged to consider concessions like offering Macedonians autonomy and the right to self-determination or at least recognize the Macedonian nation with full rights and privileges. The Comintern saw the Macedonians as a potentially strong ally that could be persuaded to rally for its cause. Unfortunately, there were problems, many problems. First there were disagreements between the various Balkan State Communist Parties regarding the degree of concessions to be awarded. Then there were fears of losing Macedonian territory, if autonomy was considered. Moscow, the leading Comintern figure favoured a Balkan Federation with the whole of Macedonia as one of its republics. Bulgaria, unfortunately, still dreaming the San Stefano dream, backed out of the deal.

Without a way of breaking the “artificial impenetrable barriers” imposed on Macedonia by the Balkan States, IMRO was never again able to rise to the glory days of the Ilinden Rebellion. As a consequence, its role slowly diminished and it became extinct after the German occupation of the Balkans in 1941.

After the Great War there was peace in Europe, unfortunately, Macedonians continued to endure denationalization, forced assimilation, forced emigration, and economic neglect at the hands of the new masters. As time will tell, Europe will not have a lasting peace, a new menace with greater ferocity is emerging and will engulf the entire world. Once again someone else’s war will be fought on Macedonian soil and once again it will prove even more devastating, almost fatal to the Macedonian people.

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What Europe has Forgotten: The Struggle of the Aegean Macedonians, A Report by the Association of the Macedonians in Poland

Part VII - 1939- 1949 - WWII & the Greek Civil War

In the previous article (part VI) I covered the effects of Macedonia's partition and the practices and policies of its subjugators.

In this article (part VII) I will cover World War II, the Greek Civil War and their effects on the Macedonian people. This article contains first hand accounts of people who lived through the ordeals of World War II and the Greek Civil War.

After the conclusion of the Great War and the Soviet Bolshevik revolution the Great Powers were in ruins and began their lengthy process of rebuilding.

Russia's desires for imperialist ventures and her obsession with destroying the Ottoman Empire brought immense economic suffering to her people.

While the Macedonians in the Balkans were suffering from denationalization and oppression, the world around them was changing.

Lenin's rise to power put an end to Russian imperialist ambitions in the Balkans, especially the Tsarist desires for annexing Tsari Grad (Constantinople) and Endrene (Macedonian Dardanelles). Germany on the other hand, bitter about her latest defeat, began to rebuild her economy. Smarting from their latest bouts with Germany, France and Britain too began to rebuild their economies and military strengths.

Germany as the vanquished party and instigator of the Great War was forced to pay restitution for damages to the victorious nations.

In spite of all efforts made to recover from the Great War, the economic situation in Europe was worsening and came to a climax in October 1929 when the stock market crashed in the United States.

The economic collapse of the 1930's and the "Great Depression" polarized the world into "left and right" economic camps. On the left were the supporters of the working class and Communism, while on the right were the supporters of industry and capitalism.

The tug of war between left and right came to a climax when civil war broke out in Spain in July 1936. Germany was in support of the right and sent troops to fight on the side of the Spanish Government. Germany at the time was only allowed to have a small army, so to compensate for her limited numerical capability she focused her efforts on producing a superior force. Germany's small but capable army was field-tested and battle hardened in the Spanish conflict. This explains her numerous victories during the course of World War II.

Russian and German influences did not escape the Balkan States and they too felt the pull from the two camps.

To maintain control of his kingdom, King George II of Greece made his state a dictatorship and in 1936, after the Greek premier's death, appointed General Metaxas to take charge of Greek affairs, who at the time was minister of war.

While there were some prospects for basic human rights for the Macedonian people in the Greek State in the early 1920's, those prospects died as Greece tightened her grip on Macedonia by implementing more racist assimilation policies. If that was not enough, on December 18, 1936 the Greek Government issued a legal act concerning, "Activities Against State Security". By this act thousands of Macedonians were arrested, imprisoned, and expelled from their homeland.

Among other things Metaxas, on September 7, 1938 by legal act 2366, outlawed the Macedonian language and prohibited people from speaking it by imposing heavy fines and imprisonment. In 1938 Australian author Bert Birtles in his book "Exiles in the Aegean" wrote, "In the name of 'Hellenization' these people (Macedonians) are being persecuted continually and arrested for the most fantastic reasons. Metaxa's way of inculcating the proper nationalist spirit among them has been to change all the native place-names into Greek and to forbid use of the native language. For displaying the slightest resistance to the edict-for this too is a danger to the security of the State-peasants and villagers have been exiled

without trial.” (page 112, John Shea, Macedonia and Greece The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation).

Once in control of the Greek State Metaxas acted against the labour unions and their leaders and declared strikes illegal. He then turned to suppressing all political opposition, outlawed all political parties and imprisoned the leaders who would not pledge their loyalty. The communist party too was outlawed and driven underground. The press was also heavily censored.

Being a military man himself, Metaxas dedicated much of the State’s finances to modernize the Greek army in both manpower and military hardware. In the sphere of education, he re-wrote Greek history to support his own ideologies declaring that there were three great periods in history: the classical, the Byzantine and his own regime, which was then known as the “Regime of the Fourth of August”. He created a National Youth Organization to bring together the children of the various social classes and provided military training for boys and domestic skills for girls.

Even though the Metaxa regime was ideologically similar to that of Spain and Italy, the Greeks were always loyal to Britain.

In Yugoslavia, events were progressing in a similar manner to those in Greece. After King Alexander declared himself dictator of Yugoslavia in 1929, he suspended the constitution and subdivided his kingdom in such a way that the Serbs would be a majority in all districts. He also abolished trade unions and removed personal liberties.

The Serbian occupied territory of Macedonia was referred to as “South Serbia” and the Macedonian language was forbidden from being spoken in public. The history of the Macedonian people and their surnames were changed as well, to give Serbian emphasis. Place names too were changed and replaced with historically Serbian names.

Unlike the Metaxa regime, after the 1930’s the Yugoslav regimes began to relax their tight grip and allowed unofficial and limited use

of the Macedonian dialects to be spoken in the streets of Macedonia and in plays and drama clubs.

In Bulgaria, events followed a similar course as in Yugoslavia and Greece. A military coup was imposed in May 1934, the 1879 constitution was abolished, and political organizations and trade unions were suppressed. In 1935, King Boris III, in a bloodless coup, overthrew the old dictatorship and replaced it with his own Royal one.

Bulgarian governments since Bulgaria's inception in 1878 have officially and adamantly denied the existence of the Macedonian nationality arguing that Macedonians are Bulgarians.

Thousands of Macedonians who over the years tried to express different views were jailed or exiled. The attitude that Macedonians are Bulgarians was used to justify violent assimilation acts and to deny Macedonians their basic human rights.

Ever since her inception in 1878, Bulgaria has been obsessed with possessing Macedonia and has caused immense suffering for the Macedonian people.

The downfall of the Tsarist Russian Imperial Empire, the break-up of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire and the demise of the Ottoman Empire, removed three of the Great Powers from internal Balkan influence. While Britain played a less active role, France and Italy attempted to form competing alliances in the Balkans but did not have the military might to enforce them. The Balkan governments on the other hand, for the first time, had an opportunity to adjust their relations with each other and form alliances to protect their mutual interests. Unfortunately, their hatred for each other and fear of losing Macedonia always prevented such an alliance and allowed outsiders to again play a role in their internal affairs.

Germany's humiliating defeat in the Great War, coupled with her economic plight in the 1930's, gave rise to a new kind of German radicalism. Hitler exploited that and turned it to his own advantage. Hitler, in the short term, also gave the German people what they desired most, work and hope for a better future. Unfortunately, in

the long term, he delivered disaster not only to the German people but also to many other nations, including the Macedonians.

As a new-world order emerged, new alliances began to form. On one side stood the Axis partners, initially consisting of Germany, Italy and Japan, then as war broke out, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Finland and Thailand joined in. On the other side were the Allied partners consisting of Britain, the Soviet Union, the USA, and China. As the war progressed, more and more nations joined the allies, totaling about fifty before the war was over.

In September 1940, Germany, Italy and Japan signed a cooperation agreement which basically identified their intentions with respect to each others' spheres of influence, and defined their political, economic, and defense strategies as well as their obligations to each other. The agreement came to be known as the "tripartite pact".

After war broke out in the Balkans, the first to fall to fascist aggression was Albania. By an ultimatum delivered to Albanian King Zog on March 23, 1939, Italian troops landed in Albania and occupied her territory on April 7, encountering little resistance.

Soon after consolidating control in Albania, on October 28th, 1940, Italy declared war on Greece. Greece however, turned out to be a tougher nut to crack and Metaxa's foresight in arming his state paid off.

Official history praises Greece and the Greek soldiers for their bravery and fighting spirit but neglects to mention Macedonian contributions and sacrifices made to keep Greece safe. Macedonians were the first to be dispatched to the front lines in Albania and took the full brunt, not just of the offensive, but of the winter cold as well. More Macedonian men suffered from gangrene than from Italian bullets and bombs. Unprepared for the frigid temperatures, many men lost their fingers, toes, limbs and even their lives to frostbite. Food too was in short supply and the brave Macedonian soldiers had to fight off starvation as well as the Italians. They did this to protect a country that refused and still refuses to recognize them.

All their sacrifices were in vain anyway because six months later, on April 6th, 1941, the German army marched into Greece. Again the Macedonians fought bravely but they were no match for the well-trained, well disciplined German army. (If you wish to learn more about World War II, specifically about events that involved Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, please read Volume 4 of “The Marshal Cavendish Illustrated Encyclopedia of World War II, but don’t expect to find anything about the Macedonian contribution).

There is a story I am told of a Macedonian soldier, a real old coot, who refused to surrender to the invading Germans and continued to fire at them in spite of orders to cease. He held his position until he ran out of ammunition and the Germans practically grabbed him by the neck. Expecting to meet his maker, he stood up and bravely faced his enemy. But instead of killing him, the German soldiers, one by one, shook his hand and praised him for his bravery, then let him go. (I don’t want to give you the wrong impression about the Germans. This is how they behaved in the beginning, later however, during the Partisan days, their policy was to “kill ten innocent civilians for each German soldier killed”).

When the Germans reached Athens, the Greek government capitulated and the soldiers on the Albanian front were left on their own. Some were told to go to Epirus and regroup, expected to make the long trek on foot. Others were told nothing and were left to roam the countryside. Eventually they were all picked up by German patrols, disarmed and sent home.

At home, the returning soldiers were given a hero’s welcome. Unfortunately for those who were wounded and lost fingers, toes and limbs to frostbite, there was no compensation or solace for their pain.

The German invasion was a welcome relief for the soldiers from the Italian front, but at the same time it posed an uneasy uncertainty as to what was going to happen next. No one was certain how the new invaders were going to react. The Macedonian people, having ample prior experiences with being occupied were expecting the worst. As time would show however, the new invaders were a mixed blessing for the Macedonian people.

After the war broke out in Europe, Bulgaria allied itself with the axis powers and on March 1, 1941, joined the German led pact. The entry of German troops into Bulgaria put Yugoslavia in a difficult position. To avoid the German wrath, on March 25, 1941 the Regent, Prince Paul, also joined the German led pact. This did not sit well with young King Peter however, who with the help of the Yugoslav military, staged a coup and deposed the Regent. This meant that again Hitler had to negotiate with Yugoslavia. Hitler was counting on Yugoslavia to allow him passage to attack Greece. The new situation angered Hitler and instead of negotiating, he signed directive number 25 declaring Yugoslavia an enemy of Germany and ordered her destruction. Hitler wanted a swift strike so he withdrew troops from the Russian campaign.

It took Hitler's army 12 days to demolish Yugoslavia, a small diversion in his destructive career, but there are those who believe that this little diversion changed the course of history. To begin with it gave the Soviet Union just enough time to adequately prepare for an offensive which ultimately led to Germany's defeat. Secondly, the violent nature of the attack created the right conditions for a Partisan uprising which ultimately helped to establish the Republic of Macedonia.

The battle for Yugoslavia and Greece was swift and effective. When it was over the Germans, as an ally to the axis powers, allowed Bulgaria to occupy Vardar (Yugoslav occupied) Macedonia and the eastern region of Aegean (Greek occupied) Macedonia. Later, after the Italians left, Germany allowed Bulgaria to occupy western Macedonia as well.

Many Macedonians from the Vardar region who had suffered under the Yugoslav regime welcomed the Bulgarian invaders as saviors and liberators. Their euphoria was unfortunately short lived as the Bulgarians quickly began to oppress and forcibly Bulgarize the Macedonian population. If there had been any pro-Bulgarian sentiment before, it quickly disappeared after the occupation.

Germany's violent entry into Yugoslavia, coupled with Bulgarian oppressive attitudes towards the Macedonian people, gave birth to an underground Macedonian resistance movement.

In Aegean Macedonia, after the Germans settled in, life for the Macedonian people took on an uneasy normalcy. The Greek police that had supported the Metaxa regime before the occupation now cooperated with the German military and again became active in Macedonia. To counter its oppressive tactics, the old Kumiti (Ilinden revolutionary guard) rearmed and went back to active duty. The "old timers" were angered by Greece's oppressive laws and were spurred back into action by Bulgarian propaganda condemning the Greek oppressive tactics. The Bulgarians were well aware of the unfavourable conditions the Greek Government had created in Macedonia and used the opportunity to agitate the Greeks. Kumiti actions were limited at best and were restricted to the Italian zones, as the Germans would not tolerate armed actions in their zones.

The Partisan movement in Yugoslavia was more organized and progressive than that in Greece. Led by Tito, the Communist partisans in Yugoslavia organized a war of national liberation in which the Macedonians, led by General Tempo, fought on an equal footing. Macedonians formed their own section of resistance even before they were recognized and accepted by Tito. The first anti-fascist war of national liberation began in the Republic of Macedonia on October 11, 1941. October 11th is the "Second Ilinden" for the Macedonian people. Since 1941 they have celebrated it as "Macedonian Revolution Day". The Macedonian people by their actions, loyalty, and patriotism earned their place in the world. By hardship, determination, and the spilling of blood the Macedonian people demonstrated their desire for freedom and willingness to rule themselves. The Great Powers in 1829 (by the London Protocol) satisfied the Greeks by making Greece a country. Similarly, in 1878 (by the congress of Berlin) Russia liberated the Bulgarians making Bulgaria a country. Unlike the Greeks and Bulgarians however, the brave people of Vardar Macedonia had to fight by themselves and for themselves to earn their place in the world among the free nations.

For just over a year the Macedonians of Vardar endured enough Bulgarian treachery to last them a lifetime. Then in April 1942 they rose up and demonstrated their displeasure. Macedonian Partisans took up arms against the Bulgarian army but were massacred in a bloody battle. Unarmed Macedonians then took to the streets to protest the massacre and they too were cut to pieces.

To escape persecution, sections of the Macedonian Partisan force fled into Aegean Macedonia. Some entered the Italian zones near the village of Besfina and the rest penetrated the German zones in the region around the village Sveta Petka and quickly went underground. The Besfina force, before it had a chance to make contact with the local population, was spotted by the Kumiti who quickly sprang into action. Seeing uniformed men on the Besfina hillside startled the old Kumiti. Thinking that it was a Greek police (Andari) invasion force, the Kumiti appealed to the local Italian garrison and were given arms and permission to attack. When the Kumiti started the offensive, the Partisans backed off and sent representatives to negotiate. They went from village to village and spoke with the local chiefs. The strangers wore handsome uniforms and conducted themselves seriously with charm and charisma. They spoke long and well about freedom, liberty and the treachery of the Bulgarian Fascists.

When the Kumiti found out that the uniformed men were Macedonians, they accepted them with open arms, gave them their weapons and many voluntarily joined their cause. The Partisans of Sveta Petka, because of a German presence, had to work under cover and they too succeeded in recruiting volunteers from the local population. After the Partisan penetration, the Macedonian people of Aegean Macedonia learned about Bulgarian atrocities and ceased to believe the Bulgarian propaganda. The old Ilinden guard was demobilized and replaced by a Partisan movement.

Partisan organizers took extraordinary measures to explain to the Macedonian people that they were fighting for freedom and for the liberation of the Macedonian people from the tyranny of the oppressive states. The Macedonian involvement in this war and later in the Greek civil war was not about “Communist ideologies” or about alliances or obligations to the Great Powers. It was simply

the next stage in the long struggle for “liberation from oppression” and to fulfill a longing for freedom, re-unification, and self-rule. The Macedonian contribution to fight against Fascism is not only under emphasized, but it is also misinterpreted by historians. I will once again say that the Macedonian people during the Second Great War (WWII) rose on the democratic side and fought against fascism and for the liberation of the states in which they lived. The Macedonian people, like other people in the Balkans fought to liberate their homeland and thus earned their place in the world. This cannot be ignored and must be recognized and recorded in the annals of history.

Word of a Macedonian Partisan movement in Aegean Macedonia spread like wild fire. People came out to the streets to freely speak their native Macedonian language, to sing songs and write Macedonian plays and poetry. The Partisans even set up Macedonian schools and taught children patriotic songs, poems and Macedonian history using the local Macedonian dialects. The younger generations, for the first time, saw written words in their beloved, sacred Macedonian language. The new found freedom brought happiness to the lives of the oppressed Macedonian people who welcomed the Partisans into their villages as “our own boys and girls”. The newfound confidence and strength projected by the Macedonians, terrified the Greeks especially the Andari and their collaborators. For a while they were no longer a threat.

The Germans and Italians did not care one way or another about Macedonian affairs as long as there was no trouble for them.

Macedonian interest in Partisan activities continued to climb, bringing new recruits and volunteers to the cause. Youth organizations (NOMS) were created with young men and women recruited to be the eyes and ears of the community and to help defend the villages. Many young volunteers of military age were recruited and trained to perform policing and civic duties in the newly formed organizations. The famous “all Macedonian” organization SNOF (Slaven Narodn Osloboditen Front or Slavic Macedonian People’s Liberation Front) was formed and recruited fighters from the Kostur, Lerin and Voden regions. SNOF even cooperated with Greek organizations with similar ideologies. Later,

there was talk about re-uniting Macedonia, possibly through a Balkan confederation. Britain unfortunately, was against the idea and discouraged Greece from taking part in such matters. Bulgaria too could not agree and withdrew support. As usual, the Bulgarians wanted to become rulers of Macedonia, which was unacceptable to the Macedonians.

There is a story told that about five hundred young Macedonian civilian men gathered at the village of D'mbeni eager to join the Partisan movement. Word of this reached the Greek Partisan leadership who appeared to be terrified at the prospect of a strong all Macedonian force. There is nothing the Greeks fear more than losing Macedonia. The Greeks by this time had formed their own Partisan movements (outside of Macedonia) and began to negotiate with the Macedonians about combining forces. For some time Greek Partisan representatives tempted the Macedonians to join them. When negotiations failed to achieve results, the Greeks tried ordering the Macedonians to surrender their arms. Macedonians were well aware of Greek treachery and refused to join them or surrender their arms. Instead they sealed the borders from Bigla to Korcha, rendering them inaccessible to Greeks. Initially the Macedonians acted alone but later they joined a wing of the EAM, the Greek Popular Liberation Army.

The leadership of the Macedonian force in Western Aegean Macedonia was shared between Voivoda Ilia Dimov code named "Goche" and our own Oshchimian Voivoda Mito Tupurkovski code named "Titan". Both commanders were loved by their men for their fighting abilities and respected for their leadership.

I briefly want to mention at this point that in an ironic twist of events, while Mito Tupurkovski engaged the Germans in bitter battles, his mother Sulta was accidentally killed by a stray German bullet.

It was an ordinary summer day in 1944 and for some time now the local people had become accustomed to German patrols making their routine rounds, inspecting the road conditions and the communication lines between Zhelevo and Breznitsa. Early each morning two German soldiers left Zhelevo on foot for Breznitsa and

a pair left Breznitsa for Zhelevo. When the patrols met they reversed direction and continued this routine all day long.

On this particular day, ten Partisans came to Oshchima and decided to attack one of the patrols and take the soldiers as hostages. They set a trap in a ditch near Ternaa and sat in wait. While they were waiting, two men from Oshchima, Paso Boglev and Giro Keleshov went to a nearby mill. Paso left his donkey to graze on the road above and stepped inside the mill. When the Germans passed by they borrowed the donkey and one of them rode it as they made their way. When they reached the Partisan trap, the only armed Partisan fired a rapid-fire volley in the air. Unfortunately, after the initial burst, his gun jammed. The Germans quickly took cover in the ravine and started to fire back. Discouraged by their failed attempt the Partisans quickly fled into the mountains. The loud gunfire alerted the German garrison in Zhelevo and reinforcements were quickly dispatched. Paso and Giro also heard the gunfire and came out of the mill to investigate. Seeing a rushing vehicle with armed soldiers headed towards them startled the two men and in panic they fled. Paso ran down to the river and hid out of sight. Giro unfortunately, ran up the hill and was in full view of the German patrol. The Germans, thinking he was the culprit, gave chase. Giro was a fast runner and the Germans couldn't catch him so before he could disappear into the woods, one of the soldiers fired a rapid-fire volley at him. Who would have expected that a bullet from that round would mortally wound Mito's mother Sulta who was quietly sitting in her yard enjoying a beautiful summer's day? Giro escaped unharmed but unfortunately Sulta died from her wound on August 20th, 1944.

In September 1944 German troops began to withdraw from the Balkans. Fearing reprisals, many Macedonians evacuated their villages and set up temporary homes in the mountains in seclusion. As it turned out the Germans were not a threat, so after a month or so villagers returned to their homes. The people that lived near main roads were afraid to return and took up residence with relatives in secluded villages and stayed there until all the Germans were gone.

There was one incident that I know of where the Germans did do damage. This was in the Village of Trnaa where returning Germans

found their “host village” empty, became enraged and stoned two old people to death.

To protect soldiers from being attacked out in the open at night, the Germans assigned them residences inside the villages among the locals. Each house was identified with a marker and returning soldiers used it for shelter. In Oshchima, as in other villages, identification numbers were stamped on the outside door of each house. Time and time again the same soldiers came back to the same house. According to stories my family told me, several German soldiers used to spend the night at our house. When someone was missing my grandfather would motion “what happened” and point in the direction where the man had last sat. The Germans would then motion back “sleep”, meaning that he was killed or would say “mama” for gone home on leave to visit his family.

After all the German and Bulgarian occupying forces withdrew from Yugoslavia, the Partisans numbering about 800,000 men were in full control. There were no outside invasion forces (Allied or Russian) inside Yugoslavia, so foreign interference was not a problem. At that time the Macedonian Partisans possessed a sizeable force and wielded considerable influence in the ranks of the Tito regime. The Macedonian people did their share of fighting for the liberation of Yugoslavia from the Fascists and earned their place as equals among the Yugoslav people.

On August 2nd 1944, Macedonia was officially proclaimed a Republic within the Yugoslav Federation. A Bitola-Lerin dialect was chosen and adopted as the official language of the Republic and the city of Skopje was chosen as the new Republic’s capital.

No sooner had the Germans withdrawn from Greece than the British military arrived in Athens. Athens was evacuated on October 12, 1944 and a British occupation force entered the city a few days later.

While Britain entered Greece with only four thousand troops, most unfit for combat, ELAS (Greek Partisans) in contrast had seventy thousand men armed and ready for combat. Even the British admit that if the Greek Partisans wanted to, they could have seized power. The conditions were certainly right. The question is why didn’t they,

and what was the Civil War all about? Official history provides no answers, only more questions.

It took the British a couple of months to get organized and by mid December 1944 they had fifty thousand soldiers of their own and some loyal Greek troops to back them. The local Greek troops came from the ranks of the Andari (National Republican Greek League), the same men who fought alongside the Germans. They switched their German gear for British uniforms and they were back on the streets again attacking the Partisans.

As Greece started to collapse, before Germany invaded in 1941, King George II fled and formed a government in exile in London, which was recognized by the Allies as the official Government of Greece. Also, the British in advance of the German departure established a centre of Greek activity in Cairo where a Greek army, navy and airforce operated under British command.

After the British consolidated power in Greece, they were able to support the British appointed Greek Government and ordered the Partisans to demobilize. What is interesting here is that before the British were able to militarily enforce a disarmament they ordered the Partisan forces to disband. What is more interesting and noteworthy is that EAM agreed to demobilize its own forces with hardly any conditions. The only condition worthy of mention is the request for Britain to disarm the “Government support units” EAM’s main opposition. Knowing full well that Britain would never allow communist rule in Greece and also knowing that the Soviet Union signed an agreement with Britain not to interfere in Greece, EAM still believed it could come to power with no outside help.

When the British went ahead with the original plan, ignoring EAM’s request to disarm the Government Support Units, EAM withdrew from the government. EAM then protested against British actions by organizing demonstrations and general strikes. When the Athens square began to flood with thousands of demonstrators, the police were ordered to fire on the crowds killing fifteen people. To make matters worse, Churchill approved a plan for Britain to occupy Athens by any means necessary if required. ELAS still held more

than three-quarters of Greece but because it could no longer count on outside (Soviet) support, it had to re-evaluate its own position.

Under these conditions, EAM on January 1945 accepted an armistice, trading guns for votes. The Varkita agreement was signed on February 12, 1945 requiring all bands to demobilize and surrender their weapons. The British, once again confirmed their allegiance to the Greek Government by giving Athens full political and military support, committing their willingness to fight to prevent a Partisan victory. The biggest losers of the Varkita agreement were the Macedonians. As soon as EAM signed the agreement, all anti-Macedonian laws were back in force and the Macedonian people lost all that they had gained during the German occupation. EAM/KKE (Greek Communist Party) made absolutely no effort to safeguard Macedonian rights in the agreements with Britain and as a result began to lose favour with the Macedonian leadership. When the Macedonian Partisan forces were ordered to demobilize as part of the Vartika agreement, the Macedonian leadership refused. Goche and Titan refused to disarm and disband without guarantees that no harm would come to their men or to the Macedonian people.

The question of “what will happen to Aegean Macedonia under Greek communist rule”, was still unclear. Greece unfortunately was determined to rid itself of the Macedonians one way or another and outlawed the Macedonian forces. A strike force was assembled by ELAS (the Greek Partisans) and sent north to intervene and arrest the Macedonian outlaws. Instead of putting up a fight however, the Macedonian brigades crossed over the Yugoslav border and entered Vardar Macedonia where they were a welcome addition to existing Macedonian forces fighting the Albanian Balisti (German allies) in Tetovo and Gostivar. The Macedonian leadership could have stayed and fought the ELAS but it would have made no sense to bring the war home to Macedonia. They knew very well that British troops would soon follow and they would be fighting a senseless, bloody war in their own backyard.

With the Macedonian force out of the way, the Greek police were back and up to their old tricks. This time it wasn't only the Macedonians who were their victims. They hated the Greek Partisans just as much. With practically no one to stop them, the

Greek police escalated their terror activities arresting, torturing and murdering people indiscriminately. This included the EAM, ELAS and KKE (Communist Party of Greece) leadership. By the time the elections were convened most of the Partisan leadership had disappeared. They were either in jail serving hard time on fabricated and trumped up charges or they were dead.

The elections were scheduled for March 31st, 1946 but instead of voting, the Greek Partisans re-armed themselves and rebelled against the Greek Government. The rebellion manifested itself as an attack on Greece in the village of “Lithohorion” situated East of Mount Olimp directly south of Katerini in Thessalie.

Other attacks soon followed and in no time the conflict escalated into a full scale Civil War, engulfing not only Greece but Macedonia as well.

In a bizarre turn of events the same ELAS, who less than a year ago turned their guns on the Macedonian fighters now extended their hands in friendship. All was forgiven and forgotten when the ELAS leadership asked the Macedonians for their help. This time they came with offers of “equal rights”, “recognition” and even possibilities of “re-unification with Vardar”.

Now tell me what Macedonian could resist that?

Many Aegean Partisan fighters who had crossed over to Vardar Macedonia only the year before came back. On their return they organized themselves under NOF, the Macedonian National Liberation Front and fought side by side with the ELAS. Many were well aware of the saying “beware of Greeks bearing gifts”, and knew that the Greek offer was too good to be true, but there was always that small ray of hope that perhaps this time the outcome for Macedonia might be different. Besides, their families, homes and lives were in Aegean Macedonia, so what other choice did they really have? They returned because they were lonely, because they loved their families and because they had to live with the guilt of leaving their loved ones in dire straits. Every Macedonian born in Macedonia, even in the most desolate places, knows the feeling of homesickness and yearns to return.

The new alliance between ELAS and NOF opened many opportunities for the Greek Partisans beyond the Greek borders. While the Greek government controlled the big cities and towns, the Partisan strength was in the villages and mountains. Most of the Partisan recruits came from the peasant population and showed themselves to be idealistic, hopeful and determined to fight. Camps were set up in mountainous seclusion where new recruits were given combat training. There were also training camps and supply depots set up outside Greece, in Albania and Yugoslavia. One such camp was the town of Bulkes located in northern Yugoslavia. Bulkes was a beautiful town with neat rows of lovely houses and fertile lands that could feed an army. The Germans built Bulkes to house German families but after the German armies retreated, some residents of Bulkes were kicked out while others left voluntarily. The empty town was loaned to the Greek Partisans to use as a supply depot for warehousing food, uniforms and weapons. Bulkes was also a training centre for officers, and an administrative centre for propaganda. During the Partisan days the town of Bulkes was administered in the true spirit of socialism.

By early 1947, the Partisan force was showing real strength in military capability and promise for delivering on its commitments to the Macedonian people. About 87 Macedonian schools were opened in the Lerin and Kostur regions. A record number of students (10,000) were reported attending school. Macedonian literature and culture seemed to flourish. The Greeks, unfortunately, were never at ease with the Macedonian gains and there was visible resentment and mistrust between the two peoples. Greek chauvinism seemed to flourish even at the best of times. Macedonians on the other hand were never at ease about revealing their real names or identities, especially to the Greek Partisans. One Macedonian explained it to me this way, "If they knew that you were Macedonian then you had to watch both your front and back, because you never knew where the next bullet was going to come from".

In Macedonia the ranks of the Partisans were swelling mostly with volunteers from the patriotic Macedonian villages. Some who had combat experience were promoted to the rank of officer. The Greeks were hesitant and careful not to promote Macedonians to high ranks.

Those they reserved for Greeks only. In addition to enlisting men, the Partisans also drafted women as nurses, field medics, tailors, menders, launderers, cooks, supply organizers and even armed combatants. For a while the Partisans grew their own food in donated and abandoned fields. The workforce managing the harvests and delivering food to the Partisan camps was made up mostly of women volunteers.

Britain was not happy with the new developments and squeezed the Greek Government to expand its military capability and to arm itself with heavy arms. “Up to 1947 the British Government appointed and dismissed Greek Prime Ministers with the barest attention to constitutional formalities. British experts dictated economic and financial policy, defence and foreign policy, security and legal policy, trade union and unemployment policy”. (page 306, Barbara Jeleovich, History of the Balkans, Twentieth Century).

For her interference inside a Sovereign State’s affairs and for allowing heavy-handed tactics, Britain received criticism from the United States whose dollars were used to rebuild Greece.

Both the Greek Government and the Partisans were recruiting fighters from the same population. While young men were drafted to fight for the Greek Government, their wives, sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers were drafted to fight for the Partisans. There were heavy propaganda campaigns conducted on both sides poisoning the minds of the young and impressionable, dividing and tearing the community apart and pitting brother against brother.

This was the Greek legacy passed on to the Macedonian people for offering their help. This was the “Greek curse” that many Macedonians must bear for partnering with the Greeks. To this day many Macedonians harbour hard feelings and struggle to make amends. To this day the Macedonian community remains divided on this issue.

Ever since the day the British set foot in Greece, they were adamant about ridding themselves of the Partisans by any means possible, even condoning acts of violence and terror. From mid-1945 to May 20th, 1947, the Partisans reported that “in Western Macedonia

alone, 13,529 Macedonians were tortured, 3,215 were imprisoned, and 268 were executed without trial. In addition, 1,891 houses were burnt down and 1,553 were looted, and 13,808 Macedonians were resettled by force. During the war, Greek-run prison camps where Macedonians were imprisoned, tortured, and killed included the island of Ikaria near Turkey, the Island of Makronis near Athens, the jail Averov near Athens, the jail at Larisa near the Volos Peninsula, and the jail in Thessaloniki. Aegean Macedonian expatriates claim that there were mass killings on Vicho, Gramos, Kaymakchalan, and at Mala Prespa in Albania.” (page 116 John Shea, Macedonia and Greece, The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation).

In 1946 the Greek police attacked a band of musicians from Oshchima and Trnaa at Popli while they were on their way to play at a wedding in Rudari. The musicians were severely beaten and their musical instruments were destroyed. For one young man his trumpet was his only means of support.

In 1946, a Greek policeman shot and killed Sofia Ianovska from Zhelevo for fun. The woman, whose husband was in Canada at the time, was standing on her front porch waiting for her children to arrive from work. The crazed policeman fired at the woman because she was looking in his direction, instantly killing her. According to local accounts, no inquiry was made regarding the shooting nor was the policeman ever questioned about his actions.

In 1945-46, in retaliation for one of their own being killed, the Prosfigi (people that Greece imported from Asia Minor during the 1920's) of Popli killed Nikola Cholakov, an innocent man from Orovnik. The only connection Nikola had with the dead man was that he was a supporter of the opposite side in the conflict.

I have been told that the Prosfigi in Macedonia committed atrocities against the Macedonian people, and were never punished for their crimes. I also want to emphasize that the Macedonian Partisans had the strength and opportunity to round up all the Prosfigi in north-western Macedonia and massacre them to the last one but instead they used sound judgement and left them alone. Macedonians understand that the Prosfigi are also victims of Hellenism.

The Greek Government in Macedonia worked closely with local collaborators and enlisted from the Macedonian population only those who could be proven trustworthy. The collaborators worked hard to identify all those who were sympathetic to the Partisans and reported on their activities on a regular basis. Anyone reported aiding the Partisans was severely punished and sometimes executed.

In the spring of 1947, all those who were on the “bad guys” lists were rounded up, arrested and locked up in the Lerin jails. Those accused of aiding the Partisans were taken out and executed. The rest, after spending one hundred days in jail, without a trial, were sent to various concentration camps in the most desolate Greek Islands.

I want to mention something very important here because I believe the Greek Government, even before the Greek civil war, had plans “to deal with the Macedonians in Greece”. “In 1947, during the Greek civil war, the legal act L-2 was issued. This meant that all those who left Greece without the consent of the Greek government were stripped of Greek citizenship and banned from returning to the country. The law applied to Greeks and Macedonians, but in its modernized version the act is binding only on Macedonians. It prevents Macedonians, but not former Communist Greeks who fought against the winning side from returning to Greece and reclaiming property. On January 20, 1948, the legal act M was issued. This allowed the Greek government to confiscate the property of those who were stripped of their citizenship. The law was updated in 1985 to exclude Greeks, but still binding on Macedonians.” (Pages 116, 117 John Shea, Macedonia and Greece, The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation).

Clearly acts L-2 and M were designed to work against the interest of the Macedonian people. Even innocent Macedonians who left before the Civil war were not allowed to return. The question now is, “What was Greece planning to do with the Macedonians?” The way acts L-2 and M were enforced over the years brings another question to mind. If there were no Macedonians living in Greece, as the Greeks claim, then what nationality were these people the Greek Government refused to allow back? Why is it that Greek law makes

the distinction between Macedonians and Greeks when it suits Greece and not when it benefits the Macedonians?

By the end of 1947 battles were raging everywhere and the war was slowly moving north into Macedonia. Clearly this was a “Greek War”, yet again the Macedonian population was being sucked into it. The heavily armed Greek Airforce and mechanized artillery gained control of most cities and main roads. The Partisans were literally trapped and continued their strictly defensive campaigns mainly from the mountains of Vicho and Gramos.

As the situation became critical, both sides stepped up their recruitment campaigns and again were drawing from the same population. The Partisans could no longer count on volunteers alone and began to enlist fighters by force and drafted anyone they could get their hands on, male or female. In addition to support roles, women were now armed and given combat duties to fight alongside the men against the well trained, well disciplined and heavily armed Greek Army. Such was the fate of the Macedonian daughters, sisters, and mothers most of whom were taken by force to fight in someone else’s war.

As the war intensified, the Greek airforce regularly bombed Macedonian villages putting the civilian population, including the children, in danger.

To save the children, in the spring of 1948 a temporary evacuation program was introduced and implemented on a voluntary basis. It is estimated that about 28,000 children from the ages of 2 to 14 were rounded up and taken across the border into Yugoslavia (more on this in part VIII). From there they were sent to various Eastern Block countries.

Again, I want to point out that the evacuation program was sponsored and organized by the Greek Partisan Leadership which was fully versed in “Greek Law”(act L-2), yet they carried out the children’s evacuation program and lied to the trusting mothers that the evacuation was only a temporary measure. Almost all the Macedonian children who were evacuated in 1948 are still not allowed entry into Greece.

By the spring of 1949, the Greek Civil War became a “killing field” consuming the Macedonian population. Some of the children who were previously evacuated were brought back to fight against the battle hardened Greek army. Children that were strong enough to carry a rifle, regardless of age, were snatched from the child refugee camps in Romania and brought back to Greece. Two of the three groups that were brought back were instantly massacred upon engaging the Greek Army. They were all under the age of fifteen and had no combat training and no idea of what to expect.

The third group was spared only because mothers protested against such barbaric acts. The Partisans demobilized the third group before it reached the battlefields and sent the children home.

By the twisted hand of fate, Zachariadis the supreme commander of the Partisan forces and his cronies, in their wisdom, decided to make a final stand against Greece that would make or break the Partisan movement. Their rationale was that the Partisans needed to occupy a large town or city to serve as their base. This would make them worthy of consideration and perhaps gain the attention of the Great Powers, especially the Soviet Union. There are many who share my belief in believing that the Partisan attack on Lerin on February 12, 1949 was nothing more than an attempt to exterminate the Macedonian fighting force and terrorize the rest of the Macedonian population into leaving Greece. I can say that with certainty now because that is exactly what happened.

In one last-ditch attempt to gain composure and legitimacy the Partisans attacked the city of Lerin attempting to create a base of operation and show the world that they were a force worthy of recognition. Their effort however was not rewarded. They did not capture Lerin and lost most of the force in the attempt. Seven hundred young Macedonian men and women died on that fateful day, their bodies buried in a mass grave. The Partisan leadership waited until dawn before ordering the attack. Wave after wave of innocent young men and women were slaughtered, cut down in their prime by Greek machine-gun fire. The horror of the slaughter became visible at the crack of dawn when the first light revealed the red stained terrain. The fresh white snow was red with the blood and bodies of the fallen.

To this day opinions are divided on the rationale of attacking Lerin so late in the war. The war was almost over and the Greek Army, supported by Britain, was unstoppable. In retrospect, some believe that gaining control of Lerin would have given the Partisan leadership a bargaining chip for surrender. Looking at the facts however, reveals a more sinister plan. By now it was well known throughout the world that Britain would not allow a communist influence in Greece. Britain's decision was supported by the Soviet Union and by Stalin himself. The Partisan leadership was well informed that it can no longer depend on support from the Communist Block countries under Soviet influence. Relations with Yugoslavia had broken off and the Greek-Yugoslav border was closed (more on this later). The Communist Party that promised Macedonians human rights and freedoms slowly began to distance itself from its commitments. Most of the Partisans who fought in the battle for Lerin were new recruits and inexperienced fighters. Most of the force was made up of Macedonian men and women under Greek leadership. The Partisan command hesitated when it was time to launch the offensive thus giving the enemy extra time to prepare its defenses. The hesitation demoralized the Partisan combatants who were not prepared for the prolonged outdoor winter cold.

A cursory analysis of developments prior to the Lerin assault and a post-mortem of the aftermath led to one inescapable conclusion. As I mentioned earlier, the assault on Lerin was designed to destroy the Macedonian Partisan force. By offering the Lerin offensive instead of surrendering, the Partisan leadership "sacrificed its own force". By accident or by design the assault on Lerin contributed to the demise of many Macedonian fighters and to the mass exodus of the Macedonian population. Many believe that the Greek civil war succeeded in "ethnically cleansing" the Macedonian people where many years of assimilation had failed.

Fearing reprisal from the advancing Greek army, in August 1949 waves of refugees left their homes and went to Albania to save themselves. When the war was over, Greece did not want them back. As a result, they were sent to Eastern Block countries that were willing to take them.

Years later some tried to return but Greece (act L-2) would not allow it. Even innocent Macedonians, who did not participate in the conflict, including the evacuated refugee children, were refused entry (again act L-2). Years passed and still they were refused entry again and again. They were not even allowed to visit ailing relatives. Finally in 1985, as I mention earlier, a repatriation policy was introduced and amnesty was given but only to those of “Greek origin”. This again excluded the Macedonians.

As the Macedonian terrain was rained upon by bombs from the air and from cannon fire, the frightened Macedonian people, mostly made up of old men and women and mothers with young children, took with them whatever they could carry and left their homes for the safety of the mountains. From there they were told to go to Albania and meet up with their relatives.

“One such group left the village of Kolomnati and was headed down the mountain towards Rula when it was spotted by a young Greek officer. The young man immediately telephoned his general and informed him of the situation. ‘Should we intercept?’ inquired the young officer. ‘No, let the troublemakers go, we don’t want them here,’ replied the old general.” (story told by the general’s assistant who asked to remain anonymous).

When the Greek Army broke the Lerin front the Partisan force that survived the onslaught fled for Albania. The fighters closest to the city were captured and imprisoned. Those who confessed to having voluntarily joined the Partisans were all executed. The others were either exiled in the Greek Islands or released after serving their sentences in local jails.

In its pursuit of the fleeing Partisans, the Greek Army managed to cut off the escape route of a group of Partisans who were manning the cannons and artillery fire at Bigla (the cannons after the war were put on display in the city of Lerin). Being unable to flee for Albania, the Bigla group attempted to cross into Yugoslavia near Prespa Lake. At the Yugoslav border they were stopped by the Yugoslav army which agreed to allow them passage only if they voluntarily disarmed. Expecting to continue the war from Albania, the Partisans were reluctant to disarm and chose a different escape

route. Unfortunately, they attempted their escape during the daytime and were spotted by the Greek Airforce. Many were killed by machinegun fire from above and some drowned attempting to swim across Lake Prespa. Only a small group made it to Albania.

When they arrived in Albania, to cover for their own blunders, the leaders of the Bigla group concocted stories claiming that Tito's forces attacked them and would not allow them entry into Yugoslavia. Later the same men changed their stories and told the truth about what happened. Unfortunately, by then Greek Partisan and Yugoslav relations had deteriorated. Even though Yugoslavia was one of EAM's strongest supporters, the Greek Partisans used this story in their propaganda campaigns to discredit Tito in the eyes of the Soviet Union.

When the Greek Civil War was over, the Partisan leadership assembled in the abandoned Italian camp of Bureli in Albania to assess what went wrong and why they lost the war. After some deliberation, they came to the conclusion that it was Tito and the Macedonian collaboration that sabotaged the war effort. The failure was blamed on the Macedonian Partisan leadership for co-operating with Tito's Partisans. Seven of the most loyal Macedonian leaders were accused of sabotage and sentenced to death. Fortunately, Ever Hodzha (Albania's highest State Leader) did not want atrocities committed in his country and would not allow the executions to take place. The men were then taken to the Soviet Union, tried for treason and sentenced to life imprisonment to be served in the prison camps of Siberia. After Stalin's death, Krushchev re-opened the case and found the men innocent of all charges and released them.

After the Greek Civil War was over, life in Aegean Macedonia was no longer the same. The smaller villages were evacuated (some permanently) and the people were relocated to the larger towns under the watchful eye of the Greek police. The familiar joy and laughter was gone and the streets were barren of children. The proud Macedonian people, who only a few years before had revelled in life, were once again joyless.

Through the conflict of the Second Great War a new-world order emerged. Two industrial giants, the Soviet Union and the United

States, rose above the rest and with their opposing ideologies would dominate the future world.

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Interviews with survivors of WWII and the Greek Civil War

Part VIII - The Plight of the Macedonian Refugee Children

In the previous article (part VII) I covered World War II, the Greek Civil War and their effects on the Macedonian people.

In this article (part VIII) I will cover the evacuation of the Macedonian children and the consequences of the Greek Civil War. The entire article is based on information obtained from interviews.

It was a dreary spring day on March 25th, 1948 when it all began. It was a day filled with high emotions, tears and heartbreak for the mothers and children of western Aegean Macedonia. It was the day the Detsa Begaltsi (Refugee Children) left, and for most it was the last time that they would ever see their beloved family and home.

The idea of evacuating the children was proposed by a sympathetic group of young men and women at a Youth Conference in 1947 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

The escalating conflict in the Greek Civil War posed a threat to the civilian population which was a concern for the “progressive youth”. Although they couldn’t do anything for the civilian adults who were needed to support the war effort, there was a way to help the children. They proposed a temporary evacuation whereby the children would be sent out of the country to pursue their education in safety with the intent of being returned once the conflict ended.

Although it was a good idea, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) saw no immediate need for such a plan and as a result it didn’t give it much support. Partisan General Markos Vafiadis however, saw merit in the proposal because he believed that the conflict would escalate and concentrate in western Aegean Macedonia. He was, at the time, responsible for the defense of parts of western Macedonia that included the territories of the Lerin region and parts of Kostur and Voden regions.

In 1947 the Partisans were at their peak strength and with the exception of the large cities were in control of all territories in western Aegean Macedonia.

When the Greek Government began to use heavy artillery and aerial bombardment, the idea quickly gained KKE support and the “save the children” program was born. Before the program was put into action it gained approval from the Macedonian Liberation Front, the Women’s Antifascist Front and the Red Cross. The host countries, willing to look after the children, were contacted to gain their approval and information campaigns were begun to inform the people about the program. The district and village organizations were also asked to participate and were eventually given the responsibility of organizing and implementing the actual evacuations.

When the authorities in the Greek Government heard of this program they began the so-called “pedomazoma” (collect the children) campaign. The Greek army, upon capturing Macedonian villages, was ordered to evacuate the children, by force if necessary. After being gathered at various camps, the children were eventually sent to the Greek Island of Leros. There, they were enrolled in schools to study religion and became wards of the Greek Queen, Fredericka.

After the conclusion of the Greek Civil War (1951-52) some children were returned to their homes in Macedonia while most, especially those whose parents were killed or fled the country as refugees, became wards of the Greek State and remained in dormitories until adulthood. All the children that remained at Leros were completely Hellenized and were never heard from again.

Pressure from the community prompted organizers of the “save the children” program to expedite the evacuation process to stop the “Burandari” (nickname for Greek Government soldiers and policemen) from taking more children.

The evacuations carried out by the Partisans were done strictly on a voluntary basis. It was up to the child’s parents or guardians to decide whether the child was to be evacuated or not. No child was ever evacuated by force or without consent.

The evacuation zones were selected based on the severity of the conflict and the degree of danger it posed to the children. Central command organizers decided on the selection criteria and qualifications of which children were to be evacuated. The lists included all children between the ages of two and fourteen as well as all orphans, disabled, and special children.

Before the evacuation was put into effect, women over the age of eighteen were enlisted from the local population and from the Partisan ranks to be trained to handle young children. Widows of fallen Partisans were also recruited as “surrogate mothers” to accompany and assist the children through the evacuation process and during their stay in the host countries.

The evacuation program began to gain momentum in early March of 1948 starting with the recruitment and training of the special teachers. The actual evacuations were carried out on mass, starting on March 25th through to March 30th, 1948 until all the designated villages were evacuated. Most children were transported through Yugoslavia and were sent to Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Some were evacuated through Albania and Bulgaria. As the numbers of the evacuated rose, children were also sent to East Germany and to the USSR.

It is estimated that about 28,000 children in all were evacuated, most of them from northwestern Aegean Macedonia.

Although smaller in number some orphans, children of Partisans, and children of families that were in trouble with the Greek Government authorities were also evacuated.

When their turn came the children from each village were summoned and escorted by Partisan guides to the closest designated border crossing. For their safety, the children traveled under the cover of darkness and away from the main roads. In some cases, due to heavy aerial attacks and falling bombs, some villages evacuated their children in haste without escorts and they became stranded in the snow-covered mountains without shelter.

Mothers prepared luggage, a change of clothing, food and eating utensils before escorting their little ones to the designated meeting places. With eyes tearing mothers said goodbye to their loved ones before sending them into the hands of destiny. Their cries could be heard for a long time as they disappeared into the distance. It didn't take too long before the emptiness was felt and many mothers could not stop crying and contemplating the fate of their little ones.

The children walked in single file behind their surrogate mothers holding hands. The older children comforted the young as they moved into seclusion. Under the cover of darkness they silently slipped over the terrain, avoiding roads and open spaces being constantly reminded by their Partisan guides to keep quiet. They crossed over high mountains and steep slopes ever mindful and vigilant of the flying Greek menace above as they made their way to the borders. The lucky ones spent the nights indoors in designated villages. The others however slept outdoors in the open spaces of the frigid mountains questioning the wisdom of their elders and wondering which was more dangerous the falling bombs or the freezing cold.

During their trek, one group came across a dangerously steep slope laden with loose rocks leading directly into the rushing waters of a river. Being too dangerous for the children to cross alone each mother had to make several trips carrying children on their shoulders one at a time. Expediency was in order as the slope was exposed to aerial view. One child was lucky that day as a tragedy was narrowly averted. In her haste to get across one mother tripped over a thorn bush, losing her balance. As she stumbled she managed to take the child off her shoulders and toss her up the slope. Luckily, the girl didn't panic and was able to brace herself. The mother then grabbed the child's feet and regained her own balance. It was a frightening experience for everyone in the group.

Another group, frightened by the heavy aerial bombardments, left their village under the cover of darkness at one thirty in the morning. It was cloudy and raining that night, ideal for escaping the bombers but a disaster for the morale of the children. It rained all night and through to the next day as the group hid in the mountains. They couldn't risk lighting a fire and being seen so they stayed wet and

cold through the day, enduring nature's punishment. When night came they inched their way through darkness over snow covered, thorn infested terrain to the next village. The children were in shock and hardly felt the bleeding cuts on their feet. Some had no shoes and their mud soaked socks offered no protection against the sharp rocks and stinging thorns.

As one group made their way towards their destination one of the surrogate mothers couldn't stop crying. The person in charge of the group explained that there was no reason for her to be upset since all of the children were accounted for, fed, and looked after. But the mother was still upset and kept crying. When asked what was the problem, she explained that she couldn't properly take care of a six-month-old orphan baby that was left in her care. She only had one spare diaper and after washing it she had no means of drying it. The best she could do was put the diaper against her own chest. It never dried and she felt so sorry for the poor child who had to wear a cold, wet diaper out in the freezing cold.

The borders could only be crossed at night so the children had to wait in seclusion until it was dark. To prepare them for the journey the children had to leave the villages and head for the mountains before dawn. As they left they were told to leave their belongings behind, promised that they would be delivered to them later by wagon. As the children made their way past the border crossing, the wagon never materialized and they were left without food, utensils, blankets or a change of clothing. To this day many believe that the Greek Partisans stole their belongings.

After crossing the Yugoslav border the children were taken to the village of Dupeni and from there to Luboino to wait for more arrivals. In the care of their surrogate mothers the children were placed in designated homes where they spent up to a week sleeping on straw covered floors, fifteen children to a room. Food was in short supply so each child was only given a slice of cornbread for supper before being put to bed still hungry. After a few days of hunger some resorted to stealing food from the village homes.

After spending a week in Luboino, the children were transported by military trucks to Bitola where they boarded a train for Brailovo. In

Brailovo each group was assigned to a home where they slept together with their surrogate mother in a room lined with hay for bedding. Morale was low and the children constantly cried from the enduring hunger and homesickness. Food was scarce so to preserve rations the children were fed one meal every other day. Those who lost their belongings had no bowls or spoons to eat with and resorted to using discarded sardine cans and whatever else they could find. Some found discarded toothpaste tubes and fashioned them into spoons. One surrogate mother found a rusty bucket and after cleaning it, used it as a soup bowl. The warm soup took on a red colour as the rust dissolved and came to the surface. The children were too hungry to waste it so she skimmed the rust off the surface and spooned it into all the children. An old woman seeing this felt so sorry for the bunch that she offered them her portion, preferring to stay hungry rather than having to watch the children starve.

At this point most of the older boys were contemplating escape but their concern for the younger ones kept them from doing so. Some were so hungry they scoured the countryside looking for food, eating kernels of grain and corn and even resorting to killing wildlife to satisfy their hunger.

After spending a little over a week in Brailovo, the various groups were transported to the nearest train station where each child was pinned with a name and destination tag and prepared for travel to the various host countries. Separating the children was not an easy task as the young clung to the older children and refused to be separated. Siblings clung to each other with all their might, fighting back with tears and cries. It took a lot of convincing and reassurances before they could be separated.

The first groups to leave were the younger children aged five to ten. Most of them were sent to Bela Trskva in northern Yugoslavia. These children were the most vulnerable and had to be quickly rescued before they died of starvation. In Bela Trskva, after spending some time in quarantine, the children were placed in dormitories with proper facilities and plenty of nutritious food. The rest, after spending a week or so at the train station were sent to Skopie. Life at the train station was harsh as most children were nearly starving and had no energy to move. Their hunger was so

overpowering that the children had no energy to even complain about the tormenting lice. Many spent their time resting in the stable cars nestled in the warmth and comfort of the hay. The cars, left from WW II were used by the Germans to transport horses.

When they arrived in Skopje the children were given milk and food which seemed like a gift from heaven after starving for so long. Without much delay, the train wagons were again divided and a group was sent to Romania while the rest continued on their way to Bulkes. Considering the episodes from the last separation, this time the authorities decided not to inform the children or the surrogate mothers. As a result, some children were visiting friends in neighbouring cars and ended up going to the wrong destination. Many mothers didn't know what had happened and worried endlessly about the fate of the missing children.

When they arrived in Bulkes (Vojvodina) the groups were supplied with food donated by the United Nations and the children were bathed and given new clothes. From there they were taken by wagons to a nearby hospital for physical examinations.

Bulkes was a town built by the Germans and occupied by the Greek partisans. It was teeming with activities geared towards supporting the war effort. Food was plentiful and the children spent most of their days living in empty schools and warehouses. Besides the Macedonians, there were also children from Epirus and Thessaly. As soon as they became comfortable however, the children were again on the move. After spending about a month in Bulkes, they were again loaded onto train cars, given some food and sent off to various destinations. Unbeknownst to them, they had been separated again and sent to Hungary, Poland or Czechoslovakia.

When the group destined for Czechoslovakia arrived, the Czech authorities stripped the children naked from their lice infested clothing, cut their hair and gave them a bath on mass. It was a new experience for the Macedonian children to be bathed naked in front of so many people. The local buildings and baths once belonged to the German soldiers, but since their expulsion, they became a haven for the refugee children.

After spending time in quarantine, the children were taken to a new camp to join other refugee children that had arrived there earlier via a different route and were assigned quarters and schoolmasters. The children were re-grouped into pre-school ages 4 to 6, public school ages 7 to 12 and technical school ages 13 and over. The surrogate mothers were responsible for looking after the younger groups consisting of about twenty children each. Their duties included waking them up in the morning, helping them dress into their uniforms, supervising their morning exercises and making sure everyone ate a good breakfast. In the evening they supervised the children playing until they were put to bed. They also had to make sure shoes were polished and uniforms cleaned and properly hung for the night. Morning started with exercise and a good breakfast.

The Czech teachers were professionals, trained in child psychology, who did their best to educate the children properly. In addition to the regular curriculum, the children were expected to learn various languages including Czech, Greek, Macedonian and Russian.

On occasion, mothers and children were sent on work assignments to the farms to assist with gathering fruits, berries and mushrooms.

With time mothers and children began to adjust to their new life with the exception of the usual fighting between Greek and Macedonian children, especially the boys. There was friction between the Greek and Macedonian children with frequent verbal insults sometimes resulting in fistfights. Eventually the Greek children were moved to a new camp, which put an end to the fighting.

When the group destined for Romania arrived, about one thousand five hundred children were offloaded and sent straight to the baths and their flea-ridden clothes were washed in boiling water. After the bath, each child was issued under garments and pajamas and sent to a nearby compound formerly used by the Germans as a hospital during the war. The children stayed there from April until October 1948. Then on October 25th, 1948 many of the children were relocated to Poland. Most Macedonian children wore homemade woolen clothes that shrank during the hot wash. Fortunately, the good people of Romania donated replacement garments and the

children were clothed before leaving for Poland. After spending six months in Romania in a quasi-supervised compound without any schooling, the children became wild and undisciplined. With one supervisor for the entire train, the trip to Poland was a joyride. Some children mischievously climbed through the windows of the railcars to the roof of the moving train and stood upright pretending to fly. When the train approached a tunnel they lay flat on their stomachs clinging hard to the roof of the rail car. As the billowing smoke from the steam engine enveloped them, their faces blackened beyond recognition. When they crossed into Poland the train was taken over by a Polish crew. A supervisor, trained to handle children was assigned to each car to deal with the rowdiness. For the rest of the trip, the children were well fed and rewarded with chocolates and apples for good behavior. When they arrived in Poland at the city of “Londek Zdrui”, the children were placed under Greek supervision, grouped by age and assigned to various school dormitories. Children of unknown age were grouped by size and height. Initially the children refused to cooperate, mistrusting the administrators and fearing separation again. It took Red Cross intervention and much re-assurance to convince them to cooperate. Unlike the compound in Romania, the dorms in Poland were well staffed with one director and two or three assistants per dorm. Each dorm had eight to ten rooms with four children per room. There was no shortage of food, toys or games. The directors were responsible for supervising morning exercises, breakfast and getting the children to school on time. After school they made sure the children came back safely, were given supper and put to bed.

About 2,000 refugee children were sent to Hungary and assigned to quarters in a military barracks in Budapest. There each child was undressed, sprayed with pesticide, bathed, dressed in new clothing and given a package of toiletries that included soap and a tube of toothpaste. The children, not knowing what the toothpaste was, mistook it for food. The aroma of mint reminded them of candy and many wasted the toothpaste, attempting to eat it.

Initially, Greek and Macedonian children were mixed together in a single group. But due to fights, the authorities were forced to split the children into smaller groups, segregated by village of origin.

After spending three weeks in quarantine the groups were adopted by the Hungarian community. Each village community, supported by a factory complex, adopted a group. Some found themselves among the richest communities in the region and were privileged to live in quarters made of marble. Nearby there was a small lake teeming with exotic and colourful fish. Unfortunately, the children were all homesick missing their mothers and had little appreciation for luxury. Slowly however, routine began to take over as the children attended school and became involved in school and community activities. Besides the regular curriculum, the refugee children were expected to learn to read and write in their native language. Even though Greek officials administered the programs and scoffed at the idea, the Macedonian children were given the choice of learning Macedonian if they wanted to.

I want to mention here that the Macedonian programs were a direct translation (word for word) from the Greek programs. Even though the children were learning in their native Macedonian language, they were learning what the Greeks wanted them to learn. The Macedonian teachers were not allowed to diverge from the established programs. In other words, Hellenization and Greek propaganda continued to influence the Macedonian children even outside the Greek borders.

By 1949 casualties were mounting at home and reports were filtering through to the refugee camps where children received bad news about the fate of their parents and relatives. Morale was so low that the children became isolated, withdrawn and would not sing, talk, cry or even eat. To boost their morale the surrogate mothers, who wore black to mourn the deaths of their husbands, resorted to wearing white and colourful dresses. For the sake of the children, in spite of their own sorrow, mothers had to appear cheerful and put on happy faces.

As the Civil War in Greece intensified, the Partisans were running out of recruits at home and began to look at the refugee children abroad as a possible source. Although draftees were recruited from all the camps abroad, most of the fighting force came from Romania. Initially, two new groups were formed and brought back for military training. The recruitment campaign and propaganda was

so tempting that the youngsters couldn't resist it and were happy to volunteer. Any child strong enough to carry a rifle, regardless of age, was good enough for the draft.

The first two groups recruited were instantly massacred upon engaging the battle hardened Greek Army. They were all under the age of fifteen, had no combat experience and no idea of what to expect.

The third group left Romania and went to Rudary, Prespa via Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Upon arrival, the young soldiers were sent to Shtrkovo, another village in Prespa, for about a month of military training and preparation for combat. The young men spent part of March and April 1949 performing military exercises, learning to operate weapons and set explosives.

When word came that the first two groups of young fighters were decimated, there was a loud outcry by the community against such atrocities, "We did not save our children so you can slaughter them."

The third group was only spared because many mothers demonstrated and voiced their anger against such a barbaric draft. The group was demobilized before reaching the battlefields and many of the children were sent back to the refugee camps. Some were allowed to go home only to end up as refugees again during the mass exodus in the fall of 1949.

As the Greek Civil War was coming to a close, Western Aegean Macedonia was bombed to dust and Partisans and civilians alike fled to Albania to save themselves.

When the war was over many wanted to return but Greece did not want them back. Anyone who voluntarily fled was not allowed to return, regardless of whether they were guilty of any crimes or not. After spending some time in the camps in Albania, the people of Macedonia, again victims of someone else's war, became permanent war refugees and were sent to various Eastern Block countries. Before departure, the refugees were separated into two groups. One, made up mostly of Partisan fighters was sent to the USSR. The other consisting mostly of civilians and Partisan support staff was sent to

Poland. After the groups were separated they were transported to the port of Durasi, loaded onto cargo ships and sent westward through Gibraltar to Poland and eastward via the Black Sea to the Soviet Union. The voyages were long and unpleasant. To avoid detection the refugees were literally hidden inside the cargo and at critical times ordered to remain immobile and quiet for long periods of time. When they landed at their destinations, the refugees were stripped and their flea-infested clothes were burned. After being powdered with pesticide and bathed in hot baths, they were then placed in quarantine where they spent about a month and a half resting idly before being relocated to permanent quarters.

After settling down and securing employment in their new countries, many parents who had refugee children began to look for them and with the help of the authorities were able to bring them home. As a result, many children left their host countries to join their parents in Poland, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, etc.

Refugees who had relatives in Canada, the USA and Australia through sponsorship made attempts to immigrate themselves and look for their children or have their relatives look for their children if immigration was not possible.

Initially “the iron curtain” was shut tight and made it difficult to make inquiries, but as the Red Cross became involved it became easier. In 1953 during a Red Cross convention in Switzerland the question of the Refugee Children from the Greek Civil War came up and the various Red Cross agencies agreed to cooperate and exchange information with each other. After that, anyone requesting help to locate missing persons in Eastern Block Countries was not refused.

There are instances where Macedonians did experience problems with the Red Cross but these were due to Greek misinformation. When the Red Cross went looking for refugees in the Greek administered refugee camps they were told that the Macedonians were “migrant workers” and not refugees. Here is an actual account of what happened to one Macedonian woman in Poland.

The woman was well liked by her colleagues and in time became a model worker and qualified for a month's paid vacation. When her turn came, she was sent to a luxurious mountain resort. She was alone and felt uncomfortable going places but did agree to go and see the nativity in a local church. There she met two women who suspected that she was not Polish and were curious about how she had gotten there. After some discussion, it turned out the women were Red Cross workers and interested in finding people like her. When the women found out that she was a refugee interested in returning home, and that many others were in a similar situation, they urged her to seek help. She was given an address in Warsaw where she could meet with Red Cross officials and tell them her story.

Upon returning from her vacation she and a friend went to Warsaw and after eleven days of appealing and pleading, their story was heard. Officials were curious as to why this hadn't come up at the refugee camps during the official Red Cross visits. As she recalls, unbeknownst to her, the Greek organizers made sure that the Macedonians were sent on day trips on the days of the Red Cross visits.

Even after all this, the woman was still not allowed to leave. Greece would not accept her without a request from her husband. Her husband at the time was serving a prison sentence in the Greek concentration camps. It was not until 1954, three years later, that he was able to initiate the process for repatriation. The woman arrived home in May 1958 but could not stand the oppressive atmosphere and soon afterwards she and her family immigrated to Canada.

By 1950, Greece was taking extreme measures to close her borders with Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Trusted Albanians from Epirus were brought into Macedonia and seeded throughout the border villages to act as eyes and ears for the Greeks. Greek authorities clamped down on the remaining population and no one was allowed to travel without permission. There were strict rules of conduct put into effect, including curfews. Anyone caught wandering outdoors past dusk was shot on sight. Many shepherds quit their jobs for fear of being killed and left their sheep wandering aimlessly. One little boy had an argument with his stepfather and ran

away. The authorities were not at all sympathetic and wouldn't allow the family to go looking for him. The boy's mother and sister went looking for him anyway and brought him home safely at great risk to their own safety.

When the violence in Greece subsided parents and relatives began to inquire about repatriating their children. Those who displayed some loyalty to the Greek cause were told that their children would be allowed to return if decreed by the Greek Queen Fredericka. Unfortunately, this process required connections with the local Greek authorities and a lot of money, money that most Macedonians did not have.

Those considered for repatriation had to meet a number of conditions including the willingness to accept permanent Hellenization. Children from Partisan families were automatically disqualified. Those who weren't willing to change their names or weren't liked for some reason were also disqualified.

As the years passed fewer children were allowed to return and requests for repatriation continued to be ignored. Parents and relatives died and still their children were not allowed to return, not even for a visit.

After travel restrictions to countries behind the iron curtain were lifted, parents in spite of the expense, old age and ill health made their way to visit their children.

One woman on her deathbed made her husband promise her that he would visit their daughter in Poland before he died. Feeling his own mortality the man, in poor health, made the long trek and after thirty years of separation saw his daughter for the first time. She will never forget her father's sacrifice.

Another woman who let all four of her children (two sons and two daughters) leave during the dreaded May 1948 evacuation, also made the trek to Poland to see them for the last time. The woman was crippled from a war wound and could hardly walk but knew that soon she would die and wanted to see her children one more time. She traveled by train and in spite of her condition made it to Poland

in good spirits. When she arrived, two of her children, a son and a daughter came to greet her. The daughter recognized her mother and after a long and emotional hug asked her if she knew which daughter she was. Her mother would not answer because she didn't know and didn't want to make a mistake. That deeply troubled the adult daughter who began to weep uncontrollably. She did recognize her son and called out his name but would not answer her daughter's pleas. After a while she finally recognized her, wiped her tears and with a wide smile called out her name. It was an emotional but happy ending for that family.

Unfortunately for every happy ending there are dozens of sad ones. One old couple did not have enough money or the strength to make the trip to visit their children. Since then, both have passed on heartbroken, with their desires to see their children unfulfilled.

Many of the people I interviewed don't know why the Greek authorities wouldn't allow the children to return. In spite of pleas, even on humanitarian grounds, the Greek authorities decade after decade, government after government, maintain the same policy and will not allow the Macedonian refugee children to return home.

After all the remaining Partisans were captured or killed, people were slowly allowed to go home to their own villages. While many returned to their old homes, a few families decided to make their home in the new village. Some lost their farm equipment, tools, livestock and personal belongings to looters. For most, life had to start all over again. As tensions began to ease, those held in concentration camps were released and began to arrive home only to find their property gone. The Greek authorities, in addition to confiscating the properties of many of those who fled as refugees during the mass exodus of 1949, also confiscated the properties of those held in concentration camps. People were demoralized and constantly lived in fear of the authorities and retributions from their collaborators. There was a certain stigma attached to the relatives of Partisans or their supporters that caused them to withdraw from society and keep to themselves. Those who served in the Greek concentration camps were constantly harassed with curfews, restricted mobility and suspicion of espionage. Many were followed by plainclothes policemen and pressured to themselves become

informants and spy on their neighbours. Strangers were viewed with suspicion and automatically assumed to be foreign spies.

As radios became affordable people began to purchase them and listen to various programs, including broadcasts from Eastern Europe and the Federal Republic of Macedonia. The Greek police became vigilant and on many occasions they were observed outside people's yards listening to hear what programs were playing. Those caught listening to foreign programs were accused of espionage. The Macedonian language was once again banned from use and the "M" word became a dirty word even if it was spoken on the radio. Ever since Greece invaded the Macedonian territory, successive Greek Governments refused to acknowledge the existence of the Macedonian language.

One by one, all those who came back from the Eastern European countries left for Canada, the USA and Australia because they could no longer stand the Greek oppression. They had tasted freedom and wanted more even if it meant abandoning their beloved ancestral homes. They remembered how life was before the latest Greeks clampdown and now it was not the same. The people too had changed, they were still courteous and kind but their spirits were broken. Everyone was afraid, careful not to say anything incriminating as if every word was going to be judged and punished. Children born during this time were brought up believing that this was how life was and it was supposedly the best life one could have. They were taught to understand that Greece was the cradle of democracy and no one in the world was freer than the Greeks. Those who knew better did not dare speak otherwise. There were certain things that could not be done or discussed, especially the Greek Civil War. Children were taught Greek chauvinist songs in school and sang them at home in front of their parents who didn't dare say anything. Even their children could unwittingly betray them. The Macedonian language became "our" language and could only be spoken in secrecy with relatives and trusted friends. The word "Macedonia" or "Macedonian" was banned from the peoples' vocabulary and could not be spoken, especially in public. Pre-school children who learned "our" language at home from their grandmothers spoke Greek with a heavy accent and were constantly teased and scolded for not knowing how to speak properly. If a child

was caught speaking “our” language in class or in the yard, punishment ensued which varied from being publicly told not to speak “those filthy words” to being given a good dose of castor oil. Sometimes children sang Greek songs about the deeds of the Greek heroes and broke their parents’ hearts. Their precious children were unknowingly idolizing the true criminals and murderers, Macedonia’s worst enemies. Some parents, when their children were old enough to keep a secret, taught them that they were a different people, that they were Macedonian and not Greek. Other parents however, thinking that it was in the best interest of the children not to know their true identity, allowed them to believe that they were Greek. Their loyalties however were never rewarded since it was very rare for a Macedonian child to be accepted in Greek society. It was not because Macedonian children were incapable of being intellectual, as the Greeks would have us believe, but because the Greek Government systemically discriminated against Macedonians. Discrimination was common practice especially at the individual level. Macedonians were constantly put down and as a result kept to themselves. Sometimes however, during heated discussions or unavoidable arguments Macedonians did show discontentment but the arguments always ended with the lethal insult of being called a “Bulgar”, the lowest form of life known to Greeks.

The highest level of education a Macedonian child was permitted to achieve was grade six. Junior high was possible only for the children of those who had shown and continued to show loyalty to the Greek cause. One young man whose parents were killed during the Greek Civil War joined the Greek military and afterwards considered the army to be his only family. He was very loyal, studious and hard working but was constantly denied promotions. During a military exercise he saved a high-ranking officer from drowning and for saving his life the officer promised to help him if he ever needed it. After years of frustration, finally the young soldier went to the officer with his complaint. After some investigation, the officer advised him that his requests for a promotion were turned down because he was not Greek, more specifically because his parents were of Slav origin. This unfair treatment angered the young soldier enough to leave the Greek military, the only family he had ever known. Disheartened he left Greece altogether and joined his aunt in Toronto, Canada where he is currently learning to speak

Macedonian. Even though he speaks no other language, he refuses to speak Greek.

After the fall of the dictatorship in Greece in the mid-sixties, many Macedonians were publicly encouraged by the Greek politicians to leave Greece because “there was no future for them there”. Many of the empty villages in western Macedonia were filled with Albanians from west central Greece. Vlachs who originally lived in the highlands of Thessaly and spent summers in the Macedonian mountains took up permanent residence there. Many applied for and were granted the properties of post-Greek Civil War migrant families.

Macedonians that immigrated to Canada, the USA and Australia at the start of the 20th century organized village associations that assisted fellow immigrants in adjusting to their new countries. As post-Greek Civil War immigration accelerated, these village associations became a haven for new immigrants and their membership grew. Encouraged by their newfound freedoms, many of the new émigrés enjoyed their Macedonian culture and language in the diaspora.

This was perceived as a threat to Greek influence both at home and abroad. As the associations grew in strength so did their threat to the Greek chokehold. To counter this, with help from the Greek Embassies and Consulates, pro-Greek factions began to infiltrate the Macedonian associations. The weaker associations were overpowered and rendered ineffective. Those that resisted managed to survive and preserve their unique Macedonian identity. For the ones that the Greeks could not subdue, parallel and competing pro-Greek associations were formed. The day a Macedonian association held an event, the pro-Greek association held a similar event, to divide the people. Macedonians wishing to participate in events and prone to blackmail were discouraged from joining the Macedonian organizations and encouraged to join the pro-Greek ones. To this day many Macedonians will not go to any of the events fearing retribution from both the Greeks if they went to Macedonian events or fearing disappointment and disgust from the Macedonians if they went to a pro-Greek event. This is precisely why the Macedonian community in the diaspora has become a silent community. This

suits the Greeks perfectly and leaves the Macedonians frustrated and disappointed.

The most anti-Macedonian organization to surface from all the Greek associations is the Pan Macedonian Association which aims to not only divide the Macedonian Nation but also destroy everything that is Macedonian. To this day this organization preys on the weak, innocent, naïve and those that can be bought and continues to spread hatred and lies at every opportunity. The Pan Macedonian Association is a “false organization” fully financed by Greek taxpayers most of whom are unaware of its discriminatory practices and the friction it creates between fellow Greek citizens.

In addition to disseminating anti-Macedonian propaganda and lobbying for “the Greek cause”, many of these so-called “Greek-Macedonian” organizations spy on Macedonian organizations and individuals, reporting their activities to the Greek authorities. Many activists and supporters of the Macedonian cause even though they are Greek citizens are barred from returning to Greece. Their cause is noble if they serve the Greeks at their own expense, but as soon as one attempts to serve his or her own cause, they suddenly become traitors.

Macedonians are refused entry into Greece at the border points without any explanation. Without consent, their passport is stamped “void” and thrown back at them. They do the same to individuals with foreign passports without respect for the foreign State’s property.

After years of living in Australia, one man decided to visit the Republic of Macedonia. Upon entry his passport was stamped with a beautiful red symbol, a real treasure, which made him very proud and happy. His visit to Macedonia was so wonderful that he decided to cross over into Greece and visit the village Nered where he was born. Unfortunately, the Greek customs officials would not allow him entry. What was most unbelievable is the Greek officer took the man’s Australian passport without his consent, and stamped it “void” all over. They literally destroyed the Macedonian symbol by repeatedly stamping “void” over and over until it was no longer visible. No explanation or apology was given.

The Macedonian Refugee Children wish to express their gratitude to the counties and people who opened their doors to them at a time of their greatest need. They treated them not as strangers or immigrants, but as equals. They also wish to express many thanks to the countries and people for giving them the opportunity of free education in their institutions.

Only through their generosity away from Greek bias did the Macedonian children prove themselves equal to all the children in the world. Free from Greek oppression they excelled in education and talent becoming professors, doctors, engineers, poets, playwrights, composers, economists, etc.

Most of the refugee children today are living in the diaspora. A great number of them have immigrated to Canada, the USA, Australia and the Republic of Macedonia. Some remained in their host countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Germany and Russia) and have made them their homes. They maintain contact with each other through associations and clubs and from time to time meet, attempting to gain entry to visit their homeland. Unfortunately, to this day they have had no success. Greece, after fifty-five years, still does not want them, not even to visit.

I would like to thank all the people who participated in the interviews and made this article possible.

Part IX - Conclusion

In the previous article (part VIII) I covered the evacuation of the Macedonian children and the consequences of the Greek Civil War.

In this final article I will offer my conclusion of what went wrong for Macedonia in the last 200 years.

Even before Alexander's time Macedonia was a single nation. With time she grew and shrank but always remained a single nation until her partition in 1912-13. Today however, while new nations spring up and flourish, Macedonia is still partitioned and fighting for her identity. Why? What went wrong and who is responsible?

In the previous articles (parts I to VIII) I did my best to present an objective analysis of historic events that took place in the last 200 years. Beyond my own editorializing, I abstained from using biased and politically motivated sources and tried my best to be as neutral as possible.

The southern Balkan region, which includes present-day Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria and European Turkey, was part of the Ottoman Empire and the region had been multi-ethnic and multi-cultural up until the 19th century when nationalism was introduced. Even though the Balkans were nationally pluralistic, the Ottomans used religion as the basic criteria with which to identify their societies.

More than 400 years of Ottoman rule and neglect for basic human rights, halted and reversed the creative spirit of the Balkan people. Education was nonexistent for the Christians and as a result there was no progress. Driven away from their fertile lands, Christians moved to secluded villages away from the Ottomans. Fear of travel and of strangers isolated them from each other and from the outside world. As a result, very few new ideas and innovations filtered in or out of their communities.

Poor roads as well as the fear of being robbed kept communities isolated thus prohibiting the development of trade. Over time villages developed local economies and became entirely dependent

on local resources and the soil to provide everything they needed to survive.

Prolonged isolation and lack of outside contact also caused language divergence resulting in the development of many dialects. Outside of the Ottoman language, almost the entire Balkan region from the Peloponisos to Romania spoke the language of the Slavs (Macedonian). There were also small pockets of people who spoke Tosk, Gheg, Vlach, Roma and some Greek around the Aegean and Adriatic coastlines.

Under Ottoman occupation, the region survived relatively uninterrupted having almost no contact with the outside world up to the 18th century. The Ottoman ruling class and Ottoman military lived exclusively off the Christian working class through land ownership and by farming taxes. Having no need to develop economically or militarily, the Ottoman Empire remained static for many years in comparison to the rest of the world.

With the advent of technology and regional economies, Western Europe and Russia began to modernize and by the late 18th century began to expand their empires and infiltrate the Ottoman world. Russia was first to come into contact during the Russian-Ottoman war of 1774. After Russia defeated Turkey, she gained access to the Black Sea and became protector of the Christians inside the Ottoman Empire. This was also the first time Turkey ever allowed foreign diplomats (Russian consular agents) inside her empire.

The weakening Ottoman Empire alarmed the Western Powers and for the first time raised the “Eastern Question”. What will happen to the Balkans when the Ottoman Empire is gone?

As the Western and Russian economies expanded, the Imperial Great Powers began to compete with each other for territorial expansion and economic influence. Being the last frontier for Imperialist penetration, the Balkans became the “apple of discord”.

While the Great Powers were jockeying for a cut of the Balkan pie, Turkey was finding it more and more difficult to maintain her territorial integrity. Having fallen behind in technology and military

capability, Turkey found it very expensive and increasingly difficult to defend herself. Having no economy or any other means of supporting her defense budgets, waging war became an added tax burden for the working Christians.

In addition to supporting the Ottoman establishment, the Balkan Christian also had to contend with corruption and lawlessness. With the army away fighting wars, Muslim outcasts and professional criminals preyed upon the defenseless Christians. The Christians could not defend themselves because they were not allowed to bear arms.

By the turn of the 19th century, the Balkan peasant population was so oppressed that it could no longer bear the burden and began to rebel.

The first rebellion manifested itself in 1804 when a group of Janitsari attempted to take control of a region in present day Serbia. In the absence of the Ottoman army, bandits and unruly Janitsaries attacked the unguarded villages killing Christians including priests and prominent village leaders. Those that fled to the forests took matters into their own hands, organized themselves into fighting units and retaliated by attacking the bandits. The Sultan's army eventually put down the peasant uprising but fear of Russian wrath prompted him to reconsider his actions, giving the rebels autonomy.

The success of the rebellion in Serbia and the willingness of the Great Powers to entertain uprisings inside the Ottoman Empire, prompted another group of people, the Phanariots to consider a rebellion of their own. This particular rebellion was a planned conspiracy designed to oust the Sultan from power and install a Patriarch in his place. In other words, the Phanariot plan was to remove and expel the Muslim Ottomans out of the Balkans and replace them with Christian rulers, leaving the Empire intact. The Phanariots were a nationally diverse class of Christian people who served in the Ottoman administration. They were called Phanariots because their home was in the Phanar (lighthouse) District of Trari Grad (Constantinople). In today's terms, the Phanariots were a class of Christian businessmen, professionals and clerics who worked in the Ottoman administration. They were employed by the Sultan to

fill the necessary positions that, due to cultural and religious restrictions, could not be filled by Muslims. Subservient to the Muslims, the Phanariots were also rulers of the Christian world.

Due to class differences and being poorly organized, the Phanariot rebellion of 1821 failed to achieve its objectives. It did however, spark an uprising in the Morea district in modern Peloponisos. This uprising was not a call for independence as the Modern Greeks claim it to be but rather a reaction brought on by fear of Ottoman retribution.

By the early 1820's it was apparent that the Ottoman Empire was seriously crumbling. Up to now no Powers other than France had economic interests in the Ottoman Empire. The Morean incident however, opened the door for new opportunities. In their eagerness to influence the outcome of the Morean uprising in their favour, the Powers sank the Ottoman fleet at Navarino Bay, thus preventing the Ottomans from retaking Morea.

Up to the turn of the 19th century France was the dominant power in the west and Russia in the east. With Napoleon's defeat however, Britain was emerging as the dominant power in the west. Unfortunately when it came to Balkan matters Britain and Russia found themselves at odds with one another. Britain had vested interests in her eastern colonies and wanted her shipping lanes secure. Russia on the other hand had ambitions of expanding her shipping into the Mediterranean Sea. This Britain viewed as an intrusion into her interests.

Another matter which surfaced by the mid 1820's was the Eastern Question. By 1826, it was becoming obvious that no Great Power wanted a single large state in the Balkans. Great Power strategy was to encourage the formation of a number of smaller states, perhaps on the basis of nationality, following the western model.

With the help of the Great Powers, the first small state to emerge and become independent was the Kingdom of Greece. The Great Powers created Greece and the British took it upon themselves to protect her. A German King and administration were chosen to rule her because the Greeks were incapable of ruling themselves. The

distrust among the Powers prevented any one of them ruling. The Germans, who at the time had no vested interest in the Balkans, were viewed as neutral. When Greece became a state for the first time, her people had no notion of a national identity or a national language. Morea was as multinational and multicultural as any region in the Balkans. The multilingual population of the region was made up mostly of Albanian Tosks, Vlachs, Slavs and some Greeks along the Peloponisos coastline. The idea that these people were Hellenes and descendents of the old City States came later, after an exhaustive search for a national identity. Finding a national language was also a problem that was not solved until the 20th century. At one point the people of the Greek fledgling nation went as far as considering the Albanian Tosk as their national language. Hellenism was an afterthought, an academic idea imported from Britain and France. When the nation builders created the Greek nationality, they did not follow the natural progression of the national evolution. Instead, they opted for creating an identity with a 2,300-year break in continuity. In other words, the national consciousness of the 19th century Greek is a myth created for the sake of assimilating the various nationalities into a single nation.

Britain's desire to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean Sea created a "non-Slavic" mythical State that would be loyal to Britain and not to Russia. The idea of "a Greek State" satisfied some of the people in the Balkans but left most, especially the Phanariots who wanted to rule the entire Balkans, disappointed.

By the early 1850's, the West European economies were experiencing an economic explosion and the Imperial Powers found themselves competing with each other to win favours from the Ottoman authorities. The power struggle peaked in 1853 and developed into the Crimean war.

On the surface the issue of controversy was who was responsible for controlling access to Christian Holy places in the Ottoman Empire. The real struggle, however, was about who had the most influence over the Ottoman domain. While Russia pitted herself against Turkey and the West in this power play, she failed to see the strength of the British influence over the other Powers. Russia also failed to see that Britain would never accept a Russian victory. As

tensions mounted, the Russian armies invaded the Ottoman Empire and occupied Romanian Principalities. Austria, Romania's neighbour, reacted and demanded that Russia get out of Romania. Encouraged by the Western powers, Turkey refused to negotiate any terms with Russia and in 1853 declared war on her. Others followed and in 1854 Austria forced Russia to evacuate Romania. Then in 1856 Allied Western Powers attacked Russia and took Sevastopol (a chief Russian port on the Black Sea). Tsar Alexander II could not repel the invaders and gave in to their demands, including opening up the Danube River to shipping for all nations. For the first time Imperial Eastern Europe was opened to capitalism. As a direct result of losing out to the Western allies Russia lost her political influence in Romania and her clout as a power broker in the region.

The Russo-Ottoman Crimean war drained Turkey economically. To avoid economic collapse the Western Powers stepped in and helped Turkey, with loans. Turkey, unfortunately, was incapable of properly managing her finances and as a result was unable to manage paying back the loans. Most of the State's income was diverted to military campaigns in order to contain the uprisings. Taxes were raised again and again causing more uprisings and further instability.

Fed up with Turkey's inability to pay off her loans, in 1875 the Western Powers created the Ottoman Public Debt Administration. This allowed foreign investors to take over management of the Ottoman State budgets for the first time. Much needed funds were now diverted to paying off the debt instead of helping the local economy. The local population was overburdened with taxes causing even more discontentment among the peasants. The situation reached the boiling point in 1875 and manifested itself by many independent uprisings in Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia (Razlog uprising). The growing peasant discontentment "disturbed" the Great Powers and in the same year a conference was convened in Tsari Grad to discuss how to handle the problem. The Great Powers decided to place Bulgaria and Macedonia under Great Power control but Turkey disagreed and rejected their demands and again found herself at odds with Russia.

Humiliated by the defeat in the Crimean war, upset over the economic plight of the Balkan people, alienated by the Western Powers, frustrated by the violent demonstrations in Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Macedonia, Tsar Alexander II of Russia again attacked Turkey and invaded Bulgaria. The Ottoman armies were decimated and on March 3, 1878 Russia alone negotiated the San Stefano Treaty with Turkey, which called for the creation of a Greater Bulgaria. The area in question included roughly all of present-day Bulgaria, Macedonia, western Thrace, part of Albania, and a district of Serbia.

The San Stefano Treaty sent shock waves through the Western world including Greece and Serbia, who both had ambitions for future conquests in the region.

Greatly disturbed by the Russian move, the Western Powers convened a conference in July 1878 in Berlin. The San Stefano Agreement was revised giving independence to Serbia, Montenegro and Romania. Bosnia was given to Austria-Hungary (Britain did not want more Slavic States to form in the Balkans). Northern Bulgaria was given autonomy while southern Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thrace, Kosovo and Albania were given back to the Ottomans.

On the verge of bankruptcy, Russia could not resist the Western Powers and gave in to all their demands.

The decisions made during the Berlin conference of 1878 reshaped the Balkans and set the stage for future events including both World Wars, the Cold War and every Balkan conflict that has since taken place.

At the Berlin Conference of 1878, the Great Powers could have freed Macedonia and given her autonomy, it was within their power to do so but they didn't. Why? There are two obvious reasons.

First, by 1878, with the exception of Russia, all other Great Powers had vested economic interests in the Ottoman Empire. Besides collecting interest on loans, they owned government bonds, shares in road construction, interests in infrastructure projects and investments in the lucrative Ottoman import-export business.

Allowing the Ottoman Empire to collapse at this time made no economic sense.

Second, if Macedonia was allowed to become a state, what would have happened to the smaller states like Serbia and Greece? Greece for certain would not have been able to survive economically without the fertile lands of Macedonia.

With Macedonia back in Ottoman hands, the “Eastern Question” became the “Macedonian Question”. What would happen to Macedonia after the eventual collapse of the Ottoman Empire?

While Macedonia’s future was being decided, to ease the pain of oppression, the Great Powers squeezed Turkey to implement some “reforms”. Recommendations were made to reform government institutions, the military, educational institutions as well as to reform the tax system.

As part of the reforms, the Great Powers also requested that the Ottoman authorities identify the “various nationalities” living inside Macedonia and define the “regions they lived in”. One of the options contemplated in solving the Macedonian question was to break up the Macedonian territory based on “nationality” groupings and then merge “like” groups with the neighbouring States of similar nationality. There were two problems with that idea. First, Turkey had no statistics that identified people by “nationality”. Ottoman statistics were based solely on religious affiliation. Second, since no such statistics existed there was motive for the neighbouring States to invent them.

Once the Greek State was created, the Greek Church began to intrude inside Macedonian territory and by 1850 had taken over the administration of all Macedonian Churches. Secure in their position inside Macedonia, the Greek clergy began disseminating Greek nationalist propaganda with aims of “Hellenizing” the Macedonian population. This unfair practice prompted Russia to intervene and in 1870 they convinced the Sultan in Tsari Grad to allow the creation of the Exarchist Church. Initially, the Exarchist Church was not affiliated with any State and was probably administered by a Slav faction of the Phanariots. With the emergence of the Bulgarian State

in 1878 however, the Exarchist Church began to identify more and more with the Bulgarian State and to vigorously compete with the Patriarchist Church for Macedonian parishioners.

After the conclusion of the Berlin Conference, and with the emergence of the Bulgarian Autonomous State, the Ottoman Empire's decline had passed the point of no return. From then on it was a matter of time before it completely collapsed. For Macedonia, this set the stage for a long and painful struggle.

After 1878, realizing the mortality of their Empire, the Ottoman authorities began to take rebellions seriously. Unfortunately, instead of taking measures to ease tensions, the Ottomans further tightened their oppressive grip, ignoring the Great Power call for reforms.

With Macedonia back in the hands of the Ottoman Empire, Macedonian territory was again available for the taking.

As the 19th century was coming to a close Macedonia was facing many enemies on many fronts. The Macedonian people came to the realization that no one was going to help them and it was time they took matters into their own hands.

On October 23rd, 1893, in Solun, Damjan Gruev, Anton Dimitrov, Petar Pop Arsov, and Hristo Tatarchev gathered together in Ivan Nikolov's house to discuss the plight of the Macedonian people and how to help them. On February 9th, 1894 a committee was formed and a constitution was drafted with the following resolutions:

The committee would be revolutionary in nature and would remain secret.

Its revolutionary activities would be confined to inside Macedonia's borders.

Irrespective of nationality or religion, any Macedonian could become a member of the committee.

The committee also set out the following objectives for itself, which were later ratified at the first Revolutionary Congress held in Resen in August 1894:

Destroy the Ottoman social system.
Remain an “independent” organization.
Seek Macedonian autonomy.

The organization became known as Vnatrezhna (Internal) Makedonska (Macedonian) Revolutsionerna (Revolutionary) Organizatsia (Organization), VMRO (IMRO).

Initially, IMRO had a single enemy, Ottoman oppression. With the rise of “nationalism” and with the increased activities and intervention of foreign churches in Macedonia, three more enemies, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia were added to the list.

The “religious wars” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Macedonia were fought between the Greek Patriarchists on one side and the Bulgarian Exarchists on the other. Greece intended to solve the “nationality” question by proclaiming that all Orthodox Christians in Macedonia were Greek because they belonged to the Greek Church. Bulgaria and later Serbia followed suit by also claiming “nationality” rights by church affiliation. Since Macedonia was predominantly Christian Orthodox all three factions were claiming rights to the same people at the same time. When diplomacy no longer worked, the factions resorted to coercion, violence, blackmail, and armed propaganda campaigns. Prior to the 1903 Ilinden rebellion the Ottomans were against such action. After the rebellion however, they welcomed the interventions and allowed anti-Macedonian brigands to operate uninhibited.

By 1900, IMRO was facing several fronts in defending the Macedonian people. On one front it was fighting the Ottoman army trying to prevent it from attacking and burning Macedonian villages. On another it was fighting foreign incursions sponsored by the Patriarchist and Exarchist Churches. At the same time it had to deal with the conditions of lawlessness and Bashibazouk attacks on the civilian population. On top of that, IMRO was also fighting

ideological battles against the Bulgarian Vrhovists who were attempting to sabotage the uprising effort.

Unprepared for a full-scale uprising due to lack of arms and ammunition, in the spring of 1903, the IMRO leaders were faced with an important decision. They knew that they were not ready for a full-scale attack against the Ottoman army. In fact some believed that a rebellion under those conditions would be suicidal. They also knew that the Ottoman army would destroy Macedonia, village by village, if they didn't do something soon. When the matter was put to a vote the majority voted in favour of an uprising. In Damian Gruev's words it was "better an end with horrors than horrors without end".

Unlike the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian rebellions which flared up at random reacting to Ottoman oppression, the August 2nd, 1903 Macedonian Ilinden uprising was a "planned rebellion". The Macedonian uprising was a well-organized fight for independence that involved the entire Macedonian community at the grass roots level. Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia were liberated with outside help from the Great Powers while Turkey was weak and disorganized. Macedonia, on the other hand, fought with no outside support against Turkey, which was strong and well organized.

Macedonia's bid for independence failed in 1903 not because of a lack of courage or desire for freedom on the part of the Macedonian people, but because of a lack of outside support. Ignoring the Macedonian people's desire for self-determination, the Great Powers allowed Turkey to take back Macedonia. Why? Official history offers no answers.

According to European press accounts, when Westerners received news of the Macedonian uprising they cared more for their investments than for the independence of the Macedonian people.

In 1903, Macedonia reached the crossroads of her destiny and failed to gain independence. Why? What else could have been done?

There are those who believe that the qualities that made IMRO successful also made it weak. Instead of working with the

bourgeoisie class of Macedonia, IMRO aligned itself with the poor village peasants who did not have the finances or the means to support an armed insurrection.

Others believe that not enough lobbying was done to solicit outside (Great Power) help. If IMRO had assured foreign investors that their investments would be secure the outcome may have been different. It is true that IMRO made little effort to solicit outside help.

I believe that after the 1878 Berlin Conference, Macedonia's fate was decided. First, Greece could not have survived economically without the Macedonian territory, Britain was well aware of that. Second, Britain at that time was not prepared to allow another Slav State to emerge in the Balkans. If Macedonia was not allowed to become an independent State, then she should have at least been allowed to merge with another Balkan State. Unfortunately, no Power wanted a "Large State" in the Balkans that had the potential of overpowering the others and dominating the region. The balance of power was best assured with equal sized States.

Prompted by Italian Imperial ventures, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia expedited their own plans for conquest and in 1912 on the pretense of liberating the Macedonian people, declared war on Turkey and invaded Macedonia. What was to be a liberation quickly turned to occupation in 1913 when the liberating forces set up the apparatus of government and, by legislative decrees, extended their own constitutions to the new Macedonian territories they occupied. Not only was Macedonia illegally partitioned by imposing artificial borders on its territory but worse than that, over time, the Macedonian people were either forcibly assimilated into the new folds or forcibly expelled from their own ancestral lands.

By the treaty negotiated in August 1913 in Bucharest the map of Macedonia was redrafted ignoring previously agreed upon boundaries as the Bucharest delegates imposed their artificial sovereignty upon the Macedonian people. With the exception of one minor change in 1920 in Albania's favour, these dividing lines have remained in place to this day. 34,603 square kilometers or 51.57% of the total Macedonian territory went to Greece, 25,714 square kilometers or 38.32% went to Serbia and 6,789 square kilometers or

10.11% went to Bulgaria. August 10th, 1913 became the darkest day in Macedonian history.

Macedonia's hopes were dashed again at the conclusion of the Great War (WW I) in November 1918, when Macedonians were not allowed to attend the Versailles France Peace Conference. Up to this time Macedonia's partition was illegal and not sanctioned by the Powers. With the stroke of a pen in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles (Paris), England and France sealed Macedonia's fate by ratifying the principles of the Bucharest Treaty and officially endorsing the partitioning of Macedonia.

This unfortunately encouraged Greece to further pursue forced expulsions and denationalization of Macedonians, to begin mass colonization of Macedonia and by the Neuilly Convention, transplant "potential Greeks" into the Macedonian territories. About 70,000 Macedonians were expelled from the Greek occupied part of Macedonia to Bulgaria and 25,000 "so called Greeks" were transplanted from Bulgaria to Greek occupied Macedonia.

By the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, the Greco-Ottoman war came to an end. Greece and Turkey signed a population exchange agreement. By the stroke of the pen some 380,000 Muslims were exchanged for something like 1,100,000 Christians. The total population in Greece, between 1907 and 1928, rose from 2,600,000 to 6,200,000. After the Greek occupation of Macedonia in 1912, for instance, by their own accounts the Greek elements in Greek occupied Macedonia had constituted 43 percent of the population. By 1926, with the resettlement of the refugees from Asia Minor, the Greek element has risen to 89 percent.

The next major event in Macedonia's history started with high hopes but unfortunately ended with tragic consequences for the Macedonian people. While the Macedonians in the Vardar region of Macedonia had gained some concessions and were re-building their lives after the conclusion of World War I, the Macedonians in Greek occupied Macedonia were engaging in someone else's war. World War II rekindled Macedonian hopes for freedom but the Greek Civil War shattered them. The oppressive aftermath was too

much for most Macedonians to bear so they abandoned their beloved villages and immigrated to Canada, the USA and Australia.

As I mentioned earlier, throughout the 19th century the Western Powers, Britain in particular, were in competition with Russia for political and economic influence of the Balkan region.

The Western Powers feared Russian Imperial expansion into the West and exercised every means to keep her at bay.

Early in the 19th century, the Southern Balkans including Romania, were dominated by Slavs. The Western Powers feared that with Russian influence, an Eastern Slav alliance (Panslavism) was possible and did everything in their power to prevent it. To prevent the Slavs from uniting, the Western Powers encouraged the creation of “easily manageable Slav opposing” States. These Slav opposing States would not only counter Russian and Slav influence, but they would also remain loyal to their benefactors. And that is exactly why Greece and Albania were created. Being Christian Orthodox and loyal to Russia, Greece, perhaps under a different name, could have easily become a “Slav State”.

Hellenism did not exist in the Balkans when the Kingdom of Greece was created for the first time in 1829. The idea of relating modern Greeks to those of 2,300 years ago came from Britain and France as a way of giving the newly created Greek nation a different “national character” from that of the Slavs to the north. This was a reliable way of ensuring Greece would not become a Slav State. Similarly, Albania was also a Western Power (Austrian-Hungarian) creation designed to counter Russian and Slav influence in the Adriatic. Not all people of newly created Greece were happy with the idea of becoming Hellenes. Many wanted to pursue their Christian roots and maintain a “Christian character”. Unfortunately, as nationalism gripped the Balkans, the Hellenic forces gained momentum and slowly extinguished the “multinational and true character” of Greece. With the creation of Bulgaria, competition for influence in Macedonia intensified. By the turn of the 19th century Macedonia became the “apple of discord” between Greece and Bulgaria, two states with diametrically opposed national ideals. Not to be outdone, Serbia too laid her own claims insisting that the Slavs of

Macedonia were Serbs and not Greeks or Bulgarians. So, were the 19th and early 20th century Macedonians “nationally” connected to the Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbians all at the same time?

The 19th and early 20th century questions of what nationalities lived in Macedonia had little to do with the “real nationality” of the Macedonian people and a lot to do with the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian assertion of it. This was done purely for the purpose of laying claims to Macedonian territory. Attesting to her long history, Macedonia has always been and still is multinational and multicultural with a Macedonian majority. Greece on the other hand discarded her “true national identity” and opted for an ideal one. Bulgaria and Serbia followed suit by claiming “homogeneity” but remained “Slav”. In addition to claiming ties to ancient Greek ancestry, Greece went a step further and claimed “racial purity” and “homogeneity”. By superficially connecting herself to the ancient people of the Balkans, Greece not only laid territorial claims to their lands but also intentionally excluded all others from making similar claims, including the “most recent owners”. Additionally, without proof of “bloodline” Greece also claimed ties to ancient Macedonian ancestry and with that proceeded to take possession of Macedonian territory from the Modern Macedonian owners.

Greece is occupying 51.57% of Macedonia’s territory today because according to Greek claims, it belongs to the Modern Greeks. Modern Greeks further claim that they are a pure race descended from the “ancient owners of the land” and thus the land is rightfully theirs by inheritance. Conversely, Modern Greeks claims that the 51.57% of Macedonian territory they occupy today does not belong to the Slavs (Modern Macedonians) because the Slavs are newcomers who migrated to the region only 1,400 years ago. They also claim that today only “pure Greeks” live in “Greek Macedonia”.

Let’s put these assertions to a test. Is a Modern Greek a “pure Greek with ties to the ancient Greeks” if he or she is a direct descendent of Modern Macedonian, Ottoman, Albanian or Roma parentage?

If “yes”, then Modern Macedonians, Ottomans, Albanians and Roma MUST ALSO have roots with links to the ancient Greeks and ancient Macedonians.

If “no” then Modern Greeks are NOT “pure Greeks descended from the ancient Greeks” and therefore cannot “EXCLUSIVELY LAY CLAIMS” to Macedonian territory on the basis of “inheritance by bloodline”.

Let’s take a look at some facts.

It is a well-documented fact that between 1907 and 1928 the population of Modern Greece grew from 2,600,000 to 6,200,000. Where did these people come from?

It is also a well documented fact that any Christian Orthodox, be it a Slav, Ottoman, Albanian, Vlach or Roma, regardless of race, who assumed a Greek name and spoke the Greek language was considered to be Greek.

History has recorded that millions of people were assimilated and added to the Greek fold, regardless of race, some willingly some forcibly, between 1907 and 1928. Today, Greece claims that these people are “pure Greeks descendents of the old Greeks”.

Based on the above facts does Greece have the following rights?

To discriminate against those who assert their non-Greek (Macedonian) identity?

To “exclude” Macedonians from “their own” heritage on the basis that they are Slavs and not “Hellenes”?

Here is a summary of what past Greek Governments have done to the Macedonian people in the name of Hellenism.

1923. Greece and Turkey signed a population exchange agreement and by the stroke of the pen some 380,000 Muslims were exchanged for something like 1,100,000 Christians. Most of the Christians from

Asia Minor were settled in Macedonia on the lands of those Macedonians killed and exiled in 1912-1913.

1926. Legislative Orders in Government Gazette #331 ordered the names of Macedonian towns, villages, mountains, etc to be changed to Greek. The Macedonian people, under duress, were ordered to abandon their Macedonian names and adopt Greek ones assigned to them by the Greek State.

1927. Cyrillic inscriptions on churches, tombstones, and icons were destroyed or overwritten. Law prohibited Church services in the Macedonian language.

1928. From 1926 to 1928 1,497 Macedonian place-names in Greek occupied Macedonia were Hellenized.

English Journalist V. Hild reveals, The Greeks do not only persecute living Macedonians, but they also persecute dead ones. They do not leave them in peace even in the graves. They erase the Cyrillic inscriptions on the headstones, remove the bones and burn them.

1929. The Greek government enacted a law whereby any demands for national rights by Macedonians were regarded as high treason.

LAW 4096 directive on renaming Macedonian place-names.

1936. From 1936 to 1940 Fascist dictator General Metaxas REIGNED TERROR. Macedonians suffered state terrorism and pogroms. Thousands of Macedonians were jailed, sent to internal exile (EXORIA) on arid, inhospitable Greek islands, where many perished. Their only crime was being ethnic Macedonian by birth.

LAW 6429 reinforces Law 4096 on Hellenization of toponyms.

DECREE 87 accelerated denationalization of Macedonians. The Greek ministry of Education sent specially trained instructors to accelerate the conversion to the Greek language.

1938. LAW 23666 banned the use of the Macedonian language and strove to erase every trace of the Macedonian identity. Macedonians

were fined, beaten and jailed for speaking Macedonian. Adults and school children were humiliated by being forced to drink castor oil when caught speaking Macedonian.

LAW 1418 reinforced previous laws on renaming.

1940. From 1929 to 1940 another 39 place-names were Hellenized.

1945. LAW 697 had more regulations on renaming toponyms in Greek occupied Macedonia.

1947. LAW L-2 decreed that Greek citizens suspected of opposing the Greek government during the Greek Civil War were arbitrarily and without due process stripped of their citizenship.

1948. LAW M allowed confiscation of properties from Greek citizens who were accused of assisting the opposition or who fought against the Greek Government.

28,000 CHILD REFUGEES, mostly from Macedonia were evacuated to Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. To this day Greece denies their right to return.

DECREE 504 continued property confiscation of exiles and colonization of Greek occupied Macedonia with people from Turkey, Egypt and other parts of Greece. Parcels of land were given to colonists along with financial incentives.

1959. LAW 3958 allowed the confiscation of property of those who left Greece and did not return within five years.

Several Macedonian villages in Greek occupied Macedonia were forced to swear LANGUAGE OATHS to speak only Greek and renounce their Macedonian mother tongue.

1962. DECREE 4234 reinforced past laws regarding confiscated properties of political exiles and denied them the right to return.

1968. The EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS accused Greece of human rights abuses.

1969. The COUNCIL OF EUROPE declared Greece undemocratic, illiberal, authoritarian, and oppressive. Greece was forced to resign from the Council of Europe under threat of expulsion.

A Military Junta continued the policy of colonizing the confiscated lands in Greek Occupied Macedonia. Land was handed over to persons with a proven patriotism for Greece.

1979. 135 more Macedonian place names were renamed in Greek Occupied Macedonia since 1940.

1982. The Greek internal security police urged an intensive campaign to wipe out the remaining Macedonian language and Macedonian consciousness in Greek occupied Macedonia.

LAW 106841 allowed political exiles, who fled during the Greek Civil War and were stripped of their citizenship, to return providing they were Greek by ethnic origin. The same rights were denied to Macedonian political exiles born in Greek occupied Macedonia.

1985. DECREE 1540 stated that political exiles, provided they were Greeks by ethnic origin, who fled during Civil War were allowed to reclaim confiscated lands. The same rights were denied to Macedonian exiles who were born in Greek occupied Macedonia.

In the 1990s Greece made every effort possible to block the formation of the Republic of Macedonia.

IT IS TIME TO EXPOSE GREECE FOR WHAT SHE REALLY IS AND PUT AN END TO HER TYRANICAL WAYS. IT IS TIME TO STOP THE SENSELESS PERSECUTION OF HER CITIZENS WHO WISH TO ASSERT THEIR TRUE NATIONAL IDENTITY.

The world is becoming a small place and in order to achieve peace and harmony, exclusion, oppression and discrimination must end. I believe that Europe is on the right track in its support for human and minority rights. Greece must also recognize her past mistakes and make amends to the Macedonian people. If history has taught us

anything, it has taught us that there is no peace and harmony as long as there is exclusion, exploitation and oppression.

For the unbelievers and for those who think that the “Greeks can do no wrong”, I offer you the following books, written in Greek by Greek authors;

If you wish to know more about Karavangelis’ terrorist actions in Macedonia read his biography (the original version) “Arheio Makedonikou Agona, Pinelopis Delta, Apomnimonemata, Germanou Karavaggeli, Georgiou Dikonymou Makri, Panagiotti Papatzanetea”. By his own accounts and through his bragging you will learn what an upstanding religious figure, a Bishop no less, he was and how many people he had killed for the good of his country and for Hellenism.

If you wish to learn what the Greeks did in Macedonia from 1903 to 1905 during and around the time of the Ilinden Uprising, read the book “Ellinikos Antimakedonikos Agonas, Apo to Ilinten Sto Zangoritsani (1903 – 1905), Megali Popeza, 1998” by Dimitris Lithoxoou.

For the lady who told me to “be ashamed for writing such lies” and for the gentlemen who asked me “are there no ends that you Scopians will go to propagate your propaganda and attempt to steal our Greek Heritage?” I offer you this two volume book. “Istoria Tis Makronisou, Meros Proto, Meros Deftero, Athina 1966” by Nikou Margari.

For those of you who do not believe Macedonians exist and therefore no Macedonian language exists, I offer you this book. “I Apagorevmeni Glossa, Kratiki Katastoli ton Slavikon Stis Eliniki Makedonia, Mavri Lista, Athina 2000” by Tasos Kostopoulos.

On a more personal note!

As a result of distributing, on the internet, the article series “Macedonia – What went wrong in the last 200 years”, I received a fair number of comments both positive and negative. Your comments were well appreciated.

While your positive comments gave me encouragement to continue to write, your negative comments reminded me why I started writing in the first place. Thank you.

For those of you who have referred to me as Skopian or agent of Skopie, I would like to set the record straight.

I am not Skopian, have never been to Skopie or to the Republic of Macedonia.

I am a Greek Citizen of Macedonian descent.

You can't just turn a blind eye and assume Greece is problem free and that people like me don't exist or are agents working for someone else. Unlike many of you, I have found the truth that I am a Macedonian and not a Greek and have accepted it. I know who I am and no longer wish to live a lie for the sake of propagating more lies.

On the subject of the Greeks calling Macedonians "Albanian half-breeds", "Gypsies" and "Bulgars", you speak as if those people are not human. Calling them derogatory names does not change them from who they are. By doing so you only expose your own contempt for those people that think differently than you. In democratic societies like Canada we have laws against such practices.

And finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone for showing interest in the series of articles and for providing me with your comments.

In the near future, I will be starting a new series of articles on Macedonia, which will cover the period from ancient times up to the 19th century. Again as always, I will strive to provide you with an objective and unbiased analysis of the historic events with the aim of countering the Greek position on Macedonia and setting the record straight.

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